



Indian Cinema 1984

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Foreword

The Indian Panorama section of the International Film Festival of India was introduced in 1978 with the objective of presenting the best of Indian cinema chosen by a panel of experts.

The operative word being 'Indian', considerations of regional or linguistic representation find no place in the process of selection.

To choose 21 feature films out of over 700 produced in a country which is cinematically the most prolific in the world cannot be an easy task. This year, too, three regional panels assisted the Central Selection Panel to choose the final package. The intent of the Panel was to select the elite of Indian cinema produced during the period 1 November 1983 to 15 October 1984.

As critic Suresh Chabbria has said, some of these films 'represent the kind of breakthrough one has been looking for...in Indian cinema in general after Ghatak and Ray—a cinema of the highest artistic standards and results...these films constitute one of the richest crops of films to come from any national cinema in recent years.'

This year we have divided the Indian Panorama into two separate publications. This volume is about the chosen 21 feature, and 11 short films and their makers. A companion volume entitled *Indian Films Today: An Anthology of Articles on Indian Cinema*, and published as an innovation this year, contains articles specially written by well-known film critics on contemporary Indian cinema, and includes a survey of cinematic trends in the various regions.

I sincerely hope that this change will be welcomed by the readers and that it will further help in promoting the works of sensitive and dedicated Indian film-makers.



A. Viren Luther

Director

Tenth International Film Festival of India

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Introduction

In undertaking to introduce the Indian Panorama section of the 10th International Film Festival of India, I am conscious of my responsibility in trying to answer what, if anything, is new with the 1984 package. No doubt the films are new. But are they different? If so, how?

A superficial look at the list of this year's twenty-one films in this section—as many as ten in Hindi, five in Malayalam, only one in Bengali, that erstwhile principal fortress of new Indian cinema, none in Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi or Kannada—is misleading. A closer look, however, will reveal as much as it conceals, for instance, as smoothly as a well-executed lap dissolve, a number of young, 'regional' film-makers have decided to switch to Hindi, the most widely understood Indian language. Thus, Goutam Ghose, whose two earlier films were one in Telugu and the other in Bengali, his own language, has this year made *Paar* in Hindi. Girish Karnad, the pioneer of Kannada cinema, has turned to Hindi for *Utsav*. Amol Palekar has left the safe precincts of his earlier matrix, Marathi, to adopt Hindi for *Ankabee*, while Buddhadeb Dasgupta has moved away from the Bengali of his earlier films to Hindi in his new film, *Andhi Gali*. As for Ketan Mehta, whose critically acclaimed

Shabana Azmi in Paar



earlier film, *Bhavni Bhavai*, was in Gujarati and styled after a popular Gujarati folk form, his new *oeuvre*, *Holi*, is in Hindi.

What exactly does this shift towards Hindi signify? Sell-out to the language chauvinism of the my-country-right-or-wrong brigade? Coming to terms with the economics of film-making, with the need to communicate to the largest number? The latter, yes, but also a new confidence in handling language as just one element of a complex, creative product. In *Paar*, the words that the young Harijan couple, Naurangia (Naseeruddin Shah) and Rama (Shabana Azmi) speak, belong to a simply understood Bihari patois. In *Holi*, the aural texture of the film is a fascinating collage of the colloquial, the graffitti and the junk lingua that is the peculiar signature tune of urban youth. In *Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho!*, the language used by Saeed Mirza is Hindi of course, but such as sounds germane to its lower middle-class milieu in Bombay, and when Rani (Rohini Hattangady) or Kapadia (Amjad Khan) speak it, it is only slightly more elevated in tone.

True cinema, as Adoor Gopalakrishnan says in his book, *Cinemayude Lokam*, (The World of Cinema), talks a language of its own, owing little allegiance to others. If some of the film-makers of today are looking at language in terms of wider communicability, others like Adoor Gopalakrishnan are intent on doing away with it as far as possible. In his *Mukhamukham* (Malayalam), the time-space-continuum of the film is marked by long, haunting passages of silence. They say a lot. For one, Gopalakrishnan has no longer any trouble finding the form that best suits what he wants to say. For another, art is its own language, able to find its own syntax and grammar from beneath the layers of movie-making technique such as can compel attention for such a complex character as Sreedharan. Like a grand and noble mansion falling into seedy decay, Sreedharan the ideologue and arch revolutionary crumples before our eyes and with him are buried, perhaps forever, the most important illusions of our generation.

From *Manik Raitong*, the lyrical first film in Khasi by Ardhendu Bhattacharya, the simple family drama of *Kattathe Kilikkoodu* (Malayalam), and the tale of adolescence and sportsmanship in *Hip Hip Hurray*, to the consummate polish and tactile sensuousness of *Utsav*, each period detail of India of the golden age firmly in its place, is a large canvas indeed. Away from these poles of lyricism and romance are unglamorized vignettes of contemporary India such as the heroines of *Swathi* (Telugu) and *Kony* (Bengali), and the exploited peasantry of *Neeraba Jhada* (Oriya). Tamil firebrand K. Balachander's new film, *Achamillai Achamillai*, like P.N. Menon's *Malamuhailae Daivam* (Malayalam), are films that breathe that essential ingredient of significant cinema—courage. Even when they may tend to pose problems in black and white, they have

a compelling sincerity and power. Above all, the South Indian films bring to a larger audience a bevy of fresh-faced charmers. Shobhana in *Kana Marayathu* (Malayalam) by I.V. Sasi, Sreevidya in *Adaminte Variyellu* (Malayalam) by K.G. George, Saritha in *Achamillai Achamillai*, and the new-find, Bhanupriya, in Vamsy's *Sitara*, are all actresses of high calibre and have given memorable, if sometimes undirected performances.

The 1984 Panorama marks the death of at least one cliché. This is the concession-seeking, patronizing manner of yore with which attention was invariably sought to be attracted to new Indian cinema. The sweet sound of the box-office till for Nihalani's *Aradh Satya* last year and for Mahesh Bhatt's *Saaransh* which is included in this year's Panorama, are not fortuitous events. The stage when it was convenient to label new cinema as something the audience did not want to look at and which the establishment chose to ignore, is over. Today even those borderline film-makers who have long been out in the cold and who swore that the audience was an unnecessary adjunct to cinema, are having to rethink their theoretical premise.

There is yet something else which is different about the films in this year's Panorama. Some of them represent the new awareness that creativity, in *auteur* cinema, must move beyond mere artistry in terms of celluloid imagery to innovations that make more creative use of the new technology now available to film-makers. With those modern, lighter, far more mobile shooting equipments at their disposal, directors can design single *mise-en-scenes* that last upto ten minutes, as Ketan Mehta does in *Holi*. With this one innovation, cutting out the various processes between the rush print and the final print, the clever artiste can cut costs by half or even more. The multi-track, magnetic mixing facilities now easily at hand, enable doing the entire shooting in sync, thereby conserving that very special aural and textural authenticity that gives *Holi* its raw physicality and gut strength.

Finally, to use the metaphor of *Paar*, new Indian cinema seems to have made the crossing from the dumb, grotesque animality symbolized by the fording of the turbulent river with the herd of swine, to the realization that human endeavour must continue in the face of the most elemental and unspeakable odds. The number of films in this section which makes this fight their concern, is itself a sign of hope. The battle of the Cinema of Soul as against the Cinema of Money has been taken into the very territory of the antagonist. Hindi films like *Party* and *Saaransh*, *Tarang* and *Mohan Joshi Haazir Ho!* are no more like the Hindi cinema one has known all these years than is Nureyev like Humphrey Bogart. In Nihalani's *Party* we are on nodding terms with all the guests—with the high society hostess with a yen for collecting celebrities like some rich women do lapis lazuli figurines, with the great playwright whose State award is the



Dina Patbak, Dipti Nava, Mohan Gokhale, Satish Shah and Naseeruddin Shah in Mohan Joshi Haazir Ho !

raison d'être for the party, with the mistress who is being pushed over the brink of loss of self-esteem by the big man—indeed all the major and minor denizens of a big metropolis's cultural and literary habitat. But as party-talk turns in Nihalani's scalpel laden hands to reveal a pus-ridden, pulverized mass of social tissue and rotting flesh, as gambits appear like truth and vice versa, Nihalani holds up a mirror that alternately displays society's pretty as well as diseased face, herding the film to a denouement full of outraged idealism and cruelty. Immediately after the end a single credit line flashes on the screen—'Producer, National Film Development Corporation'. This is at once the most significant and hopeful sign of contemporary cinema. It proves that the takers for the Cinema of Soul are there in the establishment itself, just as it marks the presence of *auteurs* who have the courage, the clarity, the conviction to make films for their own sake, to communicate a particular truth, world-view, feeling and conviction. In this year's Panorama you will find that the emphasis of the early years, for a concession-laden, regional representation has finally and rightly given way to a selection of the best in *Indian* cinema. That this is the cinema of artistes who, in these troubled times, have remained resolute in their intellectual stands, who have had to courage to follow a project, a film through to the end, itself bespeaks a relatively good year. This is by no means to suggest that there is anything uniform about the package. Only that each film, in its own artistic and creative way, will provide enough material for the big debate: whither Indian cinema?

Achamillai Achamillai

Fearless

The events take place in a village nestling among hills with beautiful waterfalls as a mute spectator of many a dramatic development.

Thenmozhi, a worker in a fibre factory, is the daughter of a freedom fighter, Umaiorubagam, who is now blind and entirely dependent upon his daughter. Thenmozhi comes across Ulaganathan, a young idealist from a lower middle-class background, who works in a saw mill. She is deeply attracted to Ulaganathan who is much respected in the community for his selfless nature, his moral values and his willingness to help others. Ulaganathan's father, Bramanayagam, finds in Thenmozhi the ideal bride for his son and the marriage takes place on Independence Day to mark it as a specially auspicious occasion for two young people devoted to the upliftment of their society.

In view of the respect that Ulaganathan commands and his influence over even the morally degenerate sections of his own community, the political parties vie with each other to woo him into their fold. Thenmozhi, however, is secure in the belief that Ulaganathan, with his high moral standards, will not fall a prey to the lures of unscrupulous politicians. But the greed for power does

Ulaganathan and Thenmozhi in the early days of their friendship



eventually overcome Ulaganathan's resistance, and he joins one of the two rival parties in the area when he is promised a ministership.

The process of disintegration, once begun, cannot be checked, and Ulaganathan makes one compromise after another, to the horror of his wife and father. Ulaganathan has reached a point of no return, and protests from his wife and father only serve to enrage him. His father's financial dependence on Ulaganathan puts him in a position of complete submission, while Thenmozhi finds herself more and more relegated to the kitchen or the bed.

The political system slowly and relentlessly brutalizes Ulaganathan. Thenmozhi discovers that in order to force a man to vote for him, Ulaganathan has hired local ruffians to molest the man's wife. Thenmozhi tries to remonstrate with her husband to bring back to him his old sense of values. But Ulaganathan makes it quite clear that the equal relationship that he had shared with his wife is now no longer possible. The final decisions will have to be his own and Thenmozhi must keep to her place in the house.

Before Thenmozhi can go to her father's home to deliver her first child, her long lost brother comes home from the city. The people of the village are amused and shocked to see that the boy whom his father had named Swatantram, because he was born the same year the country received its independence, has grown up to be a deformed midget.

While Thenmozhi is away from her home, Ulaganathan wins the election. But as neither of the parties has a clear majority, the usual horsetrading takes place and Ulaganathan has no compunctions about shifting his allegiance to the other party when a large sum of money is offered to him. When Bramanayagam comes to take Thenmozhi and the baby back home, Thenmozhi is even more rudely shocked to see that Ulaganathan has in the meantime moved to a palatial house which is part of the pay off for his timely defection.

Thenmozhi reacts violently to Ulaganathan's moral degradation, and revolted by the change in him, refuses to share his bed any longer. To retaliate, Ulaganathan brings Alangaram into the house as his mistress. Alangaram and her mother gradually take over the responsibility of running the house. Thenmozhi, unwanted and repeatedly humiliated, finds that even her father-in-law can no longer help her. Her brother has already been bought over by Ulaganathan. Her father too has been effectively silenced by Ulaganathan who has arranged for a costly operation to restore his eyesight. Thenmozhi decides to leave home and eke out her own livelihood. But tragedy follows her footsteps. She loses her child who is washed away at the falls during torrential rains.

Thenmozhi continues to live alone. She is horrified to learn from



Thenmozhi - an outcaste in her own home

Alangaram that her husband has actually arranged for the killing of an innocent girl to take revenge on all those who had criticized him for his defection, and to start a communal riot that would terrorize the community into total surrender. When Thenmozhi confronts her husband, Ulaganathan justifies the murder by saying that it is just like a sacrifice to the Rain God. After all, political murders cannot be judged by common, day to day ethics. Thenmozhi, he suggests, would do well to forget the past and come back to her husband.

The next day is Independence Day. A new statue of Gandhiji is unveiled. Ulaganathan stands on the dais and talks about the sacrifices he and his party have been making for the sake of the country and the people. Thenmozhi comes there carrying a huge garland. To her ears Ulaganathan's words sound the same as those he had spouted to her, justifying all his misdeeds. Thenmozhi garlands her husband; then pulling out a knife hidden in the garland, kills Ulaganathan.

1984/Colour/35 mm/160 min/Tamil

Production: Kavithalayaa Productions (P) Limited

Story, Screenplay, Dialogue and Direction: K. Balachander

Camera: B.S. Lokanath

Music: V.S. Narasimhan

Lyrics: Vairamuthu

Sound: S.P. Ramanathan

Art Direction: Mohanam

Editing: N.R. Kittoo

Lead Players: Saritha, Rajesh, Delhi Ganesh, Pavithra, Ahalya, Prabhakar, Vairam Krishnamoorthy, Veeraiah, Charley

Enquiries: Kavithalayaa Productions (P) Limited, 17 A Karpagambal Nagar, Mylapore, Madras 600 004.

Born in 1930, K. Balachander graduated in science from Madras University and worked in the Accountant General's office till 1964. While in government service, he became an active participant in the Tamil theatre and directed and produced several Tamil plays. Balachander shot into fame with his very first film, *Neerkumizhi*, in 1965, and since then has been a prolific film-maker, directing around sixty films in less than twenty years. Though working in the mainstream of commercial cinema, his films are unique and varied in structure, often dealing with subjects of socio-political relevance. He has also made films in Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi, some of which received awards and country-wide recognition. Balachander has received many awards both at national and state levels. He has been chosen the best story writer, dialogue writer or director on a number of occasions. Four of his Tamil films have won the best regional film award in the National Film Festival. He won the National Award for the best screenplay in his film *Thaneer Thaneer* in 1981. He was also adjudged the best film technician of the year 1983 by the South Indian Cine Technicians Association and was the first recipient of the A.V.M. Award. Among the vast number of films he has made are *Edbir Neechal* (1968), *Kanna Nalama* (1972), *Arangetram* (1973), *Naan Avanillai* (1974), *Asina* (1974) in Hindi, *Pattina Pravesam* (1977), *Maro Charithra* (1978), *Ek Duje ke Liye* (1981) in Hindi, and *Zara si Zindagi* (1982) in Hindi.

Well-known critic, Sreedhar Rajan writes on Balachander's latest film.

As a teacher, Eisenstein once told his students that to construct a revolutionary emotional film the director must provide an understanding of emotional phenomena as well as showing how socio-historic forces influence human feelings. To Eisenstein, 'the practical reconstruction of social activity', was the highest form of

creation, and it occurred when the director was able 'to reveal, manifest and organise, the visuals and phenomena of class reflected reality'.

Balachander's *Fearless*, even like his *Thanneer*, *Thanneer* falls into such categories of revolutionary emotional films that reveal the socio-historic forces which influence the 'feelings' of its protagonists. But more importantly, *Fearless* is a discourse which oscillates between a public and private view of events, between the overtly political and an apolitical position.

Among the film's remarkable features is its myriad archetypal characters, symbols and metaphors where even a waterfall assumes a human role and significance. Balachander, through the vehicle of Delhi Naicker, a cynical petite bourgeoisie arm-chair critic, mobilizes the contradictions in the political context of the film by channelising Naicker's appropriate verbal outbursts and explosive surrealist vision, that is unfailingly tinged with black and ironic humour. Naicker's abject inactivity in the face of real crisis, perhaps, helps only to further breed fantasies and vision as substitutes for action. The film opens to a stunning surrealist survey of a scenario of a streetside strewn with corpses of men, corpses of potential votes. And likewise, later in the film we see the evocative visuals of the multiplicity of men with loudspeakers growing out of their throats, each vying democratically to down the other vocally in the battle of the ballot.

Bramanayagam, a character bristling with middle-class morality and overflowing with self-righteousness, is the veritable epitome of the utter impotence of his class when confronted with a crisis situation where none but the fittest survive. While Swathantram, needless to add, signifies the sum total of all that life and liberty has come to mean for independent India.

Balachander flags his protagonist off by felicitating her as a flower-bearing mermaid washed by the cascading waterfalls whom Ulaganathan marries only to metamorphose her promptly into an object of kitchen convenience and bedroom comfort. Thenmozhi, however, refuses to accept this post-marital condition as the ineluctable fate of womankind and transforms herself into a Kali, culminating in the extremity of her resolution not to murder but to kill her husband—an act that brings down the curtain on his betrayals of his professed ideals. As a tribute to Saritha's ability to handle this role brilliantly, as also a measure of Balachander's confidence in his artiste, we witness a three-minute long close-up of her that highlights both his techniques and her performance.

It is a comment on Balachander's grasp of reality that Ulaganathan is never shown as dramatically betraying his ideals, he is instead shown as merely making one minor compromise at a time. Yet, in

the final analysis what Balachander seems to say is that a series of compromises are tantamount to something much worse than a surrender to the spoils of the system. For Balachander, there is no line between compromise and surrender, just as there exists no line between love and politics, between man and woman, between private and public lives and values for Thenmozhi, the woman who loves, argues, fights and kills the politician who murdered the ideals her husband once embodied.

Throughout the film it is evident that Balachander sees his woman's role more as moral and historical than political—thus making it difficult to dismiss the film as Naxalite or extremist. He persistently refuses to be a partisan to any pet political party or theory. For the film-maker to assume a bias to any ideology would have come easy, but Balachander has set himself a more difficult and perhaps unrewarding task—that of dissecting politicians and parties with the scalpel of morality rather than fashionable ideological swords. Looking through his moral viewfinder he crucifies his hero on the cross of humanism, thus saving him from being sacrificed at the altar of our political marketplaces—a rare and remarkable surgery performed on the living corpse of our worm-infested body polity.



K. Balachander

Adaminte Variyellu

Adam's Rib

Vasanthi, Alice and Ammini come from three different walks of life. Their environment, their upbringing, their experiences, their reactions to these experiences, have very little in common with one another. Yet Vasanthi, Alice and Ammini present a common predicament; they are women who, like many of their compatriots, spend their lives trying to come to terms with the fundamentally exploitative nature of their relationship with men. They are women who, unaware as they are of the complexities of their situation, have allowed themselves to be repeatedly used and rejected by men. They are women who, in their own ways, spontaneously rebel against their destiny, rather than remain secondary citizens in a man's world. Yet, paradoxically enough, Vasanthi and Alice can only take their rebellion to the point of self-destruction. It is left to Ammini, with her primeval instincts for survival, with her indisputable place among the sisterhood of the deprived, to open the doors to freedom. With nothing left to lose, it is Ammini who can be truly free.

Vasanthi is a young wife and a working woman with a six-year-old child. She wakes up early in the morning to finish her chores in the kitchen, then gets her son ready for school before she herself can go to work. After a long day's work in the office, Vasanthi stops on the way to pick up the child, before coming home and picking up the housework where she had left it. She waits every evening for her

Vasanthi leaves the prison of her home to enter the asylum



husband to come back home, which he does late at night after having had his quota of drinks for the day. Later still in the night he pulls her into his bed to provide an outlet for his pent up frustrations.

Vasanthi's husband also has a habit of giving up his job at short notice, which puts an additional burden on Vasanthi's shoulders. Ever since her father-in-law's death, her mother-in-law has withdrawn herself from the affairs of the house. She has presumably had her share of the drudgery and now finds it convenient to retire, leaving her daughter-in-law to take on the role of beast of burden.

As Vasanthi's days merge one into another, she slowly loses her perspective. Unloved, uncared for and physically run down, Vasanthi, slowly, unconsciously starts rebelling against the soul-destroying drudgery of her life. Her middle-class upbringing has only prepared her for submission, for obedience. How can she break out of this vicious circle? At first it is a sense of physical tiredness. Then she slowly loses interest in her job. She stays at home, mechanically following the daily routine till her mind loses all hold on reality. That is her rebellion, her escape. Her husband and mother-in-law suddenly discover that she is actually suffering from the delusion that her father-in-law has come back from the dead to look after her. At first they think they can handle the situation by intimidating her. But no amount of thrashing helps. Vasanthi has secured for herself a place in the land of fantasy where the benign ghost of her father-in-law smiles upon her, drawing out of her all pain, all fatigue, and leaving her in peace. They take her away to the asylum finally. At the gate she turns back with a smile. It is a happy smile of one who has met her salvation.

Alice is the middle-aged wife of a very rich businessman. A ruthless government contractor, her husband, Mammachen, had once upon a time made use of her attractions to get where he is today. Today Alice is neglected by her husband who is too involved in the business of making more money to have any time left for his wife or the children. Once in a while an old business acquaintance comes home and Alice is reminded of her past humiliations as the woman who has been the instrument of her husband's rise to power. Her children are in their teens and she cannot bring herself to take much interest in their activities. As the wife of a socially powerful man, she is drawn into a women's club, but there too her aloofness and her apathy isolate her from other women. She is interested in a young architect who is, however, not willing to let the affair stand in the way of his career. When her husband protests against the relationship, she attempts to get a divorce from him. In the meantime her young daughter runs away with a boy and is



Ammini left at the hospital to give birth to her unwanted child

discovered in a hotel room with him. She is rescued in time. Not so her mother. For when her parents and the church refuse to accept the divorce, Alice finds herself permanently confined to a life of ennui and despair. Her last active choice on her own behalf is the choice of death. She takes an overdose of sleeping pills to break open her prison doors.

Ammini is a housemaid in Alice's home. Sixteen years old and an orphan she has yet imbibed all the knowledge of the world. When Alice's daughter gets her first menstrual period, it is Ammini who provides her support. When Mammachen wants a little diversion, it is Ammini who must provide it with her body, for she is in no position to say 'no' to the master. Alice is aware of Mammachen's indiscretions, but when Ammini gets pregnant by her husband, she is revolted by the development. Mammachen immediately arranges for Ammini to be removed from his home. His hired ruffians take her to a construction site where she is to stay till her pregnancy reaches its full term. When the baby is due, Ammini is removed to a government hospital where she is left alone to deliver a boy.

Once out of the hospital, Ammini has nowhere to go. She leaves her baby at the doorstep of a stranger's house, and makes the street her home, taking up the oldest profession in the world. Inevitably she is picked up by the police and is taken to a rescue home. In the rescue home many Amminis sit daily at sewing machines and learn a respectable profession, preparing for the world to receive them back. Their dull faces reflect their helpless surrender to a social system that has always operated on its double standards. Ammini cannot bear her prison walls anymore. In a fantastic leap across



Mammachen - Alice's ruthless husband

reality, Ammini opens the prison doors, and with her sisters, breaks through the barrier of the camera crew, to rush to freedom.

1983/Colour/35 mm/142 min /Malayalam

Production: St. Vincent Movies

Story and Direction: K.G. George

Screenplay: K.G. George and K. Ramachandran

Camera: Ramchandra Babu

Music: M.B. Sreenivasan

Lyrics: O.N.V. Kurup

Sound: Devadas

Art Direction: G.O. Sundaram

Editing: M.N. Appu

Lead Players: Suhasini, Sreevidya, Soorya, Rajam K. Nair, Gopi, Venu Nagavalli, Mammooti, Tilakan

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K.G. George was born in Changanacherry and belongs to the old Syrian Christian community of Kerala. He graduated from Kerala University before joining the Film and Television Institute of India, from where, in 1971, he received his diploma in film direction. In 1975 he made his first feature film, *Swapnadanam*, which won the National Award for the best regional film, and State Awards for the best film and best direction. His association with Ramu Kariat, with whom he worked for three years, gave him a better understanding of the medium of cinema, and *Swapnadanam* was followed by a whole set of films which brought for George unstinted critical acclaim. *Vyamoban* came in 1977, *Rapadikalude Gatha* and *Mannua* in 1978, *Ulkatal* in 1979, *Mela* and *Kolangal* in 1980, *Yavanika* in 1982, and *Lekhayude Maranam—Oru Flashback* in 1983, which received the Kerala State Award for the best feature film of the year.

In the course of his career, K.G. George has gone back again and again to the theme of women and their exploitation by forces within their social environment, within their homes, within their own repressed personalities. In *Kolangal*, *Lekhayude Maranam*, and now *Adaminte Variyellu*, George probes into the lives of women with completely different backgrounds, and provides the viewer with a sympathetic yet honest evaluation of their individual predicaments. In a review in *Femina*, 23 May to 7 June 1984, *Adaminte Variyellu* is described as taking a 'searing look at the total degradation of women in our society, and because their lives end in a state of defeat it makes us sit up and think whether a woman after all is not her worst enemy? Instead of passively accepting the domination of the male why can't the educated middle-class women and the wealthy women smash their prisons?' Yet all these women belong to a man's world where the social and moral codes which are beneficial to men have been entrenched long enough for the prison walls to be stronger than the hands that try to break them down. If there is a solution, George certainly does not offer one. But his film does end on a note of warning. When Ammini pushes past the bewildered crew who are making the film, she penetrates into the reality beyond the screen. And by doing so, she becomes a part of us, a part

of here and now. We are suddenly made aware that the prison walls in our own world that have confined women for generations within their well-defined boundaries, can crumble too one day, and will crumble. The moment may be now.



K.G. George

Andhi Gali

Blind Alley

In the Calcutta of the early 70s, Hemanta is a school teacher who is deeply involved with an extreme left political party which is the target of continuous police repression. The police come for him one day when he is taking a class. Hemanta attempts to escape, but is ultimately herded into a police van along with some of his comrades. The police take them to an open field and tell them to run literally for their lives, while the sharpshooter from the van picks them off one by one. It is what is known as a 'staged encounter'. Hemanta is one of the lucky ones to escape the shower of bullets and manages to reach the hideout of his leader and mentor, Abhida. But the party, riven by internal dissension, is going through bad times, and Abhida can offer him neither refuge nor solace.

Hemanta finds himself left entirely to his own resources. Fearing for his life, he leaves the city and escapes to Bombay. Five years later we see Hemanta again as a junior sales officer in a company in Bombay. He lives in a distant suburb in a small tenement flat and commutes to his place of work in the centre of town every day. He has managed to dissociate himself completely from his past life. But the past still intrudes in sudden rushes of hysterical fear when the headlights of a passing car or the hurried

Hemanta meets Abhida after his police interrogation



footsteps of a man in the street running to catch a friend are transformed into menacing pursuit. Bombay has still not become a city where Hemanta belongs. He sees it from a distance, as it were, an opulent city with a shiny facade. Somewhere there, amidst the lights and the noise, the life force of the city, Hemanta must find his place.

Hemanta's only close friend is Rakesh, who works for a company which is involved in the bizarre business of exporting skeletons, but aspires to become a professional photographer. Even Rakesh, with his healthy irreverence for most things in life and his complete lack of illusions, cannot penetrate the wall that Hemanta has built between his earlier life and his present existence. Haunted by his own betrayal of his earlier beliefs and values, Hemanta will not even mention his political past.

Rakesh takes Hemanta with him when he goes to visit his dying uncle in a small town near Bombay. It is a large old house which has seen better days. In its shadows lives the young cousin of Rakesh, Jaya, her eyes like dark pools of sadness on her pale face. Hemanta goes back to that house again and again, attracted by Jaya's frail presence. When the old man dies, Hemanta asks Jaya to marry him.

Jaya is happy in her little home in the tenement building. But Hemanta dreams of a proper flat in the heart of the city in a tall, multi-storeyed building. But life has already taught Jaya not to ask for too much and she is contented with the happiness that has come her way by accident. Waiting for her baby to fill the only gap in her otherwise happy world, Jaya has a miscarriage. As she slowly recovers from her experience, Jaya is increasingly worried by Hemanta's growing restlessness. Hemanta has booked a small flat in a building under construction. To find the money for the flat he sells off his father-in-law's old house. Jaya's last links with her past are severed forever. She gives her last ornaments away to feed Hemanta's obsession, then watches with apprehension as Hemanta starts taking loans from his business contacts. But all his resources are exhausted finally and the last instalment for the flat is still to be paid. Frantic with worry, Hemanta consults Rakesh for a way out. Rakesh, who has left his old job and taken up photography as a career, suggests that Jaya should take up modelling for an advertising agency. It is not a profession that a girl with Jaya's traditional background would normally choose. She yields reluctantly to Hemanta's persuasions.

Hemanta's obsessive attachment to his new flat, which for him symbolizes a new order of life, runs counter to his hidden sense of guilt that still haunts him whenever he is alone. One day, on his way to work, he comes across Abhida who has come to Bombay in connection with some work of the party. Though Abhida makes no



Rakesh brings Hemanta into Jaya's home.

accusation, he makes it clear that Hemanta has become an outsider, not to be trusted with confidences, and Hemanta finds it difficult to face him.

Jaya's entry into the world of advertising does not change her personal beliefs and attitudes. For the sake of her husband she forces herself to continue with her modelling assignments for a while. But a sense of humiliation persists in her mind and she revolts when the agency expects her to wear revealing clothes to model as a tribal girl for a foreign travel agency. But Hemanta has already taken a fat advance from Salim Ali, the man who runs the agency, to pay the last instalment on his flat. When Jaya complains to him about the embarrassing nature of her new assignment, she is deeply shocked to find his husband insisting that she completes the work. For her it is a personal agony to have to bare her body for strangers to look at her, the final indignity. For Hemanta it is a last step to attaining his dream, the flat in the city. In desperation, he tries to shout her down and ends up by forcing himself on her physically. Revolted, Jaya tells him, 'You are not a human being !'

The night passes. It is the morning of their third day in the new flat. An urgent knock on the door awakens Hemanta. He turns to find the bed beside him empty. A man at the door, a stranger, says, 'What have you been doing? Don't you know what has happened? Go and look out of your balcony.' Hemanta looks out from his fifth floor balcony. Far away on the ground below lies the broken body of Jaya in a pool of blood.

Alone in the empty flat Hemanta faces a crowd of questions. Questions that will come up in the police enquiry. Hemanta will

run away once again. Only this time there is no destination. Hemanta is caught in a blind alley, a road that leads nowhere.

1984/Colour/35 mm/140 min/Hindi

Production: K.B.S. Films

Story: Dibyendu Palit

Direction, Screenplay and Music: Buddhadeb Dasgupta

Camera: Kamal Nayak

Dialogue: Gulzar

Sound: Kuldeep Sood

Lead Players: Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Deepti Naval, M.K. Raina, Anil Chatterjee, Mahesh Bhatt, Satya Banerjee, Shyamanand Jalan, Anuradha Tandon.

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Born in 1944 at Anara, a village in the Purulia district of West Bengal, Buddhadeb Dasgupta completed his postgraduation in Economics from Calcutta University, and spent eight years as a lecturer in a college in Calcutta. During these years he published three collections of his poems, *Govir Arieley*, *Coffin Kimba Suitcase*, and *Heemjoog*. A fourth publication, *Cbbata Kahini*, came later. Dasgupta gave up his career as a lecturer to become a film-maker. Initially he made a few documentaries, then followed them up with his first feature film, *Dooratwa*, in 1978. *Dooratwa* won immediate recognition, received the National Award for the best Bengali film of the year, and the Special Critics Award at the Locarno Film Festival. *Neem Annapurna*, made in 1979, was invited to Japan, and has recently won the Ritwik Ghatak Memorial Trust Award. Dasgupta's third feature, *Grihayuddha*, made in 1982, has been commended at several festivals. *Sheet Grishmer Smriti*, a television featurette, was made in 1982. *Andhi Gali* (1984) is his first Hindi film.

T.M. Ramachandran writes on Buddhadeb Dasgupta and his films in Cinema India-International, October to December 1984.

Buddhadeb Dasgupta who has earned quite a name for himself during the last five years with his award-winning films *Dooratwa*, *Neem Annapurna* and *Grihayuddha* (all in Bengali), has completed his latest film *Andhi Gali* (in Hindi), produced in collaboration with Bikram Singh, who has thrown away his coveted job with the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to become a film-maker.

Andhi Gali, which means Dead End is based on a novel titled *Ghar Bari*, written by Dibyendu Palit, the recipient of the prestigious Ananda Purashkar Award for literature. The conflict between values and realities in life is brought out in a telling manner in *Andhi Gali*.

Andhi Gali marks the completion of Buddhadeb's trilogy, his earlier two films in the same genre being *Dooratwa* and *Grihayuddha*. There is a link and a continuation of the characters from one film to the other. That signifies the consistency of the film-maker who believes in depicting reality against the background of contemporary events, dramatic conflict and deep humanism. While Buddhadeb has written, in addition to the screenplay, the dialogue and lyrics in Bengali, Gulzar's contribution in respect of dialogue and lyrics in Hindi is of no mean importance. In fact, his work commands attention. As in his previous films, Buddhadeb has scored the music for his latest venture.

Buddhadeb expects the film to be commercially viable. He feels that it should appeal to certain sections of the audience in India. He is of the view that film-makers should not depend all the time on institutional finance. The real support of a film should come from the audience. 'Of course, I'm not capable of making a film like *Sholay* or *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar*, but certainly I see to it that my films communicate. They can't go over the heads of people. I believe in putting across my ideas and concepts on celluloid in as effective a manner as possible. I am convinced that films rooted to the soil will always appeal. More than awards—national or international—I cherish the appreciation of the audience. Their warm reception to my films gives me much better encouragement than anything else in this world,' says Buddhadeb Dasgupta.

What interests Buddhadeb most is the plight of the middle and lower middle class—the man in the street—their confusions and contradictions. His first full-length feature film *Dooratwa* (*The Distance*), structured with merciless austerity, is about an ex-revolutionary turned lecturer in Political Science, who, when the heartless repression of the revolutionaries takes place, leaves politics and makes a mess of his life. It is a saga of 'distances' at multiple levels. The film was shown in the 'Young Forum' with great success at Berlin Film Festival in 1979. Later, it won the Special Jury award at Locarno Film Festival. It also won the National Award as the best Bengali film.

Neem Annapurna, Buddhadeb's second film, which too won the Special Jury award at Karlovy Vary Film Festival, elicited praise in Japan when it was shown there during an Indian film week. It depicts how the lower middle-class people have been further debased after Independence.

Grihayuddha, his third presentation, which won the FIPRESCI award at Venice Film Festival, displayed a clear link with his maiden venture *Dooratwa*—the confusions and contradictions of a left intellectual. This film also won critical acclaim at many international film festivals. After *Grihayuddha*, he made a T.V. film called

Sheet Grishmer Smriti (Seasons' Memoirs)—all about a theatre group with an undercurrent of politics.

In all the films which Buddhadeb has made so far, there is always a streak of political undercurrent and contemporaneity. 'The lot of the common man must improve. If my films can bring about this change through some agency or other, I'll be more than satisfied,' says Buddhadeb. He is quite concerned about the film medium. I have been watching his career ever since I encountered him at the Berlin Film Festival in 1979. He struck me as a man of deep conviction and perception, dedicated to the making of artistic films. Commercial considerations neither tempt him nor cloud his vision.

Referring to his style of functioning, Buddhadeb points out that a film-maker should always take a breather between one film and another, so that the intervening period could be utilized for introspection. 'This is very necessary for improving one's capacity for better work,' he says.

From a poet in Bengali and Professor of Economics in a Calcutta college to a film-maker of deep commitment—that is Buddhadeb Dasgupta. It's always an experience to watch his films.



Buddhadeb Dasgupta

Ankahee

The Unspoken

Human beings live and die without any sure knowledge of what the future holds for them. *Ankahee* tells the story of a group of individuals who are forced to survive or die battling against a prediction that must come true. The unknown powers that mould human destiny do not provide a reason why an individual must tread the path that he does all through his life. He takes his journey blindly, with no awareness of his destination. Perhaps that is the way it ought to be. The twists and turns of the path hold surprises for him, so that he may yet live in hope. If danger threatens, he has no knowledge of it till it is upon him.

But Nandu has been given that fatal knowledge of a dangerous corner in his life. Moving down the predestined path, Nandu yet struggles against that which is inevitable. His father, a well-known astrologer, finds himself helpless against a tragic, preordained destiny that he is allowed to see but not change. He starts questioning the value of his special powers. A vision of a tragic truth must remain an end in itself so long as the man with the vision is powerless to transform that truth.

Nandu has always been a nonbeliever. Even when his father's predictions invariably come true, he prefers to keep an open mind about why events take the turn that they do. He secretly resents his father's powers, finding in them a latent destructive force, for though his father foretells tragedy, he is unable to help in averting it. But otherwise Nandu is not an unhappy man. There is Sushma, an attractive young working woman, whom Nandu wants to marry. She is a woman with a mind of her own, and like Nandu, completely free of any fear of the unknown forces that his father believes in. But the old man's predictions hang like a dark cloud over Nandu's life while he, uncaring, brings Sushma home to meet his mother.

Nandu's father refuses to allow the marriage to take place. He would rather keep his secret knowledge to himself, but Nandu and Sushma demand a rational explanation. The old man has no rational explanation. He only has his knowledge that Nandu's first wife will die in childbirth. Will Nandu take on himself the responsibility of Sushma's death? His father has never been proved wrong, not once, and Nandu is tortured by doubts. But Sushma, a confirmed rationalist, refuses to believe in the inevitable. And if indeed she is to die, let her experience the happiness she craves for with the man she desires. Nandu cannot accept such a solution. He is trapped between his love for Sushma and his fear of his father's vision.



Indu remembers the witch doctor in her village with terror

Nandu's obsessive fears have reached their peak when Indu comes into his home. The daughter of a childhood friend of his father, Indu's psychological imbalance has caused her to confine herself mentally within the limits of an innocent childhood. Her father, at one time an exponent of classical music, is now older than his years, his voice muted, forever anxious about his daughter's future. But Indu sings his songs, expressing a childlike wonder at every flower, every bird. The fears that plague her suddenly on occasions, transforming her lovely face into a withered, shrivelled mask, slowly start fading away in the benign presence of Nandu's father and with her increasing emotional security in Nandu's home. Indu is taken to a psychiatrist who, to the delight of her father,

pronounces her curable. Indu herself is happy to be away from her village home where her attacks of instability were treated brutally by the local witch doctor, an experience which only helped to strengthen her sense of insecurity.

As Indu and her father live in hope in Nandu's home, Nandu's warped sensitivities work out a plan to circumvent his father's prophecy. He will marry the helpless Indu, and when she dies in childbirth, he will be free to take a second wife, Sushma, the girl he loves. Sushma, horrified by the change in Nandu, refuses to fall in with his plan, and stops seeing him. She has met Indu and cannot reconcile herself with the idea of allowing the helpless young girl to die an untimely death only to keep herself alive. She herself cannot believe in the prediction and is willing to take the risk and marry Nandu. But the responsibility of someone else's survival is too much for her to shoulder.

Indu's father is so happy when Nandu tells him of his wish to marry his daughter, that the old astrologer and his wife find themselves powerless to stop the flow of events. Indu, who is already spontaneously attracted to Nandu, is on the path to complete recovery. The marriage takes place. Nandu finds himself unable to undertake the final act of treachery towards his innocent wife, and refuses to sleep with her. But after a final stormy meeting with Sushma who now feels that the shadow of Indu will always be between them, Nandu comes home and makes love to his wife. The relationship develops and in spite of himself, Nandu finds himself getting emotionally involved. When Indu is pregnant, Nandu feels it imperative that he should be honest with her. The knowledge of her tragic fate gives the now completely normal Indu a strange feeling of peace. In a short span of eleven months she has been given a lifetime of happiness and fulfilment, something she had never hoped to achieve, lost as she was in her shadow world. In the last stages of her pregnancy she goes to visit Sushma who has now completely withdrawn herself from Nandu's life. She has come to say good-buy, and to tell Sushma that the happiness that has been hers, she now willingly hands over to Sushma's care. The labour pains begin and Sushma rushes Indu to the hospital herself, but leaves after informing Nandu.

Now that tragedy is upon them, each person reacts in a different way. Nandu waits anxiously, his mother waits in sorrow. The old astrologer prays for the destruction of his powers of prediction. Let him be proved wrong this once. Indu survives. She is well and cannot believe that the ordeal for which she had been preparing for so long is over at last. But Sushma is no longer alive. She has taken her own life. Her last letter to Nandu asserts her belief that her destiny has always been in her own hands.

1984/Colour/35mm/130 min/Hindi

Production: Suchimisha

Story: C.T. Khanolkar

Direction: Amol Palekar

Screenplay: Jayant Dharmadhikari, V. Bhagat, S. Akolkar

Camera: Debu Deodhar

Music: Jaidev

Sound: Narinder Singh

Lead Players: Amol Palekar, Deepti Naval, Dr Shreeram Lagoo, Anil Chatterjee, Dina Pathak, Devika Mukherjee

Enquiries: Amol Palekar, Chirebandee, 10th Road, Juhu Parle Scheme, Bombay 400 049.

Ankahee is the second film directed by Amol Palekar, a well-known actor of the Marathi and Hindi stage in Bombay. A painter in his spare time, Palekar was working as a bank clerk when director Basu Chatterjee cast him in the role of an unheroic hero in his film *Rajanigandha*. The film was an instant success, so was its unusual protagonist. Since then Palekar has acted as the lead player or in one of the principal roles in films like Shyam Benegal's *Bhumika*, Basu Chatterjee's *Chhotisi Baat* and *Baton Baton Mein*, Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Gole Maal*, Biplab Ray Chaudhuri's *Asray*, and Kumar Shahani's *Tarang*. As in *Ankahee*, in his first film, *Akriet*, made in Marathi in 1981, Palekar probed into the tortured lives of individuals trapped by their own desires and their belief in supernatural powers.

Akriet was given the Special Jury Award at the Three Continents Festival at Nantes.

Speaking to Radha Rajadhyaksha in Movie, July 1984, Amol Palekar says:

Ankahee is based on a play, *Kaalaaya Tasmaya Namaha*, written by C.T. Khanolkar. Basically, it's emotional drama dealing with a human dilemma which has fascinated me for long—the dilemma caused by the shades of grey in a man's character. I don't think many Hindi films have paid due importance to the fascinating possibilities of this problem—hung up as they have always been on simplistic, stark black and white characters.

Whilst casting for the film, I was very choosy. For each role, I wanted an actor who would fit it like a glove, who would live up to my conception of the screen character. Because as a director, I feel it is essential that you find the correct face and personality and not just pick any Tom, Dick and Harry.

Like, I couldn't think of any actress but Deepti Naval for the role of the 'subnormal' village girl—Deepti has that element of simplicity, that certain innocent charm which is very difficult to

find nowadays. Similarly, for the role of my beloved, I needed a face which was non-glamorous and which reflected an inner strength. I had seen Devika Mukherjee in two Bangali films and I decided that she would suit the role to a T. For the role of Deepti's father, I approached Anil Chatterjee because of his basic warmth—the warmth that he radiates without saying a single word. In the film, he has to be rather harsh with Deepti, yet convey his feeling, his sympathy mutely. That's why I needed a great actor like him.

I have known Anilda for a long time now. He's extremely fond of me and jokingly calls himself my local guardian in Calcutta as I descend on him every time I visit the city. Initially, he was very sceptical about the Bombay film industry. When I first contacted him for the role, he didn't want to come here. Till I told him it was for a film I was directing. 'Oh in that case, there's no question of refusing,' he said. I was touched. After this film, I genuinely hope he does come to Bombay more often—such a fine actor should be exposed to bigger audiences.

Ankabee will be a turning point in Deepti's career—her performance in the film is one of the finest I have seen on the Indian screen. Before signing her on, I had heard a whole lot of stories about her—that she was moody, unpredictable, that she would give me date problems and so on and so forth. People went out of their way to warn me not to sign her. But I did. And not for a single moment have I regretted it. Deepti was co-operation personified and it was a pleasure working with her.

My playing the lead role myself was a matter of sheer convenience. Also there are, frankly speaking, very few actors who would be ready to accept this kind of role. The film industry being the place it is, people oversimplify matters and differentiate between 'positive' and 'negative' roles. For this reason, I didn't even approach anyone.

I have done a bit of unusual casting—I have Vinod Chopra, a director, playing the role of my friend. Vinod has a very interesting personality—a high-strung temperament which is at total variance with his babyish face. When he talks, you can see the passion emanating from every pore and that's exactly the kind of person I was looking for. In *Ankabee*, he plays my colleague whose wife has died as predicted by my father. He's supposed to be the silent, brooding type whose turmoil you can sense in spite of his continual withdrawal into himself.

Ankabee has four songs—all old *bhajans*. Khanolkar is one of the greatest poets in the Marathi language and it would be sacrilege to try and translate his work or get some film lyricist to write for the situations. The only thing we could do, was attempt to find parallels which are equally great and well-known. For one of these, the credit

goes to my music director, Jaidev. There is a situation in the play, where the heroine sings about her tryst with Death. We recited the poem to Jaidevji. He doesn't understand Marathi but once he got the essence, he recollected an old Kabir Bhajan, '*Kauno thagva nagariya lootal ho*'. This *bhajan* is very well-known in North India and it's the perfect parallel to Khanolkar's poem.

Two of the songs have been sung by Bhimsen Joshi. His singing for my film has been one of the most valuable experiences of my life. It happened like this. After finalizing the tunes, Jaidev and I were discussing whose voices we should use. For two of the songs, I thought Bhimsen Joshi would be perfect. Jaidev jumped at the idea but was slightly hesitant. 'Will he agree?' he asked. 'Let's try,' I replied, 'At the most, he'll refuse.'

Bhimsen Joshi happens to be very fond of me. I rang him up and told him I was coming to Pune to meet him but I refused to tell him why over the phone. 'Well, I'm coming to Bombay anyway next week for my concert,' he said, 'you can talk to me then.' No, I replied, I wouldn't like to disturb him at the concert. 'Come to the airport then,' he said.

On the appointed day I went to the airport. Bhimsen was there. Straightaway, I asked him, 'Will you sing for a film?' 'Is it your film?' he asked. I nodded. 'No, what I mean is, are you directing it?' Again the nod. 'Well, then there's no question of refusing,' he said and began to walk away. 'Hold on,' I said, 'let's discuss the other things too.' 'Ah yes', he said, stopping short, 'one very important question—who's the music director?' 'Jaidev,' I replied. 'Jaidev?' he repeated. 'In that case, there are no two ways about it. I *must* sing.'

Jaidevji and I were touched by Bhimsen's co-operation. He came to Bombay four times for the rehearsals and generally took a lot of trouble. No starry tantrums at all—on the contrary, he was like an obedient school kid. Not being familiar with the technique of film songs, he was a slightly jittery and told us that he was used to a free style of singing. We reassured him that we had asked him precisely because we wanted free singing and so, not to feel restrained on any account. After that he relaxed immediately. He had only two requests—one, that he wouldn't sing standing and isolated in the recording room with headphones on. Two, he wanted his own *shagird* to play the *tanpura*. We were a bit worried about the mike placement problems the recordists would face but they managed just fine. It turned out to be a regular *mehfil*. You should have seen the atmosphere at Weston Outdoor that day! The air was charged with excitement. When Bhimsen walked in, all the musicians got up. Asha walked up to him and touched his feet. The flutist was visibly nervous. 'How can I play sitting next to the Bhimsen Joshi?' he wailed. 'My fingers won't move.'

Anyway, the recordings went off without a hitch. After everything was over and it was time for Bhimsen to leave for Pune, he said to Jaidev, 'I hope I haven't disappointed you in any way.' Jaidev was almost in tears. 'How can you say this?' he asked. 'You have obliged me.' 'Not at all', countered Bhimsen, 'I am a fan of yours and I still remember many of your old songs.' He went on to list them and at this, Jaidev really broke down—this talented composer who has been so shabbily treated by the film industry could not control his tears at these compliments coming from a musical colossus like Bhimsen. It was a very touching scene. Even I had a lump in my throat.

I have an aversion to the zoom lens and avoid it like the plague. One of the reasons is that with this lens, things become so simplified that there's no fun left. And also because the use of the zoom lens has become extremely vulgarised—like slow motion in every ad film. I have not used it in even a single shot. In fact, Mangesh Desai remarked on it when he was mixing the film. Being familiar with the technicalities of film-making, he was amazed and also very happy that I had made another film without resorting to the zoom lens.

Not that I deliberately contrived complicated camera movement. It is the subject which determines what kind of treatment it should get. In *Akriet*, I had used static shots because the theme demanded that kind of blatancy. Everything—the lighting, the performances, the camera movement—had to be stark. In *Ankahee*, the movements had to be very dramatic to capture the tensions of the story. For example, a long shot slowly going into a close-up, with both the performer and the camera moving—this builds up a different kind of a tension.

During the making, we once found ourselves in a rather absurd situation. We were to shoot a night scene with Shreeram Lagoo and Dina Pathak, for which I needed the sea in the background. Here, the lighting was going to be the main hassle because we had used source lighting throughout. We could have shot on the beach with moonlight as the source but then, there was the problem of where to place the lights. Apollo Bunder was a suitable site, but going through the bother of obtaining permission would have been too much. Then one day when I was passing the Mahim Causeway, I realised that this was the location and I could also get the reflection of the Mahim Causeway lights for that little extra touch. I was thrilled with my discovery. The next shooting day, we finished off our work in a nearby area and in the evening, my cameraman, Debu Deodhar, and I went ahead to Mahim Causeway to set up the shot.

We reached the place—only to discover that there was no water anywhere. The site was looking so rotten and mundane, I can't

express it in words. Debu was shocked. I was so fazed that I couldn't speak. What could have gone wrong? Suddenly realization dawned. I was low tide, obviously there was no water around ! Having little time at our disposal, Debu and I rushed all over the place to see if we could get our background some other place but to no avail. We had to pack up. The incident gave us such a jolt that immediately after that, the whole unit took to seriously studying tide patterns ! Then we adjusted the tide to the schedule and a week later, finally took the shot at Mahim.

In fact, all the shots where we had anticipated difficulties were the ones we finished the quickest. The tough, one-shot scenes with lots of camera movement, which gave us a lot of problems theoretically were the ones we completed in a single take. I suppose it's because one's concentration is at its highest then.

Amal Palekar on the sets of Ankahee



Hip Hip Hurray

Sometimes good clean family fun can go a long way, especially if a bit of healthy sports is thrown in to make the package more appealing, with a hero who is straightforward and uncomplicated and quite unlike anyone you have ever known in these tortured times. But that is indeed the special charm of Sandeep Chowdhary who is quite middle-class and a possessor of old-worldly values. He may have been a crushing bore in real life, but on the silver screen you cannot but be charmed by his open smile and his winning self-confidence.

Sandeep Chowdhary is a young computer engineer with a great interest in sports. Unlike most other young men of his times, he goes for an interview and comes back confident that he will get the job. It is only a question of waiting for the appointment letter which will take its own sweet time to come. In the meanwhile he has his girlfriend, Uma. But does he have her? Uma is a career-minded girl and keeps very busy with her work. She handles her company's export business and is likely to go to America for a long time. She is quite keen to get married before she leaves. But Sandeep, who is a bit hurt by her lack of interest in his activities, holds back from committing himself.

To solve his dilemma as he waits for his job to materialize, a helpful uncle who owns a school in Ranchi suggests that Sandeep should go

Raghu and Sandeep - a confrontation



there as a sports instructor. Sandeep lands in Ranchi only to find the atmosphere in the school definitely short of congenial. In the staff room most of the teachers find him a bit of a joke. What has sports got to do with education? In any case the school has not won a single match in the recent past, and it would not be easy for Sandeep to keep the ball rolling, especially as it is football that he must teach. The only assurance of sympathy comes from Anuradha, the history teacher, a little thing, and as pretty as a picture, on whom, unfortunately, Raghu, the tough kid of the school has a man-size crush.

Quite unknowingly, therefore, Sandeep evokes the deep hatred of Raghu and his gang. Not that Raghu and friends would be normally any friendlier. It has been their daily occupation to sit in the canteen and smoke and gamble during the time that the sports class is supposed to be held. Forced into a confrontation with Sandeep, the boys nonchalantly produce certificates that pronounce them medically unfit for physical exertion. Undoubtedly a convenient excuse, and a casual visit to the local dispensary dispels all remaining doubts. Threatening to call the police, Sandeep manages not only to get the certificates cancelled officially, but also gets back the money that the boys had paid the sham doctor. He solemnly hands the money back to the erring boys but it does not make him any more popular with them than before. The boys hang around the field in sullen defiance, refusing to practice, and even obstructing the class occasionally.

Meanwhile Sandeep has rashly accepted an invitation to a football match against a neighbouring school. He is discouraged by all the other teachers who foresee in the situation further humiliation for the school, the previous records having been none too good. Raghu and his gang refuse to participate and Sandeep is forced to choose a team from the remaining boys who are in any case highly demoralized by their past failures. The result is a foregone conclusion and Sandeep's team loses heavily. Mocked by the coach of the other school Sandeep demands a return match. The other coach only laughs at the suggestion.

This is where Anuradha steps in. She had known the young man in question fairly well in her college days and she takes advantage of her previous knowledge to goad him into accepting Sandeep's challenge. But the entire staff of Sandeep's school is against Sandeep's decision. Even the principal objects to the challenge match. But Sandeep stands firm and encourages his team to practice harder. One incident works in Sandeep's favour. The boys in Raghu's gang get embroiled in a fight with the boss of the local gambling den. A chance encounter with one of the boys brings Sandeep there just when the boys are taking a beating. Sandeep

flexes his well-oiled muscles and gets to work on the ruffians. The boys are grateful and willingly join the football practice.

Raghu, who hears of the incident, cannot forgive his friends for deserting him. He tries various ways of provoking Sandeep, and finally hits out at him when he is not watching. True to the traditions of a good sportsman, Sandeep keeps silent about Raghu's misdemeanour for fear that the boy might be thrown out of the school and be marked for life. Raghu of course does not appreciate this fact and tries once again, this time by knocking his head against a window grill and accusing Sandeep of hitting him in anger. The principal obligingly swallows the boy's story and is all set to castigate Sandeep in public when Anuradha comes to the rescue and reveals all. Sandeep still refuses to charge the boy with the grave misdeed of hitting out at his teacher. Sandeep's innate goodness finally leaves an impression on the boy and Raghu joins the football team with great enthusiasm.

There are other hurdles on the way before the team can win the match. Between Anuradha and the boys the problem of providing special nourishing meals for the team is solved with the help of a charity show. Sandeep himself wins over reluctant parents who are more interested in academic results than in their children's prowess in sports. After all, is he not himself a brilliant computer engineer? Who says a sportsman must be dumb? Sandeep also arranges for a loan to one of the boys to help him tide over bad times at home so that he may apply himself to football without having to earn his daily bread for the family.

On the day of the match the teachers decide to boycott the match. Not so the students, who all vanish from their classes at the right time. Anuradha reasons with the principal, but what perhaps finally convinces him is the leftover money from the charity show that she hands to him as the first instalment for a permanent sports fund for the school. The teachers troop into the field and are astonished to see their team actually winning the game. That too against great odds, as the umpire is the coach from the other school, a man who is anything but a sportsman, who tries his best to make his own team win, by fair means or foul. It is the errant Raghu who really leads the team to victory.

But it is time for the sportsman to revert to being a computer engineer. The appointment letter has arrived. Turning to share his good news with the boys he finds their reproachful eyes fixed on his face. But before he can feel like a positive worm, however, the principal comes to Sandeep's aid by announcing that from now on whatever happens, sports will not be neglected in the school. There will be a new and permanent sports teacher and the glory that Sandeep has brought to the school will be preserved with care. Raghu and the boys bid him a tearful farewell, but Sandeep leaves

with a relatively light heart. Relatively, because there is still one territory left unconquered. He must come back again, this time to marry Anuradha and take her back with him.

1984/Colour/35 mm/125 min/Hindi

Production: Neo Films Associates

Direction and Editing: Prakash Jha

Screenplay and Dialogue: Gulzar

Camera: Rajen Kothari

Music: Vanraj Bhatia

Sound: A.M. Padmanabhan

Art Direction: Gautam Ghosh

Lead Players: Raj Kiran, Deepti Naval, Shafi Inamdar, Deepa Rani, Nikhil Bhagat, Satish Anand, Nitin Sethi.

Enquiries: Neo Films Associates, G 2 Everest, Tardeo Road, Bombay 400 034.

Prakash Jha came to Bombay to learn painting, and ended up in the Film and Television Institute of India, in Pune, doing a course on film editing. He has made several documentaries including *Pas de Deux*, a one-hour biographical account of a ballerina, which was produced in London and has been telecast on several international television networks. In India he made *May I Think Sir*, an interpretation of intellectual slavery in our society, and *Faces after the Storm*, a study of communal violence in Bihar, which won the National Award and the Filmfare Award in 1982, and was given the Special Jury Award at the International Film Festival of India in 1983. *Hip Hip Hurray* is Jha's first full-length feature film. He is currently working on *Damul*, a feature film based on the socio-political patterns prevailing at the grassroots level in Bihar. He is also making a documentary on the changing role of women in India. Prakash Jha has been chosen the best director of 1984 by the All India Film Awards Association.

In an article based on an interview with Prakash Jha, in Filmfare, 1 to 15 July 1984, Deepa Gablot provides a glimpse of the man behind Hip Hip Hurray.

Prakash Jha is best known for his award winning documentary *Faces after the Storm* about the riots in Bihar. If one has seen this and his other documentaries, one would say that *Hip Hip Hurray* is not his kind of film. It's a film full of life, hope and fun. 'This wasn't meant to be my first film,' he says. *Damul* was supposed to be my first film, about bonded labour in Bihar. But then *Hip Hip Hurray* worked out first and I went ahead with it.' Then as if explaining his motive for making a lighthearted film he said, 'There's a kind of hypocrisy among committed film-makers. They keep degrading

commercial film-makers, but have they given the audience an alternative?'

'Let the intellectuals sit back and criticize them but the public have become addicted to those films. They are incapable of accepting better cinema.

'In our country film is a part of our culture. Also the only means of entertainment. You want to have a family outing, okay, take the family to a film. You want to take your girlfriend out, you take her to a film. So we cannot neglect the entertainment part of cinema.

'Pick up any subject—but present it in a purer and more educative way. This I believe in as a film-maker and as a technician.'

But more often than not, a film-maker injects a 'message' into a film, and the audiences reject it saying they don't want to be preached to. A lot depends, says Prakash Jha, on how the message is brought across. 'My film also has a message. Sports are so neglected in our country. When we were children, our parents always told us to study and not waste time playing. We've grown up with that guilt. Children are taught to believe in authority, never to question it. I had made a documentary, *May I think Sir?* about intellectual slavery.'

When one sees the film, one feels that interesting vignettes of student life have been taken up and then abandoned without explanation. Like Raghu's crush on the history teacher for instance. 'I look at it from a very objective point of view,' explains Prakash Jha. 'Infatuation is one thing which has never been dealt with in depth in our cinema or literature. While making this film I have also to keep in mind the class of audience that has never been exposed to this kind of thing. A student in Patna is not exposed to it as much as a student in Bombay. Student culture in our country is so varied.

'Infatuation and sex, particularly in an adolescent mind, are taboo in our country. We have to break these taboos, but we have to start working on it slowly.

'I took it up and developed it to a point where it will be accepted even in smaller towns and I have tried not to deviate from the main theme. I let this remain unfinished. I had a crush on my school teacher and it just fizzled out after some time. She fell in love with another teacher. So if I go with this problem of infatuation, I would have to sort it out—adolescence problem, images of malehood, infatuation, violence, I will tackle these in another film.

'Let's remember that the main idea of this film is sportsmanship. The message should come across to children that sportsmanship is important in life—the will to fight, the will to win, the will to play. There's a difference between playing games and playing sports.

You will win by playing sports not playing games. In life too we often play games, not sports.'

As you talk to Prakash Jha you discover that this film probably means more to him than he's willing to admit. A lot of him has gone into the film. His beliefs, his experiences and a slice of his past. 'When you make a film you make it from your point of view. How can you segregate yourself from the film?' he asks. He was a football player in school, he had a crush on his teacher like the boy Raghu in the film and he was a tough and adamant kid again like Raghu. And like the boy in the film, he disliked authority. 'In our society,' he says, 'we never like to lose the authority we have.'

The most interesting thing about *Hip Hip Hurray* is that all but three of the school boys in the film are really students who were picked from local schools and considering they had no idea about how films are made, they did a good job. 'It was great fun working with non-actors', says Prakash Jha. 'The whole unit stayed together and it was like a community affair.'

'We felt nice and safe and secure. The boys worked with great enthusiasm and worked really hard on practising football. Actually they were going through that phase, so they weren't really acting.'

For his next film *Damul* he has picked about 200 people from Bihar. *Damul* is about the socio-political situation in Bihar. The backbone of the story is the shift from feudalism to democracy. The film deals with the organized mafia operating in the Ganges belt, and their involvement in the bonded labour racket. The role of the man who finally rebels against oppression, and that of his wife will both be played by new faces. . . . *Damul* will also be shot in Bihar and right in the mafia belt. Ask him whether he isn't afraid, he smiles and asks, 'Don't I look tough?' and adds, 'If you get scared, they eat you up. We shot in Ranchi without protection and there wasn't a single unpleasant incident. And for *Faces* . . . I had shot in the streets of Bihar Sharif during the riots with bombs going off all around me'.

Prakash Jha



Holi

The Festival of Fire

The Holi festival originated in pre-Vedic times as a spring festival involving a ritual sacrifice to ensure good crops. The Vedic priests subsequently gave their sanction to the celebration, and in later times many myths were invented to give the ceremony a Brahminical orientation. In most of the myths the sacrificial fire burnt the forces of evil while the forces of good were rescued by divine intervention. The film *Holi* reverses the original myth. Here the sacrificial fire consumes the vital energies of our youth, after stifling their aspirations within the narrow confines of an unimaginative and regressive educational system.

The college where the action takes place is one of many such colleges in the cities of India. The boys, especially the ones staying in the hostel, are a rowdy lot. Baiting the girl students is a daily pastime. But there is no malice in it and the girls usually ignore it philosophically or run when the going gets too rough. The teaching staff of the college suffer from the common apathy of most teaching staff in similar colleges. The administration has the usual problems—ill-paid employees who periodically go on strike to get their demands across. In fact, on the whole, the college is a very picture of normalcy. But the day is an unusual one. It is the day of the Holi celebrations, traditionally a holiday.

The boys in the hostel rise from their slumber, some from a night's drinking, heavy-lidded, or with a hangover, or just plain sick. Another night is over and there is no water in taps again. That

The principal questions the hostel superintendent about the fiasco in the auditorium



is normal too. But on a holiday? The boys accept the temporary hardship stoically. Waiting for the water to come, they fool around, constantly on the move, each a bundle of concentrated energy. Then the news comes that the holiday has been cancelled. Instead there will be a lecture in the auditorium by the Chairman of the Board, on the cultural heritage of India. The boys decide to have a holiday all the same—they will not attend the classes.

The principal, driving into the college in a chauffeur-driven car, is confronted by an irate and highly charged group of striking employees. One of them cheerfully lies down in front of the car and has to be dragged away by the guards. What a beginning to the day!

The classes are sparsely attended. The few who do attend, slip out of the class the moment the lecturer's back is turned. The new young woman lecturer is heckled so badly that she rushes out in tears. The hostel superintendent, the only lecturer with some human links with the students, watches the growing restlessness in the college. A notice announcing a further postponement of examinations adds to the rising bitterness. The superintendent tries to warn the principal who is more concerned with the impending board meeting scheduled for the day. At the board meeting the superintendent tries one last time, but the Chairman and founder of the college has only time to listen to his own voice. The young lecturer goes unheard.

Meanwhile the students gather in the cafeteria where the walls are covered with graffiti ranging from the positively atrocious to the mildly obscene. They are in a rebellious mood, and a fight erupts out of nowhere between the principal's nephew and another student. In the scuffle, the principal's nephew is hurt and is carried bleeding into the boardroom. The Chairman lifts a well-manicured finger and says, 'Uhuh, no violence will be permitted here.' The other boy is promptly rusticated.

The news spreads like wildfire in the campus. The students feel that the decision is unjust. There are quarrels every day and a cut or two does not merit such a drastic punishment. The rebels gather with their crates of eggs and rotten tomatoes. Resistance is organized in the laboratory, in the library, in the classrooms and the college grounds. The students prepare for a confrontation in the auditorium. On neatly arranged chairs on the stage sit the Chairman and his wife with the principal. The student announcer is heckled and has to leave. The principal starts his speech in English and is at once shouted down. The Chairman rises with a smile and takes his place near the microphone. He speaks with quiet condescension of his own rowdy college days, then moves on to the topic of tradition. A student rises and politely asks him the meaning of the word. As the Chairman prepares for a lengthy reply the first

egg finds its mark. A loyal employee holds up a trophy like a shield and escorts the Chairman and his wife to the car waiting outside, as bedlam erupts in the auditorium.

Seriously worried about his own job, the principal calls the hostel superintendent and demands to know the names of the students who organized the rebellion. The superintendent politely refuses any help. Staring out of his window, the principal spots one of the students on whom he may have a hold. He knows the boy's father. He is also not one of the popular boys in the college. He is a bit of a loner, unsuccessful socially or otherwise, occasionally the butt of jokes. The ideal material for the role of an informer. All the principal has to say is that he will tell his father what company the boy keeps.

The hostel superintendent unhappily announces the rustication of a large group of boys, all of whom belong to the hostel, including

The informer humiliated



one who had nothing to do with the events in the auditorium as he was locked up in his room with a girl while it happened. 'Was it you who gave in our names?' asks one of the boys. 'No', says the superintendent, shaking his head sadly. The boys must vacate their rooms by the morning. Suddenly the boys are in a rage. They collect all the wooden furniture in the hostel and make a bonfire of them. They even throw in their textbooks in a final act of rejection.

The boy who gave the principal the names of the culprits can no longer keep silent. He admits to the boy he hates and fears most and whose name he has kept out of the list, that it is he who sealed the fate of his fellow students. His distorted sense of triumph is short-lived. The boys collect together and vent all their frustrations on him. The informer has his trousers pulled off, he is beaten, pushed around and abused mercilessly. Someone brings a sari to put round him, paints his lips and cheeks with lipstick. Someone else crops a path through his hair. He must dance, they demand, and the boy hops around in a grotesque fashion, terrified by the ugly mood of the crowd around him. No one wants to listen when one of the boys remonstrates that the torture has been taken far enough. The humiliated boy finally manages to rush away and lock himself in his room.

In the gathering dusk the boys sit listlessly on the steps of the hostel. 'What journey is this, where will the path lead?' They sing. The song fades into a depressed silence. Suddenly from the far end of the verandah a boy shouts urgently, appealing. As they rush towards him, he is seen standing in front of a locked room, throwing up into the gutter below. He points helplessly towards the skylight above the door. The door is broken open and someone turns on the light and the fan. The dangling object suddenly gains a shape and identify. The fan moves very slowly and hanging from it is the informer, dead.

The boys give their name, age and address to faceless policemen. Some are scared, some numbed into shock, some desperately pleading innocence. The night passes. In the first light of the morning the police van is seen carrying the boys away. Caught in the midst of a rowdy, jostling crowd of merry-makers, playing with colours, the van edges its way forward relentlessly. The boys stare blankly, hopelessly out of the barred window at the shouting revellers. The van frees itself from the crowd and moves away. The camera moves to the tree tops as clouds of colour cover the screen.

We have tasted life here
 We have tasted poison here
 To mend a torn pocket
 We have sewn our hearts here
 The one who knows not himself is giving knowledge away
 What journey is this, where does the path lead?

The smoke rises
The home burns
At least save the city
O what is happening here
Let us go from here now, who will stay behind
What journey is this, where does the path lead?

We are not used to life
We have no time for death
There is only a last wish
To witness the deluge
What kind of world is it, where we'll be going now
What journey is this, where does the path lead?



The boys stare out of the prison van

1984/Colour/35 mm/120 min/Hindi

Production: Film Unit

Adapted from a play by: Mahesh Elkunchwar

Direction: Ketan Mehta

Screenplay: Mahesh Elkunchwar and Ketan Mehta

Camera: Jehangir Chaudhary

Music: Rajat Dholakia

Sound: A.M. Padmanabhan

Art Direction: Archana Shah

Editing: Subhash Sehgal

Lead Players: Sanjeev Gandhi, Rahul Ranade, Asutosh Gowarikar, Amole Gupte, Om Puri, Naseeruddin Shah, Deepti Naval, Dr Shreeram Lagoo.

Enquiries: Néo Films Associates, G2 Everest, J. Dadaji Road, Tardeo, Bombay-400 034.

Ketan Mehta was born in 1952 and graduated from St. Stephen's College, Delhi. He joined the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune and received a diploma in film direction in 1975. During this time he directed a short feature called *Madhya Surya*, and a documentary film, *Coolies at Bombay Central*. After getting his diploma, Mehta worked for a year as a television producer in the Space Applications Centre in Ahmedabad during the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment. After a short involvement with the theatre, Mehta produced and directed a documentary, *Experience India*, for Air India. In 1980 came his first feature film, *Bhavni Bhavai*, produced by a co-operative which he formed with a few other graduates of the Film and Television Institute of India. The film won two National Awards for the year: for the best art direction and for being the best film on national integration. It was also selected for the festival at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. At home it received eight Gujarat State awards. The same year, at the Nantes Film Festival in France, *Bhavni Bhavai* was given the Unesco Club Human Rights Award. In 1983 Mehta produced a documentary for Gujarat Tourism, *Tarnetar Fair*, and directed and designed a play in Gujarati, called *Channas*. With *Holi*, his second feature film, he entered the field of technical innovation in cinema, innovation that he finds necessary in the present economic environment. *Holi* is made up of just 40 shots. 'Given the available technology,' he says, 'which allows considerable mobility in shooting, it is possible to design single shot *mise-en-scenes* lasting 8 to 10 minutes in duration. Given the sophisticated sync-recording equipment and multi-track magnetic mixing facilities, it is possible to do the entire shooting in sync. All

it takes to evolve a structure of a full-length feature film comprising only these *mise-en-scenes* is a little courage, a little bit of imagination and a lot of hard work.' Thematically the film raises questions about the roots of violence and mass hysteria which can submerge the rationality of an entire group, and the validity of an educational system and social environment that ritually sacrifices the vital energies of the youth, suppresses the life-assertive urges by falling back upon a forgotten and obsolete culture, and leaves them without hope.

In an interview with Vijay Lele in Cinema India-International, October to December 1984, Ketan Mehta talks about his own hopes for the future of the cinema.

V.L.: This session is to grill you about your new film—*Holi* (Mehta parodies a shudder). Could you please sum up in just one sentence your experience in making this film?

K.M.: In one sentence? (Looks up from what he has been doing, viz., rolling a reefer. Smiles). All right. It's been one great trip, from beginning to end.

V.L.: Now to the gritty details. What made you pick up this particular topic—youth—as the subject of your film?

K.M.: Because, I think youth, collectively, is the most important, determinant factor in the future of a society. Too often, it's also the most susceptible target of the society's ailments.

V.L.: Was the film inspired spontaneously from a stark confrontation?

K.M.: No. *Bhavni Bhavai* was like that, a logical result of my experiences while making films for ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation). The life and politics were an eye-opener. But the idea of making a film on youth has been latent for a long time. In some way, for me, it's a going back in time . . .

V.L.: Going back to your college days in the radical sixties?

K.M.: That too, yes. I mean, the experience of four guys actually leaving class to join a political underground movement was a rude shock to a gentle Gandhian-bred boy like me. But *Holi* really probes something else—the culture and psychology of youth.

V.L.: We have had filmdom's version—the hero more than the youth, fantasia more than real. As perhaps the first film from the 'Parallel Cinema' to probe the subject, what is the essence of your finding—your statement?

K.M.: Violence. I believe our present socio-political structure, and within it the educational system, is almost geared to breeding

violence. That is even more true of the eighties than it was in the sixties.

V.L.: Isn't that tacitly providing a justification for violence among the youth?

K.M.: I am no judge to deliver judgement. I am trying to record what is patently visible. In the hierarchical top-bottom structure, the end recipient is the youth. And there it takes a new form—explosions amongst themselves. In *Holi*, my attempt is just that—a metaphor for horizontal violence.

V.L.: In Elkunchwar's play, and later in the script, one of the climactic events is suicide. Doesn't it signify succumbing to oppression?

K.M.: It is suicide on a personal level. But, in fact, it is murder committed by society. The predicament is peculiar. On the one hand, the system inevitably goads them to repression, irritation, coarseness, violence. On the other hand, the perpetrators of violence become its own victims.

V.L.: Your film seeks to raise questions about this process?

K.M.: Yes.

V.L.: Inasmuch as it does so, do you accept terms like 'new wave' and 'Parallel Cinema'?

K.M.: Terms are important only if they help specify a reality; otherwise, it only breeds semantic squabbles.

V.L.: Let me put it this way. Do you sense a different cinema on the horizon—a cinema that has been steadily approaching?

K.M.: (Laughs) Yes . . . In fact, I think it isn't on the horizon; in many ways, it has already arrived. Without doubt, few countries have witnessed such an explosion of novel attempts in such a short span. There must be 50 such film-makers in India today. It's fantastic.

V.L.: Yet there are basic differences amongst them?

K.M.: Oh yes, undoubtedly. In theme, style, everything. For example, I may have serious questions about the appropriateness of *Ardh Satya*'s end, or the attempt at epic form in Kumar Shahani's *Tarang*. But for the creation of a mass culture of critical audience, the paramount need is to allow as many varied films of this genre as possible.

V.L.: What binds these films in common, then?

K.M.: I think, above all, they have initiated a process of looking at commonplace society, contemporary reality, with a perceptive, critical eye. Whether it's Kundan Shah's *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro*, or

Ashok Ahuja's *Adharshila*, or Sai Paranjpye's *Sparsh*, it has caught the pulse.

V.L.: How has the mainstream cinema taken this—adaptation or resistance?

K.M.: A bit of both. I mean . . . take *Meri Awaz Suno* or *Insaaf Ka Tarazu*, for instance. In spite of the justified criticism against both there is some change from the typical slotting of the 'unruffled cop' here or 'serves-woman-right' model. Of course, there is *masala*, bad, ample doses of it, but there is also a bit of some lurking doubt.

V.L.: You also mentioned resistance by the film establishment. How?

K.M.: Well, in a variety of ways. Say, . . . take the distribution network. One can't forget that many of the films from the new cinema have been run as morning shows or matinees, not slated as the main attraction. A small example.

V.L.: Are you apprehensive about *Holi*?

K.M.: No. We have some plans.

V.L.: No. I was't implying about distribution. I mean *Holi* seems to be a 'first' in many ways. For one, it's your first film in Hindi.

K.M.: Being in Hindi, it is more of an advantage. More reach.

V.L.: Why did you consciously choose new actors for the students' roles? Wasn't that taking a risk?

K.M.: I wanted fresh faces. There is something special about the raw, explosive energy of teenagers. The tired professional collegians of filmdom won't do. The only known actors are Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri and Dr. Shreeram Lagoo—all making brief appearances.

V.L.: You are trying something very different, technique-wise, in *Holi*—live sound sync and long hand-held shots. How do you feel about it?

K.M.: I'm quite excited about it.

V.L.: Both things can help reduce costs in some situations. Apart from that, you must have had a specific intention.

K.M.: Less expense wasn't the thing I had in mind. First and foremost, it is an experiment. An experiment specially tailored for the topic and structure of this film. The long hand-held shots and the live sound sync go hand in hand. (Smiles) In this case, that expression, hand in hand, is literally true. Anyway, the point is you can never quite re-create the mood, the tension, noises, the intonation, later in the dubbing room. This is all the more true when the cast is nonprofessional, which is as I wanted it. And in



Ketan Mehta with Naseeruddin Shah and Benjamin Gillani on the sets of Bhavni Bhavai

Holi, the camera moves freely, gyrating 360 degrees to capture the buzz, the whispers, the restlessness of a listless collective, all in one take. And the end effect, I think, is that the film achieves unbroken, greater and greater levels of intenseness . . . like Ravel's *Bolero*.

Kana Marayathu

The Invisible One

Philanthropy is all very well, but why must Roy Verghese take on his father's liabilities in a day and age when, to survive in business, it is no longer pragmatic to be charitable? A confirmed bachelor and no longer of marriageable age, Roy's sensitivities are of an entirely different order from that of his father. So he decides to cut down all extra expenses and sends off a letter to the orphanage announcing that it will no longer be possible for him to sponsor young Shirley. The nuns from the orphanage are disturbed by the news. Shirley has been doing so well in school. It is now time for her to enter college and from there launch herself into a promising career. It is really most unfair of the younger Mr. Verghese to withdraw the sponsorship just at this point in Shirley's life. Roy is a bit taken aback when the nuns confront him personally. He finds himself positively cornered when his mother and his father's old associate, Mathan Chettan take up Shirley's case and battle against his decision. So Shirley joins college after all, blissfully unaware of the little drama behind her good luck. Her benefactor has always been a faceless 'uncle' to her, who has never wanted to meet her nor keep in direct contact with her, except through the letters that she was expected to write to him. For Shirley

A transformed Baby proposes to Shirley only to help her



this one-way correspondence had become her only human link with the world outside the orphanage. As Roy has no desire to involve himself very much with this unknown orphan, he too decides to remain anonymous, and Shirly is never told of the death of her real benefactor. So she continues to write to her uncle as before.

In the college Shirly has given herself a different identity. The nuns had warned her that it is better to have some sort of parentage rather than none at all. So, apart from the college authorities, no one in the college is aware of her true background.

The first day she goes to the college, Shirly meets Mercy, Roy's niece. Quite unaware of her identity, Roy pretends to be the principal of her college to make her accept a lift in his car. At the end of the journey the trick is exposed, but though annoyed with Roy for fooling her, Shirly and Mercy become fast friends.

In the meanwhile Shirly writes to her sponsor and mentions that she needs a wrist watch. The wrist watch arrives from the now rather mellowed Roy, and Shirly wears the watch when she goes to Roy's home to attend Mercy's birthday party. Roy realizes that it is Shirly whom he has been sponsoring. He feels drawn to Shirly, but her extreme youth does not make it easy for Roy to understand his own feelings. Shirly on her part develops an obsessive admiration for Roy which Roy finds more embarrassing than flattering.

Roy's close friend Alex has a wayward younger brother called Baby who is given a job in Roy's office to cure him of his irresponsible lifestyle. Baby meets Shirly and falls in love with her. Roy tries to bring the two together, thinking that there can be no future in Shirly's relationship with him because of their age difference. Shirly resents this interference and makes no bones about telling Roy that it is he whom she wants. Roy severely reprimands her for her foolishness and tells her to leave him alone from now on.

Shirly is now in her final year in college and the nuns have already made arrangements to send her to Italy to do a course prior to becoming a nun. Shirly is deeply unhappy about the decision. But the nuns have been the only family she has ever had and she must respect their wishes, especially since the only other alternative has been snatched away from her by Roy's rejection. Baby, whose unrequited love for Shirly has made him a more sober and understanding person, comes to tell Shirly that he is willing to marry Shirly only to save her from having to be a nun. Shirly confides in Baby about her love for Roy and Roy's stubborn refusal to accept her. Flying into a rage, Baby storms into his boss's office holding a resignation letter, and gives him a talking to. Caught

unawares, Roy is suddenly made aware of not only Baby's present level of maturity, but his own lack of understanding as well.

Shirly had requested through the nuns that she would like to meet and personally thank the sponsor who has done so much for her all her life. Roy knew about her impending trip to Italy, and knew that after she returned, she would be absorbed in the nunnery. But in his foolishness he found that a better solution for her than marrying him, and therefore refused to reveal himself as her sponsor. Yet when Baby, who is about Shirly's age, scolds him for his blindness, the scales drop from his eyes and he is suddenly able to see that he was being unfair to both Shirly and himself.

Shirly is all set to go to the airport when the nuns tell her that her sponsor has actually decided to see her after all. Rushing up to him, she stops in her tracks, and tears of hurt roll down her cheeks. Roy slowly walks up to Shirly and takes her in his arms.

1984/Colour/35 mm/130 min/Malayalam

Production: Vici Films International

Story and Screenplay: Padmarajan

Direction: I.V. Sasi

Camera: Jayanan Vincent

Music: Shyam

Lyrics: Bichu Thirumala

Sound: C.D. Viswanathan

Art Direction: I.V. Sathish Babu

Editing: K. Narayanan

Lead Players: Mammooty, Lalu Alex, Rehiman, Bahadoor,

Sobhana, Sabitha, Seema, K. Ponnammma, Sukumari, Noorjahan

Enquiries: Century Films, 25 IInd Cross Street, Lake Area, Madras 600 034.

Born in Calicut, I.V. Sasi had his education both in Kerala and Madras. Besides having a brilliant academic background, he has also displayed ample talent as an artist. But, from his childhood the cinema was his first love. He entered the world of films in the mid seventies and did not have to wait long to attract the attention of a large section of film viewers and critics. His films have been in technique, style and objectivity, quite different from those of his predecessors. He has exploited the best available artistic talents in the region and used them with vision and wisdom to produce films that have been popular both artistically and commercially. Notable among his films are *Manasa Vacha Karmana*, *Ulsavam*, *Vadakuikkku Oru Hrudayam*, *Aa Nimisham*, *Alinganam*, *Eatta*, *Etha Evide Varey*, *Allavudeenum Atbbutha Vilakkam*, *Jnan Jnan Mathram*, and *Eazham Kudalinakkorey*.

The charm of *Kana Marayathu* is the age old charm of romance. Only in this case, in a merry reversal of the conventional, the girl chases the man. What makes it more interesting is the fact that the girl is very young and inexperienced, and the man a much older confirmed bachelor. Yet, it is Shirley who has a clearer understanding and grasp of the situation. Roy, worldly wise, and at the head of a large business organization, finds it impossible to believe that a young girl who has always lived in the confined atmosphere of an orphanage would really be willing to let go of her new-found freedom by falling in love with a man twice her age. He is also unable to comprehend the depth of his own feelings for Shirley. Convinced that he is doing the right thing for his young ward, Roy pushes Shirley and Baby together, not realizing that Shirley is mature for her age and is not suffering from a school girl crush. To him his rejection of Shirley is a form of self-sacrifice. But as far as Shirley is concerned, it is she who is being sacrificed in the process. But for Baby's intervention, a Baby who is no longer the irresponsible young boy he used to be, Roy would be sitting back sad, but satisfied with his unselfish conduct. In the nick of time, just before Shirley is committed to becoming a nun, Roy arrives to take a tearful Shirley in his arms. Shirley has got her man. Roy, presumably, will lose his bachelorhood, but will be a wiser and happier person after all.



I.V. Sani

Kattathe Kilikkoodu

A Bird's Nest in the Wind

Some very commonplace things usually make life a fulfilling experience. The fact that Indira Thampi is always bad-tempered only goes to show that lack of love, and loneliness can take all the fun out of life. Indira's next door neighbour is Krishna Pillai, a professor of English literature in a local college. He has a plump and pretty wife, four noisy children, and an old car which is equally noisy and even more unpredictable. But Krishna Pillai is happy. He has all the love and attention in the world. and he has his books. What more does a man need?

One would expect that the coming of Asha, her niece, would brighten up Indira Thampi's life. But Indira has long been out of the habit of loving and giving, and Asha, a self-willed young teenager, finds the neighbours more interesting. Also, Asha has an eye on the main chance, and the fact that Krishna Pillai is a professor just makes things that much easier. He can help her get an admission in his college. Asha confides in Pillai's wife Sarada that

Disappointed and hurt by Unni's behaviour Asha plans vengeance



she has come to live in her aunt's home, only to be near her fiancé, Unni, who is a sports instructor at the university. Sarada's heart is touched and she urges her husband to help Asha.

Before long Asha brings Unni to the Pillai home. Unni takes to Sarada at once. Not only does she remind him of his mother, but she also shares his love for music. Unni starts coming to visit Sarada on his own. Asha, who is a particularly short-sighted young woman, starts questioning Unni's motives. At the same time she feels hurt and left out because she does not understand Indian classical music, and Unni makes no attempt to initiate her into it. Asha starts thinking of ways and means of taking revenge on Unni and Sarada. She finally works out a devilish scheme and as a first step starts taking tuition from Krishna Pillai. Sarada and Unni who are quite innocent of Asha's designs, suddenly find that the young girl is spending more and more time in the professor's company. She hops into his car when he is leaving for college, and takes a lift back home too. She spends hours behind closed doors, ostensibly studying with the professor's help, and the rest of the time pointedly ignores Sarada. Unni she has given up altogether after an encounter with him when he defends his friendship with Sarada. So, both Unni and Sarada watch with great bewilderment the development of an unlikely intimacy between the young girl and the middle-aged professor.

Asha's plans work out beautifully. Suddenly showered by attention from a pretty young girl, Krishna Pillai starts believing in his extra special charms. He starts taking her out, and merrily accepts all her adulation. Asha even tells him of her deep, compelling passion for the professor. The absurd situation creates a lot of unhappiness at home. The children feel neglected. Sarada finally approaches Indira Thampi for help. Indira, who does not have any idea of how to discipline a spoilt young teenager, is at her wit's end. She gives the girl a piece of her mind, but Asha just packs her bags and leaves her aunt's home. She remembers to ring up the professor, however, and Pillai comes to her rescue, taking her to a guest house for the time being.

At home, Sarada, who knows what is taking place, can no longer hold back her anger and frustration. The confrontation gives the professor just the chance he was looking for, and he promptly walks out of the house. At the guest house, Asha is finally faced with the consequences of her irresponsible behaviour. Krishna Pillai, believing the girl to be in love with him, expects her to spend the night in the same room with him. Asha is in a terrible dilemma. She has never really wanted to have a questionable relationship with a man who is old enough to be her father. But how will she explain it all to him now, and what would be his reaction to the fact that she has actually fooled him all along?

Luckily for Asha, Unni arrives at the guest house before matters have gone out of hand. In a violent rage, he forces a confession out of the girl. Krishna Pillai is suddenly brought down to earth. The realization that he has actually been taken for a ride, and in the process has nearly destroyed his family, makes Pillai feel horribly ashamed of himself. He decides to drown his sorrows in drinks, following a time-honoured tradition. Here too it is Unni who comes to his rescue and carries the semi-conscious man into the arms of his forgiving wife and children.

1983/Colour/35 mm/120 min/Malayalam

Production: Grihalakshmi Productions

Story: Nedumudi Venu

Direction: B.G. Bharathan

Screenplay: T. Damodharan

Camera: Vasantkumar

Music: Johnson

Sound: Nair

Art Direction: B.G. Bharathan

Editing: N.P. Suresh

Lead Players: Gopi, Mohanlal, Sreevidya, Revathi

Enquiries: Grihalakshmi Productions, 197 Broadway,
Madras 600 001

Born in 1946, B.G. Bharathan is a professional painter and sculptor. He joined the film industry as a publicity designer and art director, and directed his first feature film, *Prayanam*, in 1975. It immediately captured attention and was quickly followed by several other award winning films. *Guruvayoor Kesavan* was completed in 1977 and won the Kerala State award for the best film from the state that year. *Aniyara*, a low-budget black and white film, was made the same year, and *Rathi Nirvedam* came in 1978. Among his other films are *Takara*, *Lorry*, *Chamaram*, *Palangal*, *Nidra*, *Ormakkai*, *Aravam* and *Marmaram*. *Chatta*, made in 1981, won the Ramu Kariat Award for the best director for the year. Bharathan makes films in Malayalam as well as in Tamil.

Many of Bharathan's films reflect his concern for the institution of marriage and the sanctity of marital relationships reinforced by the deep-rooted social values that are attached to it. In *Rathi Nirvedam* the premarital sexual adventures of a marriageable girl and an adolescent boy become the target of divine judgement when the girl is bitten by a snake and killed immediately after making love to the young boy. In *Ormakkai* Susanna's marriage is desecrated by the return of the man who had once tried to rape her, and the subsequent events inexorably lead towards tragedy. *Kattathe Kilikkodu* begins in a lighter vein, but its theme of the inherent

fragility of a happy marriage, barely avoids tragedy at the end. Though the film ends with the professor, now repentant and full of silent self-recrimination, being welcomed back into the family fold, the doubt remains whether the relationship can ever get back its earlier sense of security. When the stable foundations of a marriage have once been threatened by the stupid self-indulgence of one of the partners, is it really possible to rebuild the relationship? If it is possible, then there is still hope for Krishna Pillai.



B.G. Bharathan

Kony

From the banks of the Ganga; devotees throw raw mangoes into the river. Urchins from the street swim out to pick them off the water. Khitish Sinha, the coach of a well-known swimming club, who has come for a morning dip, watches as a quarrel begins among the boys. The one who has been deprived of his share, fights with all his strength, vanquishes his enemies and marches off in triumph. An acquaintance of Sinha makes a passing remark about a tomboy, and points out the winner to Sinha. 'That's a girl. Kony. Take a good look,' he says.

Sinha comes across Kony again in a park near his home, taking part in a walking race that is really an endurance test. He approaches the girl and offers to teach her swimming. But Kony refuses to listen to him and walks away saying that she has nothing more to learn about swimming. Growing up in a slum, with a widowed mother and many brothers and sisters, Kony's only real possessions are her pride, her independence and her indomitable spirit. By looking at the girl in her frayed dress which she is already outgrowing, Sinha has an inkling of her background. But he can do nothing till Kony is willing to accept his help. He does not give up hope, however, specially when he finds her participating in a local swimming competition. Without training, without enough nourishment in her, she fares badly in the competition. Sinha is not surprised. The girl who wins, belongs to an affluent family and is being trained for the national championship. Sinha finds a young man waiting away from the crowds for Kony. He is her elder brother and knows Sinha by his reputation. He too was a swimmer once, but had to give it up to become the only earning member of his large family. It is he who has been encouraging Kony to take up the sport against all hurdles. But his ability to help Kony is so limited that he can only stand by and feel frustrated about it. Sinha offers to coach the girl once more. With her brother persuading her, Kony agrees.

In the meanwhile, Sinha has been facing enough hostility from the administrative body of his club. He belongs to an older generation when the approach to training was rigorous and harsh. Also, Sinha is uncompromisingly honest, and will not accept anything less than hard work. For him swimming is not just a sport, it is a passion, and training young swimmers has been a lifetime's involvement. His rivals in the club consider him a cranky, overbearing old man who is more an impediment than an asset. Sinha is forced to resign. A rival club has been offering him a post for a long



Kony - fighting her way to the winning post

time. With his old world sense of loyalty, he refuses to coach the swimmers there. But he asks them for a favour. He wants a place where he can coach Kony. The authorities of the rival club agree to allow him to use their pool.

Sinha now earns some sort of a living by writing speeches for a rich young and ambitious industrialist, who also wants to make inroads into the world of sports as part of an effort to finally win political recognition. But Sinha has never been the mainstay of his home. His childless wife has really been the person who has kept the home running, by concentrating all her energies on a clothes shop. She resents Sinha's lack of practical sense, and at the same time, secretly admires him for his detestable love for his work as a coach and his uncompromising attitude. She scolds him and quarrels with him, but stands by him whenever he really needs her help.

Kony begins her training, but her stamina is much lower than average without adequate nourishment at home. Sinha starts giving her money to buy eggs and fruits for herself. But Kony needs that money for her impoverished family. Her brother who works in a factory has fallen ill, and with no other source of income apart from what Kony occasionally brings home, the family will starve. Sinha coaxes his wife into giving Kony a job in her shop. Kony's brother

dies. But Kony continues to struggle, to survive and to be a swimmer. Sinha, who is an extremely hard taskmaster, is determined to make a champion swimmer out of Kony. In the process, he instills in her an indomitable urge to rise above the deprivations of her life. With Sinha's support, winning a championship becomes identified in her mind with winning in the battle for existence.

In spite of all the internal politics of the swimming clubs, the petty jealousies, the grossly unfair interventions of the authorities of Sinha's old club, Kony qualifies for entry into the national championship to be held in another city. Kony travels alone in a second class compartment, as Sinha, who had scraped together the money for a ticket for himself, loses the ticket and is thrown out of the train. The other girl swimmers all come from middle-class or affluent families and can afford to travel together in comfort. Kony is actually aware of the social and economic gap between her and the other girls, and though they all share rooms in the guest house, she refuses to let down her barriers. The girls on their part are mostly suspicious and hostile towards Kony, and tend to leave her alone.

When the championship is about to begin, Kony is told that her name has been left out by some oversight from the events from her state. She sits with the viewers in the gallery and watches with resentment each event taking place. In spite of trying their best, the girls from Bengal come up against stiff opposition from a champion from another state. Kony knows that she alone can better the timing of this champion, if only she is given a chance. When the final events are to take place, one of the girls from Bengal, the best of their team, has to opt out of the competition. Kony unwillingly agrees to stand in for her. In the meanwhile Khitish Sinha has finally managed to reach the place where the competition is taking place. Raising his clenched fist he urges Kony to win. 'Fight, Kony, fight!' he says. They are the same words with which he has always spurred her on. Words which for Kony contain a world of meaning. Today they give her the incentive to come out the winner. It is her only way to tell all these people who have collected here, people who have always had the opportunities that were denied to her, that she will win her battle for survival. That poverty cannot degrade her. Lack of education cannot hold her back. With her courage and her spirit she will build her own destiny in a hostile world.

1984/Colour/35 mm/130 min/Bengali

Production: Government of West Bengal

Story: Moti Nandy

Direction: Saroj De

Screenplay: Saroj De and Jayanta Bhattacharjee

Camera: Kamal Nayak

Music: Chinmoy Chatterjee

Sound: Durgadas Mitra

Art Direction: Subhas Sinha Roy

Editing: Ramesh Joshi

Lead Players: Soumitra Chatterjee, Sreeparna Banerjee, Mausumi Roy, Sharmistha Mukherjee, Subrata Sen, Swarup Dutta.

Enquiries: Director of Films Government of West Bengal
Writers Building Calcutta 700 001

Saroj De has been directing films from 1955, as a member of a group called Agragami. Of the eleven films that he has directed, *Kony* is the first in colour. Among his other films, *Dak Harkara* was India's official entry in the 1958 Venice Film Festival. The film was also shown at the International Peace Conference in Stockholm and televised in Moscow the same year. De's *Nishithey*, a film based on a short story by Rabindranath Tagore, won a National Award in 1962. *Bilombito Loy*, a film that De made in 1969, was selected for the San Francisco, San Sebastian and Locarno Film Festivals. De's other films are *Sagarika* (1955), *Shilpi* (1956), *Head Master* (1958), *Kanna* (1962), *Shankhabela* (1966), *Je Jekhane Darie* (1974), and *Swati* (1978).

If Khitish Sinha urges Kony constantly to strive to become a great swimmer, he also provides her with the incentive to struggle for a new life. Kony has too much character, too much pride to allow herself to drown in a morass of poverty. She must break through the cycle of deprivation that is destroying her family just as she must forge ahead to reach the winning post. Kony's young face only gives a glimpse of her hidden strength and fiery spirit. In a short life that hardly spans girlhood, Kony has already experienced a world of pain and sorrow and humiliation. And therein lies her strength. She knows much more of the world than the world knows of her. For Khitish Sinha who has himself been a fighter all his life, battling for integrity and honesty, not just in sports but in the game of life, Kony is an extension of all his hopes and desires. Through Kony he fulfils himself. For Kony, her mentor is a spur to her ambitions as a human being, and a sportswoman. Wading through the turbulent waters of her life, Kony will fight, and come out a winner.

Saroj De, on the left of the camera



Malamukalilae Daivam

The God Atop the Hill

In a village at the foot of the Banasuran mountains of Wynad, in Kerala, lives Kayama, a little orphan boy who has been adopted by a villager, Nambi and his daughter, Marie. The tribals who see the sun rise and set every day over these mountains believe that the mountains are the abode of their god. The villagers never go beyond the mountains. Enclosed in their shell of superstition and ignorance, they are quite sure that the mountains are the confines of their world, and no one who tries to cross them will ever come back.

Kayama has always known that he can meet his dead parents on top of the mountains. But who will show him the way? Nambi and Marie do not encourage him at all. Kayama goes to Nencham, the village drop-out, who spends his days under a tree, smoking a local leaf and indulging in pipe dreams. Nencham has been a friend and confidant of the little boy for a long time. He is also in love with Marie whom he dares not approach. Nencham, who is a dreamer himself, understands the child's obsessive desire to climb the forbidden mountains. He agrees to take him. But the fear of Marie's wrath and of violating an age-old belief, stops Nencham from actually taking the boy up the mountains. Acutely disappointed, Kayama goes to plead with his sister to find someone to take him on his adventure. Nambi comes to know of Kayama's mad desire. He tries to dissuade the child in the only way he knows, by punishing him. Nambiar, the landlord, casually promises Kayama one day that he will take him to the mountains. But like all grown-ups, he forgets. Kayama persuades Marie to go to Nambiar to remind him of his promise.

Unable to dissuade Kayama, Marie comes to see the landlord. Bored and isolated in his opulent home, Nambiar calls Marie in and seduces her. Waiting outside, Kayama does not understand the significance of Marie's tears. He only knows that his hopes have been dashed again. But he does realize that Nambiar has hurt his sister, and finding him dallying with another girl from the village one day, he throws mud on Nambiar's jeep.

Kayama now decides to take matters in his own hand. He leaves his home in secret and walks away into the unknown. The mountains beckon him. But they are a long way off, and before he can get anywhere near them, he meets a lorry driver and his boss who give him a lift, telling him that they are actually on their way to the mountains. The truth, however, is that the men think that the



Nenchan in a pipe dream

plucky little boy will make a good servant and look after their cattle. But Kayama is too smart for them. When they stop at a wayside stall to have a cup of tea, Kayama quietly vanishes from the lorry and waits in hiding till the men give up the search and leave.

The lorry has brought Kayama to a little town away from the mountains, where Madhavan Master, a large-hearted old soul, picks him up and decides to make a man out of him. Kayama becomes Ramachandran, and a new world opens out before him. The village with its wide open space, its forests and ponds, its daily hardships and the magic lure of the mountains, is left behind. Ramachandran is given an urban education and becomes an officer, with a large number of employees working under him.

One day the nostalgia returns. The urge to be with his own

people can no longer be denied and Ramachandran leaves for the forgotten village. So many years have passed but the village has retained its old identity. Hidden behind the Banasuran mountains, the tribals still lead a primitive existence. The god of the mountains still holds his sway, and the landlord wields his power with the same ruthlessness as before. Ignorance, superstition and blind faith in an unknown god have imprisoned the minds of the tribals. Marie is an outcaste in the village for being the mother of an illegitimate child. She does not recognize her adopted brother till he calls to her in the language of his childhood.

Coming back to the village has been a revelation for Ramachandran. He realizes that he now has a new mountain to climb. It is only by moving beyond the shadows of the mountains that the villagers can find a new existence. Ramachandran takes it upon himself to change his village. He wins the confidence of the villagers by confronting the landlord on their behalf. He convinces them of the need to break the shackles of ignorance. In a symbolic act of liberty, he gathers the people of his village and takes them up the forbidden mountains. The flames of their torches will light their way to a new awareness that will break through their isolation and find them a place in the sun in the larger world outside.

1983/Colour/35 mm/115 min/Malayalam

Production: Suriyamudra Films

Story and Screenplay: Kalpatta Balakrishnan

Direction: P.N. Menon

Camera: Deviprasad

Music: Johnson

Sound: Devadas

Editing: Sasi

Lead Players: Sudharani, Suresh, Kunjandi, Balasingh, Lakshmi, Subramanian, Gabril, Mary, Sathindran

Enquiries: Suriyamudra Films, Vijnana, Trichur.

P.N. Menon was born in Machad, a village in Kerala, in 1928. After high school, Menon went on to study painting in the School of Arts in Trichur. In 1947 he left Kerala and joined as a background painter in Vauhini Studios in Madras. He also worked as an art director for Malayalam, Telugu and Tamil films, and directed his first Malayalam film, *Rosi*, from his own script in the year 1963. His second feature film, *Olayam-Theeravum*, made in 1969, won critical acclaim as well as commercial success, and received a State Award. *Chemparathy* won a State Award in 1972. In 1973 Menon was given the National Award for the best Malayalam film, and the State Award, for *Gayathri*. He has also directed two Tamil films, *Devutbai* in 1979, and *Anu* in 1980. *Malamukalilae Daivam* won both the State

Award and the National Award for being the best Malayalam film of 1983. Menon has so far directed seventeen feature films and one documentary. Among his other films are, *Kuttiyedathi* (1970), *Mappusakshi* (1971), *Panimudakku* (1971), *Chaayam* (1973), *Dharsanam* (1974), *Mazhakkaru* (1975), *Udayam Kizhakkutbanne* (1976), *Taxi Driver* (1978), *Kadamba* (1982), *Astham* (1982), and a documentary in English, *Glimpses of Kerala* (1983).

If the mountain god remains invisible in *Malamukalilae Daivam*, his baleful presence is felt all throughout the film. He stands guard atop the hill, keeping Kayama's village immersed in the shadows of ignorance, and keeping out the light of knowledge and reason. Kayama's desire to reach the god's abode is the indomitable human urge to reach out beyond his limited existence towards greater knowledge and enlightenment. Ramachandran can fulfil that urge because he has broken the taboos of the god by stepping outside the small prison of his village. The question remains, however, whether by exposing his tribal community to the influences of the outside world, he will not be destroying its ethnic identity and sowing the seeds of destruction that lie dormant within any growing civilization. Civilization brings its own evils with it, and throughout history, enlightenment has never been too far from social and moral decadence. But the fruit of knowledge awaits Kayama's people across the mountains, and for good or ill they must now follow a new destiny. The advantage is that they now have their eyes open, and the torches, burning with their desire to throw off the shackles of backwardness, will light their way.



P.N. Menon

Manik Raitong

Manik the Miserable

The story of this film is an immortal folk tale often told among the people of the Khasi Hills in Meghalaya.

In the beginning, God created sixteen families who lived with him in his abode. The members of these families could come to earth and go back at will across a golden bridge. Then seven of the families decided to stay back on earth, and the golden bridge was destroyed forever. These seven families came to be known as the Seven Huts (U Hynniew Trep). The Huts are the eternal source of inspiration for the Khasi people. In the Huts lie the origin of their existence, and the divine heritage left behind by the ancient people.

The story of Manik Raitong takes place in an unnamed and unknown place in this ancient confederation of the Khasi States.

Manik is a poor village boy whose most treasured possession is his flute on which he plays haunting tunes. Lieng Makaw, a young girl from the same village, is his sweetheart. Manik's father dies, leaving Manik and his sister Bida to face many hardships. He also leaves a large burden of debts on Manik's young shoulders. To avoid becoming a bonded labourer, Manik decides to give up playing his flute, and works very hard to repay the debts. It is Lieng who makes him play on his flute again one day.

It is the day of the local festival. Manik plays his flute and the girls in all their finery dance to its tune. Watching the dance, the local chief, the Syiem, is enchanted by the fresh beauty of Lieng. At home, the Syiem's sister has been nagging him daily to get married. She is tired of looking after his home on her own. Lieng, with her untouched, youthful look appeals to the Syiem, though he himself is neither handsome nor quite young.

A friend of the family goes to Lieng's home to negotiate the marriage. It is a great honour for Lieng's parents. Also, they dare not refuse the Syiem. Lieng is heartbroken. As a last resort she rushes off to see Manik who tells her that he has already heard of the match, and as he has nothing to offer her, he has accepted the fact that Lieng will marry the Syiem. Lieng is numbed by the shock of his rejection. The marriage takes place with the usual pomp. But the unhappy Lieng can show no warmth towards her husband. On the wedding night the Syiem has to leave his queen to attend to matters of state, and the marriage remains unconsummated. Later, when the Syiem tries to win over his bride, Lieng remains mute and unresponsive. For days the Syiem and his sister try to talk her out of



Manik and Lieng meet in the forest

her silence and depression. But Lieng remains aloof and apathetic. Tired of her continued coldness, the Syiem one day loses his patience and lashes out at her. For the first time Lieng responds, but with anger. Next day the Syiem goes on a two years journey to visit his outer domain. Angry and hurt by Lieng's behaviour, he arranges to send her back to her home in the village.

Back in her village home, Lieng still refuses to come out of her shell. She keeps to herself, no longer sharing the happy relationship she used to have with the other village girls. At night she hears the plaintive flute of Manik, and stirs restlessly on her bed. One stormy

night the flute is silent. Lieng strains her ears, but can hear nothing but the noise of the torrential rain outside. Disturbed and worried, she quietly slips out of the house and for the first time since she is back in the village, goes to Manik's lonely home. The long suppressed emotions can be held back no more, and Lieng and Manik make love while the rain pours outside his little hut.

Soon a little boy is born to Lieng. When the Syiem comes back from his sojourn, he is full of hope that his wife will soften towards him after this long separation. He is horrified when he finds that Lieng has had a child in the meantime. Bringing Lieng back to the palace, the Syiem insists on knowing the name of the man who has fathered the child. But Lieng refuses to say anything at all. The Syiem decides to put to test all the men in the community. The child does not react to any of the men. At last Manik arrives, and making no attempt to hide his crime, comes and picks up the child, who is obviously very happy to see him. Manik knows that he has offended the moral code of the land and is ready to be punished for it.

A funeral pyre is lit. Manik plays his flute for one last time, then sticking his flute in the ground, jumps into the funeral pyre. As the flames rise over him, Lieng runs forwards, calling Manik's name and throws herself into the pyre. The flames consume the unhappy lovers as the sun sets in the far horizon.

1984/Colour/35 mm/121 mins/Khasi

Production: Neo Cine Production

Story: Rishan Rapsang

Screenplay and Direction: Ardhendu Bhattacharya

Camera: Bijoy Anand Sabberwal

Music: Kazu Matsui

Lyrics: Skendrowel Syiemlih

Dialogue: Humphrey Blah

Sound: Robin Sengupta

Art Direction: Ashoke Bose

Editing: Prasanta Dey

Lead Players: William Rynjbah, Sheba Diengdoh, Gilbert Synnah, Veronica Nongbet, Benjamin Khongnor, Diamond Mawthaw

Enquiries: Rapsang Brothers, Jaiaw, Langsning, Shillong 793 002, Meghalaya.

Of Bengali parentage, Ardhendu Bhattacharya was brought up in Shillong, Meghalaya, and is now settled in Tripura. After completing his M.A. in Philosophy from Shantiniketan, Bhattacharya went to the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune and spent three years there. With the knowledge he gained in Pune, Bhattacharya joined different film units in Bombay, and afterwards in Gauhati

and Assam. In between, for a while he taught philosophy, but was lured away again by the call of the cinema. He began making documentaries for several state governments as well as for the Films Division. Recently, one of his documentaries, *Cattle Wealth of the North-East*, has been acquired by the Films Division.

A simple tale, redolent with sadness, *Manik Raitong* brings with it the enchantment of a long forgotten world. Manik's romance with the unhappy queen of the Syiem carries echoes of many another tragic romance found among the folk tales in different parts of the country. The inherent sense of fatalism in folk cultures finds expression in Manik's calm acceptance of his tragic destiny. It is not only Manik who has transgressed the unalterable laws of social conduct. Lieng, who voluntarily goes and offers herself to her old lover, is in silent rebellion against her marriage with the Syiem. In the process she violates the codes of her marriage. The punishment meted out to Manik is actually her personal tragedy, her punishment. She can only rush into the flames with him, for without Manik, how can Lieng survive? Neither Manik, nor Lieng attempt to escape from this cruel justice. The harsh laws of an ancient land will not brook any resistance. They protect even as they destroy, and Manik and Lieng see themselves as victims of a preordained fate.



Ardbendu Bhattacharya briefing his heroine

Mohan Joshi Haazir Ho !

A Summons for Mohan Joshi

In a democracy every citizen can seek redress for a wrong done to him by going to the court of law. Such is his constitutional right. But the long arm of the law is rarely long enough to reach across a chain of cumbersome procedures, manipulated witnesses, unscrupulous lawyers and indifferent judges, to bring justice to the Mohan Joshis of this world. In the ramshackle tenements of the great metropolis of Bombay families survive for generations in unhygienic conditions without uttering a word of protest, for the reverberations of such an act might bring the whole rickety structure crashing down on their heads, and what rights can a citizen have when he has no roof above his head?

Mohan Joshi is a foolish old man. He does not appreciate the fact that he is one of the privileged few who actually have a home to live in. So what if the sewage pipes leak on his head throughout the year, and the plaster peels off the ceiling without notice? It all begins when old Joshi is standing in the queue at the milk booth one day, when the man in front of him boasts how he has sued the landlord of his uncle, given the man something to worry about for years ! What a grand idea ! Why cannot Mohan Joshi demand that his landlord provides the minimum running repairs for a flat where the Joshi family has lived for three generations, and paid the rent regularly too?

As the case carries on, Joshi and his wife wait with a growing sense of despair





Rani and Malkani, lawyers from opposite camps, in bed together

Joshi and his wife decide to meet the landlord first; give him a chance. But the greedy Kundan Kapadia, bloated with his already overflowing wealth, is surrounded by sinister building promoters. He will have more money when the tenements collapse and hi-rise buildings are constructed in their place. Insulted and humiliated, Mohan Joshi marches off in righteous indignation in search of a lawyer. His neighbours ridicule him, his family refuse to help him. Only his wife stands by the stubborn old man. Clientless lawyers pounce on the two old people like a pack of hungry wolves. Out of the fray, Gokhale and Malkani emerge the victors, and Joshi becomes their first client.

The battle begins. The case starts and stretches on as court cases do. The old couple part with their meagre savings and the old woman's last bits of jewellery. The slippery lawyers promise great results. But the days stretch to months, the months to years, without the day of reckoning ever coming within sight. The landlord hires Desai and Rani whose claim to fame lies in the fact that they can harass the opponent into submission, and this is what they set out to do. The Joshis are led a merry dance with an assault case and an eviction suit to complicate the original repairs case. The neighbours watch Joshi's humiliation with glee, some of them bait him mercilessly, and one vicious old man fills his pockets on the side by actively helping the landlord against Joshi. A further complication arises out of the fact that the old man's daughter and Joshi's younger son are in love, but dare not own it up in front of their elders. Threatened by the hired ruffians of the landlord and harassed by his smart lawyers, even Joshi's daughter-in-law and elder son join the battle.



Kapadia and his promoters survey the last minute repairs

In the meanwhile Malkani and Gokhale progress from a desk in the corridor to a luxurious office. Rani marries Desai, but carries on a clandestine affair with Malkani. Between the four of them the case carries on across time while the promoters wait patiently for their chance to build a sea of buildings from Bombay to Dubai. Judges come and go, and sections and sub-sections clash in mid air in the courtroom. The Joshi family are tossed between impatience and total despair. Their tenement home creaks and groans under years of neglect. Even Joshi begins to see through the hoax.

Finally when the whole family starts bearing down on the lawyers, Malkani decides to make an unexpectedly passionate appeal in court, demanding that the judge sees for himself the state of affairs. The judge agrees, and the world changes colour for Mohan Joshi. All of a sudden his jeering neighbours turn into fast friends. Mohan Joshi has become a hero overnight. After all, the judge will not see the Joshi home alone. When redress comes, it will come for everybody. Mohan Joshi receives a standing ovation from his new friends. The mill of justice may grind slowly, but now there is no holding it back.

But the tenement dwellers have calculated without Kundan Kapadia and his slick lawyers. An army of workmen descend on the crumbling building, sweeping the dirt away, giving a lick of paint to cover the cracks on the wall, propping the disintegrating roof with painted poles. Though the tenants try their best to tear down any attempt at patching up the superannuated structure, the building

wears an undeniably festive look when the judge finally arrives. The two sets of lawyers range on either side of the judge and carry on a slanging match. The tenement dwellers watch helplessly as the whole thing develops into one more interminable legal battle with the vacillating judge in its centre. In sheer desperation the younger members of the Joshi family intervene to have a last hearing. But the judge is no longer interested in listening to what the dwellers of the tenement have to say. There is only one way left to Mohan Joshi. Putting all his frail strength together, he ends the dispute once and for all by pushing away the props that hold the building together, and allowing the house to come crashing down on himself.

1984/Colour/35 mm/130 min/Hindi

Production: Saeed Akhtar Mirza Productions

Story and Direction: Saeed Akhtar Mirza

Screenplay: Saeed Akhtar Mirza, Sudhir Mishra, Yusuf Mehta

Camera: Vierendra Saini

Music: Vanraj Bhatia

Lyrics: Madhosh Bilgrami

Dialogure: Ranjit Kapoor, Sudhir Mishra, Saeed Akhtar Mirza

Sound: Jagmohan Anand

Art Direction: Nachiket and Jayoo Patwardhan

Editing: Renu Saluja

Lead Players: Naseeruddin Shah, Deepti Naval, Rohini Hattangady, Bhisham Sahni, Dina Pathak, Amjad Khan, Mohan Gokhale, Satish Shah, Pankaj Kapoor.

Enquiries: Saeed Akhtar Mirza Productions, 47 Nair Road, Bombay 400 008

Born in 1943, Saeed Akhtar Mirza came to film-making after working for eight years in advertising. A graduate in film direction from the Film and Television Institute of India, Mirza has been a vociferous spokesman for the Parallel Cinema movement in India. He has directed four documentaries, three of which, *Urban Housing* (1976), *Slum Eviction* (1976), and *Rickshaw Pullers of Jabalpur*, deal with urban problems. His first feature film, *Arvind Desai ki Ajeeb Dastan* (1978) received the Filmfare Critics Award for the best film of the year, and portrayed the alienation of an upper-middle-class urban youth. Mirza's second feature film, *Albert Pinto ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hai* (1980), tackled the problems faced by a minority community in secular India. This film too has received the Filmfare Critics Award for the best film of the year. Mirza's concern as a film-maker is with creating 'a cinema of struggle as opposed to the cinema of the status quo.' His films are an attempt to evolve a form that is acceptable and has mass appeal, and at the same time opposes the status quo.

Talking to Iqbal Masud for the Express Magazine, 15 April 1984, Saeed Mirza expresses his views on his own films, particularly his third and latest feature film, Mohan Joshi Haazir Ho !

I.M.: How do you feel about your two earlier films, *Arvind Desai* and *Albert Pinto*?

S.M.: I constantly refer back to them. I constantly re-analyse my position with regard to those films. About *Arvind Desai*; I had then come out of the Film Institute fresh and I made a film which was very classic in construction. I realise now that it is a film which could very easily be made by a person like me who had gone through an academic education about the theory of the construction and the structure of film. A lot of people say they prefer *Arvind Desai* to my other work. I know why. *Arvind Desai* doesn't take a leap into the realm of mistakes. *Albert Pinto* took that leap. There, I was bound to make mistakes. *Albert Pinto's* form was much more free. *Arvind Desai* was more strait-jacketed, more rigid. When one tries to break loose, there will certainly be pitfalls and traps.

I.M.: There are likely to be ideological changes in stance as well as changes in cinematic form. Is the former true in your case?

S.M.: Certainly. The kind of questioning I engage in is fundamental to my ideology.

I.M.: How did you see *Mohan Joshi* when you started the film?

S.M.: *Mohan Joshi* is predominantly an idea, and I have characters who make that idea sensuous. *Mohan Joshi*, to me, is the idea of decency. Sacrificed at the altar of pragmatism. Today, a man who tries to get a bus queue into line is derided as an idealist.

I.M.: *Mohan Joshi* has three worlds—the worlds of the chawl, the court and the landlord-promoter. Let us take the world of the chawl. This is a favourite hunting-ground both of 'commercial' and 'art' cinema. How did you ensure that your chawl did not fall into one of the familiar grooves?

S.M.: The nature of the chawl has to be understood as an idea. The idea of pragmatism has also seeped into this chawl. The outside world is impinging on the inhabitants of the chawl. Everybody in this chawl has become pragmatic, except for an old man called Mohan Joshi. The other people in the chawl do not see why a man should fight at this level for what he calls his dignity. The only occasion [on which] they change is when they see the future changing, thanks to this old man, and suddenly [they] make a hero out of him.

I.M.: In *Arvind Desai* and *Albert Pinto* you stressed the danger of going it alone. Here, you stress the importance of individual conduct and initiative, of ethics and courage.

S.M.: My stance is that I would leave the collective aspirations to the audience. I have certainly shifted the emphasis in *Mohan Joshi* to the

conduct of an individual, Mohan Joshi, hoping it will affect the audience.

I.M.: The influence of Brecht (I mean both his life and works) and of generally left-wing politics has over-emphasised the role of history and of group effort and has liberated the individual from the burden of responsibility and ethics. Perhaps this tendency needed to be corrected and I am glad you have done it. Coming back to Mohan Joshi, towards the end of the film, he develops mythological overtones.

S.M.: Mohan Joshi is mythological. To me he is Bhim and Samson combined. I use mythology not in its obscurantist form, but as a cross-reference in today's context. Today, the entire world—specifically, Bombay city—is working towards a kind of desensitisation to its own living conditions. To this, Joshi says: No. He is not a conventional hero. He is an old pensioner. He is not eccentric, he is demanding what everybody needs to demand—dignity according to our Constitution.

I.M.: Why does Mohan Joshi alone possess this kind of fire?

S.M.: There was an explanation in the first shot. Joshi is the kind of man who has always complained, but by the time the film opens he is reduced to a whining old man. That is how his 'pragmatic' neighbours have come to see him.

I.M.: Placing a seemingly prosaic old couple at the centre of action is certainly original and bold. Against them you have set up the farcical, caricatured lawyer team of Naseeruddin Shah and Satish Shah. Farce and comedy are new elements in your work.

S.M.: I felt I should play with that idea in this film. I thought tragic-comedy would push the basic idea in the film a little further. The lawyer team exploits the Joshi case not only to make money, but to zoom off into politics, into another realm altogether.

I.M.: Despite the caricatures, there is a greater degree of realism in *Mohan Joshi* than in your earlier films.

S.M.: That is correct. What I am trying to do is to understand the courts in their essence. When you extend the logic of the court, it becomes a circus. What are our courts? Whose functions do they serve? I am trying to show the grotesquerie of the courts without losing realism.

I.M.: At the same time you do not caricature the day-to-day execution of justice but bring out its limitless possibility for delay.

S.M.: And this possibility is backed by law, this dragging through, this stripping of a person.

I.M.: The role of the lawyer, Malkani, played by Naseeruddin Shah is, I think, a triumph.

S.M.: Malkani represents the inexorable logic of desensitisation. I have observed such lawyers closely. They have a rationale for

existence. They really believe in what is called law. Of course, in their minds, there may not be a coincidence between law and justice. There is separation here and they live with that separation.

I.M.: There is a continuity of approach in this film from your earlier films in that you are not too interested in the intermeshing of individual relationships.

S.M.: No, I am not interested. What I am interested in is the fact that the reference point of the individuals in this film is Mohan Joshi. Mohan Joshi is the butt of their cynicism. That cynicism is destroyed only when they feel a change in their lives may occur because of Joshi—that is, when the judge decides to visit the chawl.

I.M.: The ending of the film suggests that even in the morass of our legal system there is some hope of justice if one persists.

S.M.: We have individual lawyers, individual judges, who are doing a fantastic job. But, by and large, the system stands for inhumanity towards the weak and the oppressed.

I.M.: That conclusion and the thrust of the film, aren't they rather pessimistic?

S.M.: If one can question the rhetoric of the layman, that by itself, is something. There is a position of power and a position of non-power. Through law, a position of power can be assumed depending on who is exercising law.

I.M.: You have shown the people of 'non-power', the chawl people, as incapable of co-operation. Will they ever convert their position into that of power?

S.M.: Not in the film, but outside of it. I cannot provide the solution within the structure of the film. The ball is in the audience's court—now what?

I.M.: The third segment of the film, the world of the landlord and the promoter, is entirely caricature. There is no attempt at realism.

S.M.: There is a new trend in this kind of exploitation. It is faceless and impersonal. How did the Cuffe Parade and Nariman Point complexes come up? Do we really know what forces are at work? There are specific individuals who manipulate but they remain faceless. That is why I have made the landlord (Amjad Khan) a caricature and the promoters human robots. They are beyond the pale of normal logic.

I.M.: Let us turn to your general approach to cinema. I think your cinema is not 'artistic'. It is adversary cinema, an adversary to commercial cinema.

S.M.: There is a cinema of status quo and a cinema of change. That is the polarity. There is a kind of cinema which exists in a certain kind of political state. There is a direct correlation between the two. That kind of cinema produces the young 'romantic' couple in this film—frozen and static in their attitude to life. They do not

represent the future; the old man represents the future. I have reversed the usual position. I am talking about generations. In the 1947 generation (that is, which was young at Independence) I feel there was some dignity, some calibre.

I.M.: I am surprised to hear that.

S.M.: There is a law of underdevelopment. There is a clear decline of leadership in all fields in underdeveloped countries after Independence. Expediency and hypocrisy flourish. Where is enlightenment today? All this is reflected in Mohan Joshi. Still, you will see that one segment of youth takes over the torch from Mohan Joshi.

I.M.: A final comment. At the moment, the subversive content of your films does not hurt the structure at which it is aimed. Your films are tolerantly regarded as 'angry films'. A time will come when that kindness will disappear.

S.M.: I am aware of it. I am aware of my precarious position. But if Mohan Joshi can stand, I can stand.



Saeed Akhtar Mirza

Mukhamukham

Face to Face

In 1957 the Communist Party was voted into power in Kerala in South India and it stayed the ruling party for a short period. In 1964 the Communist Party was split in two, the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party (Marxist) of India. Later many extremist splinter groups emerged. The first part of the film is set in the decade ending in 1955. The second part begins from 1965.

Truth, in philosophy, in politics, or even in the humdrum daily life of an individual, is never final. Between the image and the reality lies a vast chasm of uncertainty, an area of search. Who is Sreedharan? A firebrand revolutionary who has fallen upon bad times, a man in the throes of self-questioning and self-condemnation, or just a drunkard with a political past? In death Sreedharan reverts back to the image that had led his people in a time of strife. But the living Sreedharan, the victim of an imperilled ideology, can provide no simple explanation of his personal reality.

The men and women who came close to Sreedharan during the days of his leadership, remember with reverence his simplicity, his austerity, his silent strength, his devotion to his ideals. He had a special relationship with the commonest, most insignificant of

The people wait for a word from their hero, but Sreedharan has nothing to say



them. But at the same time he stood apart from them all, protecting his loneliness behind a wall of silence. Even young Sudhakaran, with his almost obsessive admiration for Sreedharan, and his close apprenticeship under him, could never penetrate the man's personal isolation. Savitri, who loved and desired him and bore him a son, can only recall her physical closeness to Sreedharan. His friends and compatriots of the trade union movement remember the stern idealist and his charismatic hold on the town's workers. But not one of them remembers Sreedharan as a complete human being. Sreedharan remains a phenomenon through years of political ambivalence that follow his disappearance, his reality submerged in the intangible abstraction of his image.

We first see Sreedharan with other leaders of the trade union movement, sitting in front of the gates of the tile factory. Mechanization in the factory threatens to take away the livelihood of the workers. Sreedharan leads the workers' agitation. A confrontation with the management leads to a prolonged strike. The party starts collecting funds as the workers' families face starvation. Sreedharan remains the key figure in the struggle for better wages for the workers. The man who runs the tea stall, the beedi shop owner, the common man in the street rally round his leadership. Young Sudhakaran listens to him avidly and schools himself in the intricacies of a political understanding.

One night an old farmer discovers Sreedharan lying bleeding on the ground after an attack by strangers in the dark. The farmer brings him to his own home where his daughter Savitri tends to his wounds. As he recovers, the forced physical closeness between them is transformed into a more intimate relationship. Sreedharan stays on in the old farmer's home, accepted as his son-in-law. But when the proprietor of the tile factory is found murdered, Sreedharan becomes the prime suspect. As the police start rounding up the leaders of the workers' agitation, Sreedharan and his comrades have to go underground.

Years pass, and Sreedharan's son, Sreeni, born soon after his disappearance, is now ten years old. In the intervening years Sreedharan's comrades have returned one by one and become involved in the changing face of left politics in the country. Sreedharan, believed to be dead, has become a legend and a permanent fount of inspiration. Sreeni, brought up on the memories of the father he has never seen, is the only one who actually awaits his return. And Sreedharan does come back. He steps into his home one night across the gulf of ten unknown years. He comes carrying ten years of exhaustion on his shoulders and promptly falls asleep. The news spreads and all the old faces crowd around the little house to have a glimpse of the man who has sustained them

with his memory of steadfastness through the troubled years of his absence. All they see is a worn-out old familiar face, drooping in sleep. He has come a long way, he is tired. Poor man, let him sleep, they think.

As the days pass, Sreedharan slowly recovers from his somnolent state. But every day he drinks himself into a stupor and Sreeni finds him asleep when he leaves for school in the morning or when he comes back home at the end of the day. What used to be an occasional secret indulgence to dull the physical pain of a stomach-ache, has become a daily necessity. Sreedharan is even willing to rifle his wife's meagre savings. Sreeni, suspected of being the thief, gets a beating from his mother. Later in the evening Sreedharan comes home blind drunk and the little purse he has stolen drops out of his pocket.

But it is difficult to dismiss Sreedharan as a common alcoholic. A legend come to life, Sreedharan is pulled in different directions by his old friends and admirers. The party has been torn into two. Rival aspirations have demolished ideological unity. The sustaining power of Sreedharan's old image leads the rival factions to vie with each other to use his name. Perhaps Sreedharan's alcoholism is a gut reaction to the destruction of a unified political identity that had formed the basis of his struggle in the old days. Between the ideological confusion and the personal political ambitions of his friends and admirers, Sreedharan dulls his pain with liquor. The ideal revolutionary becomes an embarrassment. Sreeni's friends throw stones at him. His old followers, the common people, mock him publicly. When the image, the abstraction that Sreedharan had stood for, is almost obliterated from people's minds, Sreedharan's body is found one day, beaten to death under mysterious circumstances. No one knows who killed him or why, no one wants to know. In death Sreedharan the idealist has returned to his people again. The rival parties parade the streets together resurrecting their hero. What was the image now becomes the reality. But who knows where the truth lies? Did Sreedharan betray the revolution, or did the revolution betray the man?

1984/Colour/35 mm/107 min/Malayalam

Production: General Pictures

Story, Screenplay and Direction: Adoor Gopalakrishnan

Camera: Ravi Varma

Music: M.B. Srinivasan

Sound: Devadas

Art Direction: Sivan

Editing: M. Mani

Lead Players: P. Ganga, B.K. Nair, Ponnammamma, Krishna Kumar, Karamana, Thilakan, Vishwanathan, Ashokan, Lalitha
Enquiries: General Pictures, P.B. No. 115, Quilon 691 001, Kerala

Adoor Gopalakrishnan was born in a small town of Kerala called Adoor. His family have been known for generations as patrons and practitioners of Kathakali, the highly stylized classical dance drama of Kerala. Gopalakrishnan began acting on the stage at the age of eight. By the time he graduated from the Gandhigram Rural University in 1960, he had already produced over twenty critically acclaimed plays besides writing half a dozen of them himself. Recipient of a merit scholarship, he took his post-graduate diploma in script writing and film direction from the Film and Television Institute of India in 1965. In the same year he pioneered the film society movement in Kerala and founded Chitrakalka, India's first film co-operative. His first feature film, *Swayamvaram*, made in 1972, won the National Awards for the best feature film, best director, best photographer and best actress. It also received the Kerala State Awards for the best film, best photography, best art direction and best music. His second film, *Kodiyettam*, was made in 1977 and won the National Award for the best regional film and the best actor. *Elippathayam* came in 1981, and received the National Awards for the best regional film and best sound recording. It was also given the Kerala State Awards for the best feature film, best photography and best sound recording. In 1982 *Elippathayam* received the British Film Institute Award for 'the most original and imaginative film' to be shown in the National Film Theatre that year. All of Gopalakrishnan's films have participated in various film festivals abroad, and won wide acclaim. Among his publications, Gopalakrishnan's book on the cinema, *The World of Cinema*, written in Malayalam, has won the National Award for the best book on the subject for the year 1983. He also received the Padmashree in 1983. Gopalakrishnan has scripted and directed, and occasionally photographed, audiographed and edited over twenty-five documentaries and shorts. Among them the most significant ones are *The Myth* (1967), *And Man Created* (1968), *Guru Chennangur* (1974), *Yakshagana* (1979), *The Chola Heritage* (1980), and *Krishnanattam* (1982).

Bikram Singh interviews Adoor Gopalakrishnan in the Sunday Observer, 2 December 1984.

B.S.: Do you think it is possible that some people may take your film as a rather sweeping criticism of leftist politics in Kerala?

A.G.: That's what some people in Bombay, specially Malayalees, have told me. But I do not consider it a political film at all. I am a serious student of cinema and I dare not call it a political film. A sympathetic viewing, understanding, that's what I expect of any

serious viewer of my film. Basically the film is about my trying to understand the human mind in its complexity.

B.S.: Your central character, Sreedharan, is something of a mystery. We see what may be called the breaking of Sreedharan, but there is little about his antecedents, about the making of the political person that is Sreedharan.

A.G.: He is a very dedicated Party man who belongs to the Communist Party in the decade before 1955. I am trying to understand him. In the film there are some reports about his possible involvement in the killing of a factory owner, but those reports are themselves contradictory. How do you pursue reality, that is the question. What is real, the image or the reality? I don't know for certain what Sreedharan did during those ten years, between 1955 and 1965, when he went underground. But I try to understand from what he does when he comes back. The questions asked in the film are genuine questions from the point of view of the common man—what happened to the spirit of such an idealistic ideology which gave us hopes and dreams?

B.S.: How far is the film based on real life events, personal experiences, like your last film *Elippathayam* was?

A.G.: I know characters like that, there are hundreds of them. The Party formally split in 1964, though the pulling apart had been there for some time. It is said that during that period there were many who took to alcohol, because they couldn't bear it, they couldn't understand what was happening.

B.S.: When Sreedharan takes brandy for the pain in the stomach, why does he want the fact to remain such a secret?

A.G.: There was a time when Party workers would do nothing that could tarnish the image of the Party—no alcohol, no womanizing, nothing that could be considered immoral. So, Sreedharan is an austere person. But in those days people used to work so devotedly for the Party, they would not eat properly, they would starve and develop stomach ailments. I have researched it—most of them had problems with the stomach, basically due to lack of food. And because they were underground they could not go to a doctor. So just to kill the pain they took alcohol. I have used it as a dramatic element.

The second time he gets pain in the stomach it is when he meets his old colleague in the Party office where he listens to all that he talks, all platitudes, and when he comes out, there are these loudspeaker announcements of the splinter parties providing *their* interpretations of the current political situation. The stomach pain becomes at a spiritual level a pain that affects us . . . So anybody who says that it is an anti-Marxist, anti-Communist film has absolutely not understood it.

B.S.: And you maintain that it is not a political film?

A.G.: I am not trying to preach this ideology or that. This is not an insider's view of things, this is not the view of somebody who is opposed to the ideology—it is neither. It is the view of somebody who is affected by the whole thing. Because Communism, I think, is the most noble philosophy that ever evolved on this earth. I am deeply affected by what happens to this ideology.

B.S.: The split is there not only in Kerala. Communism means different things to different followers in different parts of the world.

A.G.: Exactly. It is an international phenomenon. I am not talking about Kerala only, but I have to be specific and confine myself to things that I know.

B.S.: A noble philosophy generating so much confusion . . .

A.G.: I have quoted Lenin, through characters, throughout the film. The Marxist Party man quotes Lenin to the effect that at every new stage of the march of the proletariat some people will be unable to continue the journey and will drop out. This was very prophetic.

B.S.: With all these splits and branchings, the common man is confused.

A.G.: The common man is absolutely confused, no doubt about that . . . The ideology got absorbed in smaller parties. Even the most reactionary parties raised the same slogans—*Inquilab Zindabad*. You cannot even tell who represents the left and who the right.

B.S.: Stylistically you must have had some problem while making *Mukhamukham* since you had to live up to the stature of the greatly acclaimed *Elippathayam*.

A.G.: Actually, any film of mine does not influence the next one. Because of the long intervals between my films I forget the earlier film.

B.S.: Going by one viewing of the film, you seem to have a very condensed, elliptical style of narration in *Mukhamukham*.

A.G.: Yes, I do not want the audience to just sit back and expect things to work out for them down to the last detail. I want them to participate in my search—when you are searching you cannot say things in a tone of finality. I do not want to do that. Secondly, the time of my audience is very precious. So everything that I show on the screen, every visual, every sound, every gesture, every movement that I use has to mean something, to build towards something. So this economy that I try to bring into the work, it necessarily means omission of the obvious . . . Personally, I have liked this film even better than *Elippathayam*.

B.S.: The sequence where Sreedharan comes back and people

gradually flock to have a glimpse of him as if he were a creature from another planet seemed highly stylized . . .

A.G.: You must see this film with the sounds properly heard. I used very ordinary sounds. A rooster crowing, to suggest early morning, is a very conventional thing, a cliché, and I have used it constantly to suggest mornings (*laughs*). The factory siren has been used for various purposes. The music used is the Communist Internationale. The first time it is used is when the framed photograph of Lenin rises as it is put up on the wall. It is a very important sequence.

What is to be noted is Sreedharan's own face reflected in the glass—the two images merge. His own image rises in the same form at the end of the film to the accompaniment of the Communist Internationale played full scale. Even in the sequence of the raid on the party office where the picture of Lenin is pulled down and trampled upon, it is, first, the fall of the image, and then, its ascent, resurrection.

B.S.: You have said that this film has been with you as a concept for a long time.

A.G.: The first draft of the film was written at least two years before *Elippathayam*. Then after *Elippathayam* I rewrote the script. That makes the idea four years old, and it was shot one year ago.

The following is a note on Mukhamukham where Adoor Gopalakrishnan states his own artistic and political standpoint in the context of his film.

Mukhamukham is not really a total departure from what I have done earlier. My previous film, *Elippathayam*, dealt with an individual trapped in a situation which was mostly the making of a society in transition. In *Mukhamukham*, the society itself is caught in a crisis distraught by doubts, despair, inaction and remorse. It is a society that vaguely nurtures hopes about change but does nothing about it.

There lives a revolutionary—not necessarily political—in every individual. But in the course of time, as a matter of common experience, this spirit either dies out or becomes dormant. The idea of this film was born out of my desire to search for this spirit. Not being in the know of the final answers myself, I decided to give it a structure which is basically investigative in character.

At a point of time in the present, the image of a small-town revolutionary is progressively pieced together from reminiscences and statements of people who had known him and documents that related to his life and times. As an artiste who is sympathetic to the cause, I have logically filled up the gaps in the fabric of the story to construct an image that is real and credible.

The narrative returns to the same point of time and situation—

from where it started—to the present day society that is spiritually inept and morally corrupt.

Will this revolutionary, long absent from the scene, if called back and entreated, take up the challenge to shake the society out of its lethargy and slumber?

Driven by a sincere and deep felt desire to find answers to their questions, the people conjure up the man of the image from the past and wait listlessly for things to happen.

The man of the image turns out to be a bitter disappointment. He acts and behaves like themselves—withdrawn, indifferent, evasive, confused and even defeated. He cannot inspire them any more.

He is in fact a projection of their own selves—a very inconvenient, embarrassing and menacing revelation.

Naturally they do not want to accept this for it is pointing the finger at themselves.

Soon the status quo is maintained by destroying the real and resurrecting the blemishless, venerable image of their ideal.



Adoor Gopalakrishnan

Neeraba Jhada

The Silent Storm

In a remote village in Orissa, a young boy lies unconscious, while a human chain brings pitchers of water from the well to pour on his head. The boy has been bitten by a snake, and it is not surprising that he dies without any medical care. But the ways of the village have remained unchanged for generations. Poverty and illiteracy have fostered their dependence on superstition, and they accept the daily sorrows of their lives without question. Most of the villagers have their land mortgaged to the landlord, Janardan. They work on these fields, but the major share of the harvest goes to Janardan. Fear of traditional authority and a sense of abject helplessness keep the villagers from protesting against their condition. Perhaps it is such a muted rebellion that sent Malia mad. Malia now spends his days digging for hidden treasure. On a rainy night, when the two friends Bhamar and Haria sit talking under the thatched roof of Bhamar's hut, Malia, in a state of frenzy, walks away into the rain shouting, 'Do you know who owns all the land in this village? It's Janardan and I. Only Janardan has more now, because he has taken away part of my land!'

Noori's brass pitcher has been stolen. In one of the nocturnal village meetings that are held in the same place where the religious meetings take place, Janardan gathers the villagers together. He asks each man to come forward and swear in the name of god that he has not stolen the pitcher. The guilty villager cannot contain himself, and breaks down weeping. He confesses that he has stolen the pitcher and pawned it in exchange for some food.

Janardan's greed and the inability of the villagers to protest in the face of injustice, creates a situation where many of the villagers are forced to become contract labourers and leave the village to earn a livelihood. Haria, who has no other means of raising money to give a dowry at his daughter's marriage, has to join this band. He leaves his family with a heavy heart. His young son exclaims, 'Father, you will go to the city! You will see the wide roads, the big buildings, the coloured lights!' Hiding his grief, Haria promises to bring back gifts for them from the city.

In the meanwhile Bhamar antagonizes Janardan, when to pay back his loan to Janardan, he goes to work in the stone quarry instead of working for free on Janardan's land. Janardan sees to it that he loses his job. His real intention is to take over the last piece of land that is not mortgaged to him, Bhamar's land. While Bhamar fights for his survival in the village, his daughter Phoola finds herself drawn towards a young man in the employ of Janardan. One

day when they meet in secret, they are spied upon and Phoola is recognized. There is a scandal in the village as a result. Janardan takes this opportunity to get Bhamar ostracized in the village, especially since he has tried to defend his daughter in public against Janardan's allegations.

When Bhamar discovers that the allegations are true, that it really was his daughter who was meeting a man in the village in secret, he is shattered. He goes back to Janardan to mollify him. But Janardan is not prepared to listen. He makes it clear that unless Bhamar clears his loan, he will not be allowed to enter his own fields. He will also have to pay the penalty for his arrogance in the next village meeting. Left with no other alternative, Bhamar decides to leave the village and take up the job of a contract labourer.

But before Bhamar can leave the village, Haria comes back suddenly one night. He has been ill, but they forced him to work all the same. Haria escaped to come home and rest for a few days, though he knows that he cannot escape the clutches of his new employers for long. The children huddle around him in the hope of gifts, but their father has come empty-handed. Looking at his son in despair he says, 'Yes, son, I have seen the wide roads and the coloured lights. But they took us far away from them to a place where one has to work all the time, from dawn to dusk.'

Bhamar and Phoola - faced with an uncertain future



Bhamar and Phoola wait at the little station near the village. Phoola will go to her uncle's home and Bhamar to hard, back-breaking toil. As they wait for the train, Phoola weeps. 'Don't cry, my daughter,' says her father. 'Look! Look, there lies our village. My grandfather was born there, so was my father. I was born there too. I have to come back there one day to take possession of my land!'

1984/Black & White/35 mm/120 min/Oriya

Production: Chayyadhwani Productions

Story: Nandalal Mohapatra

Direction and Screenplay: Manmohan Mahapatra

Camera: Raj Shekhar and B. Bindhani

Music: Shantanu Mahapatra

Sound: Gopinath Das and Bani Mohanty

Art Direction: Ashim Basu and Sampad Mahapatra

Editing: Satyendra Mohanty

Lead Players: Hemanta Das, Niranjana Patnaik, B. Tripathy, R. Das, Jaya Swami, Manimala

Enquiries: Chayyadhwani Productions, 232 Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar 751 007, Orissa

A graduate in direction from the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, Manmohan Mahapatra made a mark with his student films. His first feature film, *Seeta Raati*, made in 1981, received the National Award for the best film of the year in Oriya. *Seeta Rati* dealt with a woman's self-realization in the context of a traditional social milieu.

Neeraba Jhada is Mahapatra's second feature film and has won National Awards for the best photography and the best film of the region for the year 1984. Mahapatra has also made two documentaries, *Voices of Silence* and *Konark—the Sun Temple*. He has just completed the shooting of his third feature film, *Klanta Aparanbha*, also in the Oriya language.

In *Neeraba Jhada*, Mahapatra shifts his interests to an entirely rural environment, depicting a universe of deprivation within the closed atmosphere of a single small village in Orissa. Bhamar and Haria are the archetypal peasants of India trapped by their ignorance and poverty into a cycle of exploitation which continues to push them towards a dehumanized existence. Yet they have the audacity to dream of a more fulfilling future. Their latent instinct for survival will not be crushed under the soul-destroying drudgery of their lives. Haria's little son dreams of the wide roads and coloured lights of the city. Phoola desires a home of her own with the man she loves. Bhamar knows he must come back to till his own

land. Generations of submission to the obsolete feudal laws of the land has still not managed to annihilate the human spirit. Bhamar and Haria will not give up their struggle. Within their own confined worlds, they will continue to battle against the forces that daily attempt to snatch away their last possession, their human dignity. But one day the many individual worlds will unite. The silent storm will break. Its resonance will sweep away the dusts of a decaying system and make place for a new generation whose dreams will be their reality.



Manmohan Mahapatra

Paar

The Crossing

Darkness falls on a small village in Bihar. In the huts of the poor Harijan labourers the hearths are being lit when the stillness of the night is shattered by the noise of advancing motorbikes and jeeps. The landlord's henchmen appear out of the dark, carrying torches and guns. The huts are set on fire, the people are pulled out of their hiding places and gunned down. In the cover of darkness only a handful escape the holocaust. Among them are Naurangia and his pregnant wife, Rama.

The day after the massacre come the protectors of the people—the police, the press, the local administration. The village headman sits recounting an age-old tale of injustice which lies at the root of the tragic event.

It all began predictably with the village schoolmaster, an idealist of the old school, who believed, however naively, that the fruits of freedom must be shared with the poorest. It is with his encouragement that a Harijan stood for the Panchayat elections and became the headman. It is also because of him that the movement for minimum wages first began in the area. 'It is your inalienable right,' said he. 'The government has given you the right to receive a stipulated sum as minimum wages. How can the landlords not agree to it?' But of course the landlords did not agree. The schoolmaster himself went to intercede on behalf of the labourers. The younger brother of the landlord laughed to his face and mocked at his old-

Naurangia and Rama crossing the river



fashioned Gandhian ideas. When the labourers refused to go to the fields, the hot-blooded young man came to the school to openly threaten the old schoolmaster. A Harijan winning the Panchayat elections came as an additional insult. The younger brother of the landlord decided to take matters in his own hand, and the old schoolmaster met sudden death on the roadside, going home one evening on his bicycle.

The villagers waited for justice to be done. There were even witnesses who had seen the jeep that had thrown the schoolmaster off the road onto the field below. But the witnesses were never called. The police were convinced that it was an accident, not a murder. Who would want to kill a harmless old man? The feud would have ended right there, with the traditionally powerful winning another round against the traditionally powerless. But Naurangia and his friends decided to change the course of history by lying in wait for the landlord's loud-mouthed brother one evening at a lonely spot on the road.

The landlord's brother died a violent death, but the course of history did not change after all. The entire village paid with their lives for that one death. And Naurangia and his wife became fugitives from the law.

Rama and Naurangia's odyssey begins at the home of the schoolmaster's widow who sends them off with a letter addressed to a friend of her dead husband in a nearby town. From there, armed with a note to another unknown benefactor, the two set off for Calcutta. By now Naurangia is fed up with being on the run. The government has announced compensations for the victims of the massacre. Naurangia wants to go back to the village. It is Rama who is determined not to go. 'They'll kill you!' she says. 'How can we go back?' On the train to Calcutta they meet a stray traveller, a vagabond who persuades them to spend the little money they have by spending a few days roaming the streets of the strange metropolis. When they have reached the point of desperation, he puts them on a train to Naihati where a jute mill is their final destination.

But the man Naurangia is to meet at the jute mill has left for his village. Naurangia spends days futilely looking for employment. What with retrenchments and strikes, the mill is in a bad way. Even the local bosses are losing their hold and nobody can help Naurangia. With starvation staring them in the face, even Rama is now willing to go back to the village. But where is the money to pay for the fare back home?

At this point, after a long and hopeless day, Naurangia is offered an absurd job. A herd of swine have to be delivered to the other side of the river. The ferries refuse to take animals on board. So the herd



Exhausted after the ordeal

must be manually driven across the river. Rama is at first scared of the wide river in front of them. What if she loses the baby? But Naurangia is adamant. There is hunger on this side of the river, and money on the other side, money to take them home. They have no choice. Naurangia and Rama wade into the river with the herd.

At the end of the long and arduous journey Naurangia receives their payment, and an extra bonus—a roof over their heads for the night. As they lie exhausted at night, suddenly Rama realizes that the baby has been too still, too silent. Will she lose the baby after all? She has already lost her first child who had drowned in the village well. Will this one go too? She cries out aloud in her fear. In the darkness Naurangia puts his ear against his wife's rising belly. Wait, listen. There he is. I can hear him cry. Rama relaxes and lies back again, as Naurangia continues to listen avidly to the small silent voice of life in his wife's womb.

1984/Colour/35 mm/120 min/Hindi

Production: Orchid Films Private Ltd.

Story: Samaresh Bose

Direction, Camera and Music: Goutam Ghose

Screenplay: Partha Banerjee and Goutam Ghose

Lead Players: Naseeruddin Shah, Shabana Azmi, Utpal Dutta, Om Puri, Mohan Agashe, Anil Chatterjee

Enquiries: Orchid Films Private Ltd., 3 A Hindustan Road, Calcutta 700 029.

Born in 1950, Goutam Ghose graduated from the University of Calcutta and took up theatre and photo-journalism. By 1972 he was making documentaries and short advertisement films, and *Hungry Autumn*, a documentary made in 1976, was acclaimed both by the critics and the serious film lovers, winning an award at Oberhausen and receiving a Diploma of Merit at Leipzig. His first feature film, *Ma Bhoomi*, based on the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh, was made in Telugu in 1980 and was judged the best regional film. His second feature film, *Dakhal*, made in Bengali in 1981, based on a tribal people's confrontation with an exploitative system, won the President's Award for the best feature film of the year, and the Grand Jury Prize in the XI International Human Rights Film Festival in France. *Paar* has won his actor, Naseeruddin Shah, the best actor's prize at the 41st International Film Festival in Venice. The film has also been awarded the Unesco Solidarity Award for the year.

A one-time active member of the Students Federation, Goutam Ghose gave up politics for films. Commenting on his latest film, Ghose says: 'When one probes into the world of violence, lawlessness and dehumanization of values, one finds charred ruins of human dwellings; people enslaved and driven from their homes; human dignity trampled underfoot. For me, the crossing of the river is a metaphor—a metaphor for the whole challenge of human endeavour in the teeth of hunger, with the elemental challenging them in the form of dumb, grotesque animality.'

In an interview with Mukul Sharma in The Telegraph, 14 October, 1984, Ghose gives his views on films and filmmakers.

M.S.: Do you feel you make 'art' films?

G.G.: Any good film should be a work of art. But I don't consider my film on the same level as *Ardh Satya*, frankly speaking.

M.S.: Did you like *Ardh Satya*?

G.G.: No, I didn't like the film, though I liked the approach and the basic concept. I thought that the formula of *Ardh Satya* contained typical elements of commercial Hindi cinema.

- M.S.: How would you rate *Paar*? Better than *36 Chowringhee Lane*?
- G.G.: No, I can't say that. That's a different film. You see, what I believe is that the 'marks' that we give only reflect our attitude towards good cinema. Good cinema is absolutely universal. When you really make a film you should consider that you're making a film for an international audience. And when one should criticise a film they should consider the entire history of cinema.
- M.S.: In that case why do we have silly awards like *Best First Film By A New Director* etc? Isn't that stupid?
- G.G.: Perhaps it works as some kind of incentive to the first-film maker who tried his or her best to make a good film. In fact the best solution would be to just ignore the competition.
- M.S.: You didn't.
- G.G.: No, that's true. But I believe that cinema is still not considered as great art. Like painting or music.
- M.S.: Therefore should there be a moulding of people's consciousness about cinema since it is supposed to be the greatest medium of the 20th century?
- G.G.: Sure.
- M.S.: Do you for example think it is your duty to do so?
- G.G.: I don't think so. It's impossible. It's never happened in history.
- M.S.: It has happened with film.
- G.G.: No, never. I can give an example. For instance Chaplin, Chaplin made his great masterpieces like *The Kid* or *The Gold Rush* or *City Lights* or *Modern Times*, but when Chaplin thought that after the war he should change his form, he made *A King In New York*. It was not accepted by people.
- M.S.: *Limelight* was.
- G.G.: Only *Limelight*. What about *A King In New York*? I consider that to be as equally important as *The Kid* or *The Gold Rush*.
- M.S.: Not *A Countess from Hong Kong*?
- G.G.: I think that kind of a film is a great pain for a master. Chaplin you know created such great things before he made this film. He wanted to keep track with modern films and somehow, he couldn't. He failed. Sometimes you go wrong. For instance in this film *Paar*. I thought that the film should start with the massacre. I'm not satisfied with the scene. It's filmed and photographed very badly. By badly I mean that the first scene—the carnage—could have been done much better. It's not like the best scenes in the film.
- M.S.: What do you consider the best scenes in your film?
- G.G.: I consider two to be the best scenes. One is when Shabana and Naseer leave the village. When Shabana says that he has to go or they would kill him and Naseer says that the government has

promised some kind of compensation. But she is so insecure; she wants to know what is going to happen to her. She's carrying a child. And if you remember, the entire sequence is very similar to the part where Shabana says she can't cross the river because she's carrying a baby. That's when Naseer is counting the pigs and he says, 'Oh, come on, that's about Rs. 27 and I have to pay seven and a half as commission.' Then it's a very dramatic scene when Shabana says she cannot do it and Naseer says, 'What the hell! You crazy bloody bitch, we have to do it for the Rs. 20!' The point is not the poverty alone. Even Gunter Grass asked me about it.

M.S.: I believe he was impressed with the film.

G.G.: Yes, in fact he liked it so much he saw it twice. Then he asked me why I had put in that scene. He was referring to the scene when Shabana and Naseer come to Jagdish and find that Jagdish has gone back to the village and it's evening and Shabana is waiting and she is hungry and Naseer has gone to see someone else about a job. And suddenly this lady comes out of the house and seeing Shabana sitting there, pale and tired, gives her something to eat. Immediately there is a shot, a closeup in fact, which shows her keeping a portion of the food for her husband. Gunter asked me, why that shot? Why should she share with her husband?

M.S.: It's unthinkable for an Indian woman.

G.G.: It's absurd. Unthinkable for our society. And I don't think it's because of our backwardness. It's basically a question of sharing. That's what is important, which a lot of Europeans can't understand. Or Americans for that matter. They can't think of it either.

M.S.: Is this in anyway something to do with your leftism?

G.G.: You know my experience with leftist politics, particularly in my student days, opened out a lot of things. It gave me a lot of experience. For instance I was very sceptical about the characters in the villages but I was absolutely sure about the character of Sunil because I have mixed with a lot of lumpens.

M.S.: You're not answering my question though.

G.G.: Okay, I still believe in some Marxist philosophical understandings. In Marxism there are tremendous openings available.

M.S.: So, should Marxist film-makers in India be encouraged?

G.G.: I'm not quite sure who is and who isn't a Marxist.

M.S.: That makes you a pretty terrible communist, you know!

G.G.: Yes, I know!

M.S.: Anyway, are you glad that you function in a state that is Marxist oriented?

G.G.: Not at all. Not at all. There is a kind of state you believe in

when you read Marxism. This is not that kind of state. Also, it's not possible.

M.S.: Are you a communist?

G.G.: I'm not a communist. Impossible. It's so difficult to be one. You see when I started film-making in 1973, I'm sure you remember our condition. There was a tremendous crisis among students the world over—Vietnam and all that. This affected a lot of people even in India. It affected my film-making.

M.S.: So do you like Mrinal Sen's film better or Satyajit Ray's?

G.G.: I don't consider Sen or Ray as left-leaning film-makers. However, I think Ray has made more of a contribution to cinema than Mrinal Sen. What I honestly like about Sen's films is the youthfulness.

M.S.: What was the last film of his that you liked?

G.G.: *Akaler Sandhaney*. Of course *Bhuvan Shome* is historically more significant. It was made at such a time that most film-makers were beginning to get tired. Even Ray.

M.S.: That's when he made *Goopy Gyne*, etc.

G.G.: But the impact was different. *Goopy Gyne* was a very exciting film.

M.S.: Did you like it as film? Do you think it's a great film?

G.G.: No, I don't think it's great film.

M.S.: What film of his do you consider great? Besides the usual.

G.G.: Well, apart from the trilogy and *Charulata* I like *Kanchenjunga*.

M.S.: Who has influenced you more? Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak or Satyajit Ray?

G.G.: I think Orson Welles.

M.S.: You like *Citizen Kane*? And does this mean you like *The Magnificent Ambersons* too?

G.G.: I think the second is a more mature film than the first . . .

M.S.: How did you go into film-making?

G.G.: I'm coming to that. I think my first exposure to great cinema was—which really changed my life, changed my entire vision of film-making—were two films. One is Jean Renoir's *La Grande Illusion* and John Ford's *Stagecoach*. Before that I had not been exposed to Ray or Mrinal or Ritwik.

M.S.: Have they made a difference since?

G.G.: Of course. I saw *Aparajito* for instance. And one of my favourite films is *Kanchenjunga*. But I think none of the great directors in Calcutta are political people. Not even Ritwik or Mrinal.

M.S.: Since we are on Ritwik let me clear something. Why is that you are being compared frequently these days to the Ritwik Ghatak syndrome of creativity and alcohol?

G.G.: I think this is the most ridiculous thing that has happened in our cinema history—the kind of aura or media that Ritwik was also influenced by. They were constantly praising Ritwik for his unconventional way of living. You see, we are still living in a society with a lot of feudal values. It's an absolutely ridiculous proposition. You see the problem with our critics and our audience is that they think our life should be different. I don't know what kind of Indian tradition this is, but our upbringing right from our youth—we've had a bourgeois understanding which is . . . I was born in Calcutta. I had no exposure to the Indian countryside, till 72-73. I really had no understanding. When I started making documentaries I travelled a lot and then I got fascinated by the country and then I was involved with student politics.

M.S.: Were you also involved in the Naxalite movement?

G.G.: No, never.

M.S.: Of course you were! You acted in a film called *Palabar Path Nei*. This was covertly and overtly an extreme left-leaning film.

G.G.: Well, that was an absolutely personal involvement . . . I've always had this contradiction. We pursue our lives with this contradiction. Idealism; personal involvement. I believe life is more important than film-making. Just imagine, I always kept apart from the press and all that. I never ever went to the press with my awards. I got my first international award in 1976 at Oberhausen.

M.S.: For a bad film!

G.G.: Oh, come on. I don't think *Hungry Autumn* is a bad film. Why don't you see the film again? You'll realise then that in 1976 our mental condition was different. It was made in 1974 when I was struggling with the tension of our villages and I saw people who were really dying in front of my camera. You see I had a crazy childhood. My mother comes from a very sophisticated Brahmo family. But my father is a different person. Possibly scatterbrained but a very very interesting person. Also, he had a tremendous understanding of European literature.

M.S.: Are you still anarchic?

G.G.: I think so subjectively. The way I lived my life 15 years back—I feel that was a real anarchic life. Where you reject normal things of life and create something which is better.

M.S.: Does this mean you like Bunuel or Dali or Andy Warhol?

G.G.: Well, I like them.

M.S.: Because they're anarchic?

G.G.: Let's take, for instance, Bunuel.

M.S.: And let's take *Le Chien Andalou*.

G.G.: That was made a long time back with Dali and at one point, as we know, he left Dali.

M.S.: I was talking about what you thought of it now.

G.G.: I saw a lot of films of Bunuel in Venice this time.

M.S.: But I get back once again, why is it that you are thought of as a protege of Ritwik Ghatak?

G.G.: First of all, as a film-maker I have liked basically only three films of Ghatak. *Ajantrik*, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* and *Subarnarekha*.

M.S.: Not *Jukti, Takko Aar Gappo*?

G.G.: No, I didn't like that film. In it Ritwik projected himself as himself. I always like autobiographical films but I found this a stupid film. An absolutely stupid film. As a person I never liked Ritwik. Never in my life.

M.S.: Why are you identified with him in that case?

G.G.: I liked a lot of his artistic qualities. His images. Moments in the film. Shot patterns. Also I felt that he was one of the very few who started sharing his identification with people. He started with *Nagarik*. As a film I don't consider it good. Bunuel for example was an incredible guy; he was from Andalusia. After 10 or 15 years he went back to his country and he found images. By that time he had got a different consciousness. He had got a different vision of life. But with Ritwik, he started with absolute virgin images, like in *Nagarik*. Then he was tremendously influenced by Ray's *Pather Panchali*.

M.S.: You really think so?

G.G.: I'm sure that after *Pather Panchali* there was a tremendous wave of our films that should have a place in international cinema.

M.S.: You're saying Ray had an influence. Whom did he have an influence on?

G.G.: Ritwik Ghatak and many Bengali film-makers. In fact all of them.

M.S.: Who?

G.G.: Even Tapan Sinha.

M.S.: Whom do you consider, in Bengal, a good film-maker? Besides my wife.

G.G.: Till now I don't consider me or Reena (Aparna Sen) very good or great directors. Maybe we're trying to do our best.

M.S.: What do you think of Buddhadeb Dasgupta?

G.G.: He's also trying his best.

M.S.: And Purnendu Pattrea?

G.G.: I've seen one of his films called *Chenra Tamshuk* and I think it's a very bad film.

M.S.: *Streer Patra*?

G.G.: That was a miserable failure. And you know why? *Streer Patra* was a technical mistake. But the intention was good.

M.S.: Since we're at this game, what do you think of Sai Paranjpye?

G.G.: I've seen only one film of hers—*Katha*.

M.S.: What did you think about it?

G.G.: *Katha* is a mediocre film with a little fun inside.

M.S.: You like anything by Mahesh Bhatt?

G.G.: In Mahesh's film—*Saraansh* I've seen, only one film—it's a melodramatic film, extremely melodramatic but I did have some kind of gut reaction. I don't consider it a great film, mind you. But then when I met Mahesh, I liked him. I thought he was a real great person.



Goutam Ghose

Party

Diwakar Barve, a celebrated playwright and novelist, has been given a prestigious literary award. Mrs. Rane, a high society patron of the arts, is throwing a party in the evening in Barve's honour. Her guests are a mixed crowd of poets, writers, actors and intellectuals from different walks of life, all preparing themselves through the long day for the evening's festivities.

Who are these people? What are they really like in the hidden corners of their lives? There is Mrs. Rane, the rich widow, who has always projected herself to her children and friends as a genuinely sensitive, artistic person, misunderstood and neglected by a husband who had done nothing to deserve her. To her daughter, Sona, who has produced an illegitimate child by a man she despises, Mrs. Rane is a parasite, sitting on a cultural vacuum, and living off the talent of people whom she pays with her patronage. Sona lives under sufferance in her mother's home, spending her days in silent rebellion against the frenetic social life around her, the false cultural mores, the desperate craving for recognition by little people, the arms outstretched for the gift of a foreign trip. Her emotional survival in a milieu she hates has been made possible only by her deep attachment to Amrit and all that he stands for, Amrit the poet-warrior, the ultimate romantic, who has gone over to the other side of the battle lines to fight a losing war for the deprived and the dispossessed.

Images of Mohini



There is Diwakar Barve, the great writer, the keeper of the cultural conscience of the nation, respected, admired and emulated by a large number of younger writers. He alone knows that for years he has had nothing to say. He has repeated the same selling idea year after year, dressed in new clothes. What he has held up as profound has been hollow within. He has known how to survive, and has ruthlessly applied himself to that task. In the process he has destroyed the one person who has genuinely believed in him and loved him—Mohini. Once a successful actress, the now aging Mohini still waits for a single gesture of warmth from the man who has used her and rejected her long ago. Mohini has waited through the best years of her life for Barve to marry her. She gave up her career, the glamour and the adulation, to live with Barve as his mistress. Now she waits for his love, drowning her frustrations in drink, living in hope and in despair.

There is Bharat, the young rising poet from humble beginnings, wavering between the desire for the kind of success that Barve has achieved, and the remote, romantic dream of Amrit. There is Ravindra, the handsome, established stage actor whose soaring ambitions hide his secret desire for possessing Mohini. There is the grotesque middle-aged critic, Mrs. Abraham, hiding her advancing years behind a mask of make-up, carrying around with her a reluctant youthful lover like a dog on a leash. There is the young leftist intellectual, Vrinda, quick to lash out at petit-bourgeois compromises, yet keen to belong to the privileged set who throng Mrs. Rane's drawing room.

Behind the noise and the laughter, the petty quarrels and compromises, the party takes on a bizarre character of its own. Brief encounters emerge like small islands only to be swept away again. The shifting sands of conversation leave nothing tangible behind. But there is one latent force that holds each individual tied to his personal feeling of guilt—the name, Amrit. In his own way, each individual present at Mrs. Rane's party has been touched by Amrit's talent, and shamed by his passion for truth. Unknown to all of them, it has been also Amrit's day of reckoning. Amrit's friend, Avinash Kale, a young journalist, brings news of Amrit's betrayal. Amrit, battered by the very forces he has been fighting against, lies injured in a prison hospital. Faced with the reality of physical suffering, the writers and artistes, the merchants of words, gather around in a free for all, where they are suddenly cornered, each one protecting his own attitudes, justifying his artistic stand, shielding his ambiguous position and intellectual role within the society that sustains him. As the evening draws to a close, news comes of Amrit's death in the hands of unknown assassins.

The ears leave one by one. The great house falls silent once



Ravindra in one of his memorable roles

again. Only Sona walks out of the house into the darkness outside to mourn Amrit and the passing away of a dream.

In Diwakar Barve's bedroom, Mohini lies in a drunken stupor, but Barve moves restlessly in his sleep. The battered and bleeding face of Amrit moves silently out of the darkness towards him.

Bharat sits awake in his room, haunted, like Barve, by the distorted, bloodied image of Amrit, his tongue pulled out of his mouth, his mighty voice silenced.

1984/ Colour/ 35 mm/155 min/Hindi.

Production: National Film Development Corporation

Based on an original Marathi play by: Mahesh Elkunchwar

Direction and Camera: Govind Nihalani

Screenplay and Dialogue: Mahesh Elkunchwar

Sound: Raghubir Date

Art Direction: Nitesh Roy

Editing: Renu Saluja

Lead Players: Rohini Hattangady, Manohar Singh, Vijaya Mehta, Deepa Sahi, K.K. Raina, Soni Razdan, Shafi Inamdar, Akash Khurana, Gulan Kripalani, Amrish Puri, Om Puri, Naseeruddin Shah, Pearl Padamsee

Enquiries: National Film Development Corporation, 13-16 Regal Chambers, Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021

Born in the early forties, Govind Nihalani came to Udaipur as a refugee in 1947 from his original home in Karachi, in Pakistan. After completing his college education, Nihalani studied cinema-

tography in Bangalore, at the S.J. Polytechnic. For ten years after that he worked as an assistant cameraman for V.K. Murthy, the man behind some of Guru Dutt's best work. He then became assistant cameraman to director Prämód Chakravarty. Nihalani's entry into feature films was in 1970 when he photographed and co-produced Satyadev Dubey's Marathi film, *Shantata ! Court Chalü Abe*. He has since photographed nearly all of Shyam Benegal's feature films, and for one of them, *Janoon*, collected the National Award for best colour cinematography for the year 1979. His first feature film *Aakrosh* won the Golden Peacock at the 8th International Film Festival of India, held in Delhi in 1981. The same year, director Richard Attenborough signed Nihalani on as the second unit director-cinematographer for *Gandhi*. Among his other films are *Vijeta*, 1983 and *Aradh Satya*, 1983. The latter proved to be a highly successful film, and won the National Award for the best Hindi film of the year.

In an interview with Lens Eye in The Times of India, 11 November 1984, Govind Nihalani talks about his two most recent films.

L.E.: Have you been accepted by the film industry after the commercial success of *Aradh Satya*?

G.N.: No. I don't think so. As far as acceptance by the film industry goes and specially by the distributors, I'm still judged on the basis of every new film I attempt. To the hardcore film people, I'm an unpredictable commodity. I trust the audience more than the film industry actually, I'm sure they will come to see what I've authored, they will be curious to see what Govind Nihalani's up to.

I agree *Aradh Satya* has become a kind of reference point for low-budget cinema—not so much for its quality or the issues it tackles but for thinking that such cinema can also be profitable at the box-office. I'm not too happy about this, a 'hit' usually means that compromises have been made by the director. I don't believe I made any.

L.E.: Why did you change the ending? Vijay Tendulkar's script closed on a more downbeat note, didn't it? Even in the case of your first film *Aakrosh*, you insisted on changing the end.

G.N.: What should matter is what comes off on the screen. In *Aradh Satya* Welinkar kills Rama Shetty. If you look at this superficially, then you can say, yes he gets his revenge. My intention was more complex; a man is trying to cling to his power, he refuses to be insulted and does the most drastic thing he can under the circumstances. He kills. Not only the end, but other points were modified as a result of discussions with Tendulkar.

As a film-maker, I should be given the benefit of the doubt; if I've changed something it's because I believe in it strongly. In the original version, which was also shot, Welinkar becomes an

alcoholic, he is reduced to a vegetable. He meets Shetty, throws a glass at him and the next thing you know is that he has gone home and committed suicide. Sorry, but I'm not interested in this kind of a person. I'm just not interested in quitters. They may exist. The trouble is I'm only interested in those who take a stand, refuse to get cowed down, and don't know the meaning of the word 'submissive'.

L.E.: At times, it looked as if you were supporting the police system—that brutality and corruption are inevitable.

G.N.: The police system in this country has major flaws. Now, I have no intention of supporting them. At the same time, I don't believe if it's the police, it must be painted black. Instead, I think we were viewing the system from an insider's point of view. There was that speech in which it's stated that we can't do without the police, that they do have their role to play as the clean-up men of society. It's a contradiction in terms. I know, but it had to be made. Neither have I really tried to justify police torture. When Welinkar beats a boy to death, I'm sure the people hated him for doing that: the violence of the situation isn't justified.

L.E.: Right. Can we talk about *Party* which you've just completed for the National Film Development Corporation?

G.N.: The film's based on the Marathi play *Party* by Mahesh Elkunchwar. He's a dear friend, I met him through theatre, through Satyadev Dubey actually. The play was performed on stage but I had heard unfavourable reports about the production, that Mahesh's view of Bombay society was amateurish and that his characterizations weren't deep enough. When I went to visit him at Nagpur (he stays there), he read out the play and I found it absolutely engrossing.

I thought here was a challenge: the play doesn't offer any changes in time, location or costume. A party is hosted for an award winning writer, everything takes place on the same day and most of the action is concentrated in one set. There's no plot or the strong dramatic structure you find in my other films. On the other hand, there's a terrible amount of intensity; all the characters are placed in a claustrophobic situation. This has been rarely attempted by our cinema.

I've tried to achieve striking character studies. With each scene, a new aspect of a particular character is revealed. My aim has been to make the audience wonder whether each character is speaking the truth or putting on a mask. People, I feel, have to be shaded with ambiguity.

L.E.: How does the film differ from the play?

G.N.: There is a major difference in the thrust. The play's

concerned with the question of art versus life. The film goes a bit further and tries to see whether a person can have two contrary sets of morality. One as an artist and the other as a human being. My ultimate conclusion is that what you decide to do as a human is more important than anything else.

L.E.: How close have you been to this world of art, culture and parties?

G.N.: Fairly close. I don't look down on social gatherings, parties, whatever. Neither do I run after them. They can be uninteresting at times, and stimulating at times. Just talking to someone, or listening to the general flow of conversation, or even observing the scene, can be a positive experience. In *Party*, you encounter all types. The film can also be viewed as a story of choices: someone might have chosen to become an activist while another person may have turned his face away from the rigours of commitment.

L.E.: Have you faced such a choice yourself?

G.N.: No. From the beginning, survival has been of the utmost importance. My family came from Karachi to Udaipur after the partition. We had to go through tremendous financial crises. Father was trading in grain, he wasn't doing too well. By the time I went to study cinematography at Bangalore's S.J. Polytechnic, he had incurred heavy losses and the pressure was showing.

As soon as I finished the course, it was important for me to earn. I became the only earning member of the family. The situation is much the same today, a fairly large family has to be supported. Though, I must say the pressure has eased.

From the kind of subjects I've done, it's clear that I'm aware of the condition around us. Yet, I've never had the courage to leave, chuck it all up and get involved in field work. But I refuse to take up the type of offers I've been getting from the industry. I prefer to make ad films for the money and develop subjects of my own choice. This is the only way I can remain in a position of strength.

Govind Nibalani



Saaransh

The Gist

A point may come in the life of an individual when he must justify to himself his own existence, his reason for staying alive. A man who is daily losing control over his own life in a corrupt and brutalized environment, is perhaps better off if he is out of this business of living altogether. Unless, of course, he can shift all responsibility onto the willing shoulders of an inscrutable god as Parvati has done: Parvati, wife of B.V. Pradhan, a retired headmaster, and mother of Ajay who was recently mugged and killed, quite senselessly, in a street in New York.

While Parvati sleeps, Pradhan wakes up, goes to his desk and starts writing a letter to his son. But Ajay is dead. Had he forgotten? Stirring in the cocoon of his grief, he remembers, and crumples the letter in his hand.

Day breaks and all the old habits take over. Life's business carries on inexorably around Pradhan and his wife. There are immediate problems that cannot wait. Now that Ajay is dead, the old couple must augment their meagre income by renting out Ajay's room to a paying guest. Sujata, a young struggling actress, comes to take the room. With her comes Vilas, her boy friend and son of Gajanan Chitre, a municipal corporator who can bend everyone and everything to his wishes. Even Vilas is afraid of him.

Pradhan writes to his dead son



Sujata, who is only waiting for the day when Vilas will marry her, has been trying to get him to speak to his father. But Vilas is too scared to even broach the subject. In the meanwhile both want Sujata to have a room of her own where Vilas can come and meet her secretly. As the young people take a look around, Pradhan gets a telegram and rushes out of the house. He has just received the news of the arrival of Ajay's belongings from America, and his ashes.

There is a long queue at the counter, of people waiting to receive gifts of colour television sets. Rejecting the offer of help from a tout, Pradhan waits in the queue for hours, only to be told that he must collect a few more papers from the right official quarters before he can collect all the goods. Pradhan tries to explain that he is only interested in receiving the urn carrying his son's ashes. But the harassed officer at the counter shouts at the old man. In desperation, Pradhan storms into the room of his senior who finally arranges for the urn to be delivered to him.

Once he reaches home, Pradhan steals a handful of his son's ashes, and goes and sits in the park near his home, watching the children at play. As the laughter and noise of the children surround him, he scatters the ashes on the ground. For Pradhan, Ajay's life has ended where it began. Not so for his wife. Parvati lives in hope. Has not her guru said that Ajay will be reborn, near them?

In a valiant effort to continue living, Pradhan decides to look for a job again. He goes for an interview for a librarian's job, but rejects the offer of the job so that it may be passed on to an old student of his who is obviously in a far more desperate situation financially. On his way home from the interview Pradhan finds himself in the midst of a sudden riot. He is beaten up by a mob of youngsters, and manages to drag himself home late in the night. Overwhelmed by a sense of deep humiliation and unable to bear the finality of Ajay's death, Pradhan attempts to take his own life. He has no god who will save him from destruction. But Vilas, who has stolen into Sujata's room in the night, rushes out to help Parvati, and Pradhan is back among the living once more.

Shocked by Pradhan's suicide attempt, and frightened of being left alone, Parvati makes an offer to her husband. They will die together. At night, as the two old people prepare for their final escape, Vilas and Sujata have a quarrel. Sujata is pregnant. Vilas, who still hopes to win over his father before he marries Sujata, would rather get rid of the child. Sujata, outraged, and disgusted by Vilas's lack of courage in relation to his father, throws him out of her room. Pradhan and Parvati overhear the argument between the two. For Parvati this is the message she has been waiting for. Sujata's child will be Ajay, reborn! She has no time to die now. For Pradhan too it is a moment of illumination. If Sujata wishes to have

her child, Pradhan will help her; not for the sake of any blind belief in the guru's claims, but because it is Sujata's right to have her child that must be protected.

Pradhan begins by thinking that he will achieve what Vilas could not. He takes Sujata to Vilas's father. Gajanan Chitre, rich, powerful and uncouth, laughs at them, makes the trembling Vilas say that he has no responsibility towards Sujata and her child, and throws them out of his house. But the municipal elections are round the corner, and Chitre cannot afford to have the story of his son's indiscretion leak out to the opposition. Rallying all his forces together, Chitre attempts to persuade Sujata to have an abortion. A chain of events follow, each one an incident of terror, forcing Pradhan, Parvati and Sujata into complete isolation. Parvati continues to protect the young girl with the passion of her faith. But for Pradhan it is a battle against the annihilation of all human values. Pradhan is protecting all that he has held dear in the long years of his life; the right to individual freedom, the moral values that he has tried to inculcate in his students.

That he, a little man, does after all achieve victory, is really an accident of fate. That the minister he appeals to finally, turns out to be an ex-student, and manages with his magic wand of power to wipe out the nightmare, is one of those unprecedented and unbelievable happenings that take place more often in fiction than in real life. But Pradhan accepts it as an inevitable triumph over evil. Turning once more to the business of life, he decides to send Sujata away with Vilas who has finally rebelled against his father. It is his first step towards releasing Parvati from her obsession. Bereft of all emotional support, Parvati reminds her husband of their suicide pact. But Pradhan has learnt that one cannot die for the dead. As dawn breaks over the city, he takes his wife to the park where he had scattered a handful of his son's ashes. There, near a lonely park bench, the ashes have been transformed into wild flowers that stir gently with the breeze. Looking at the flowers, Pradhan and Parvati share a feeling of exultation, an understanding of the final assertion of life.

1984/Colour/35 mm/137 min/Hindi

Production: Rajshri Productions (P) Ltd.

Story and Direction: Mahesh Bhatt

Screenplay: Sujit Sen and Mahesh Bhatt

Camera: Adeep Tandon

Music: Ajit Verman

Lyrics: Vasant Deo

Dialogue: Amit Khanna and Mahesh Bhatt

Sound: Hitendra Ghosh

Art Direction: M.S. Shinde

Editing: David Dhawan

Lead Players: Anupam Kher, Rohini Hattangady, Soni Razdan, Madan Jain, Suhash Bhalekar, Nilu Phule.

Enquiries: Rajshri Productions (P) Ltd., 'Bhavana', First Floor, 422 Veer Sawarkar Road, Bombay 400 025.

In an interview by Udaya Tara Nayar for Screen, 27 April, 1984, Mahesh Bhatt talks of his own experience with Saaranish.

Born in Bombay in 1948, Mahesh Bhatt is the son of the well-known film-maker of yesteryear, Nanabhai Bhatt. His first directorial assignment was *Manzilein Aur Bhi Hai* in 1974, followed by *Viswasghat*, *Naya Daur*, *Laboo Ke Do Rang* and the highly successful *Arth*.

U.T.N.: How did *Saaranish* come about?

M.B.: *Saaranish* is a film close to my heart. After the success of *Arth*, I really didn't know what to do. I had decided I wasn't going to gamble away my hard won success by making just any film. It is not so difficult to attain success in this profession and in most cases of success the decline starts after the success, because success breeds an insecurity that makes a man grab anything that comes his way to hold on to his success. I was careful to see that it didn't happen to me.

I had this subject in my mind earlier but I hadn't developed it. Now after *Arth* I began giving it serious thought. The subject formed in my mind one evening when I was at U.G. Krishnamurthy's place. A woman came to him with a problem. She had lost her son and she wanted to know if he would be reincarnated, if she would be able to meet him somewhere in this life, if she, after her death, would be reunited with him. She was shattered and she was seeking solace in something that could keep her hopes alive, some assurance that could give her the desire to live her own life. I saw the torment on the woman's face, the turmoil she was experiencing within herself and I said, 'God, what's all this?' That was when I went home and thought about the finality of death and tucked away the seed of a subject in my mind.

U.T.N.: Any special reason why you took Anupam and Rohini to play the old couple?

M.B.: I had never seen any of Anupam's work on the stage. I had seen his photographs. That was all. Something about him told me that he was going to be ideal for the old retired headmaster of my film. He has done a marvellous job. You can see that for yourself when you see the film. Rohini is excellent, too. I don't have to tell you anything about her. In fact, the only thing I want to tell you is that I'd like you to write about my film and the wonderful people who have worked in it. The film needs to be promoted and they need exposure. Why bother about Mahesh Bhatt? No director, I can tell you is greater than his film.

U.T.N.: Didn't you think it was risky to make a film that questions our traditional belief in reincarnation and life after death and so on?

M.B.: I did. And I told my producers I was aware of the controversial nature of my subject but I had to make the film and make it my own way. There was no opposition, no interference from my producers. When you see the film you'll realize that nowhere in it have I said that death is the end of life. Life is a continuing process. The old man scatters his son's ashes in a children's park. Months later when he has a confrontation with his wife about life and death, he takes her to the park and shows her the place where he had sprinkled the ash and shows her the flowers that have blossomed there. She understands.

It is such subjects that fascinate me. Unless I feel intensely about a subject, unless it hits me deeply, gnaws at my heart, I cannot expect it to touch my audience. In the days of my failure I sat and thought a great deal. I realised I could succeed only if I made my kind of films and not the kind of films that were in vogue. These days you know it is fashionable to attack corruption and expose social evils. But for Heaven's sake, who is interested?

U.T.N.: Do you draw from personal experiences when you are making a film?

M.B.: I do in the sense that images and memories stored away in my mind come up while I am visualizing a scene or a character and I use them. I've shot *Saarangsh* in the lanes and parks I frequented in my childhood, which I spent in Shivaji Park. The house the couple lives in is a house I know very well. Similarly, there was always an image in my mind of a pregnant woman I had seen once with a dead child in her arms. It was a strange sight, a very disturbing sight, and I could never forget that image. It showed how life and death could co-exist in one person. There was life within her and death in her arms. That had set me thinking about life and death. The character of Soni becoming pregnant in this film is, perhaps, a derivation from that image in my mind. There was also my association with U.G. Krishnamurthy's son who died of cancer at the age of thirty-two.

He worked in an ad agency and was full of youth and creative energy. He died. He was in hospital and I watched him die. It was he who coined the 'happy days are here again' slogan. I saw death claiming a life which had so much left to accomplish.

U.T.N.: Would you never want to make a formula film, one with lots of dances and songs?

M.B.: I have nothing against those films. I have nothing against a *Be-Aabroo* or an *Amar Akbar Anthony*. A big chunk of our filmgoing population wants to see such films and enjoys such films. There is nothing wrong with it. What I am against are the *Kbandars*. That's supposed to be elite cinema. It is not for you and me. We have an elite cinema and an elite media to promote it.

No, I'd rather make something that I can feel close to and derive satisfaction from. If I've liked my own film, then I know that ten thousand other men are going to like it because they are as human as I am. In no way am I greater or superior to any one of the viewers who will be buying an admission ticket to see my film. If they don't like my film, then there is something wrong with me, not with them. All that a filmgoer wants is a good experience. Thank God for boredom, Tara. You and I are in this business because of boredom.



Mahesh Bhatt

Sitara

A Star

Travelling in a train one night, Devdoss, a young, up-and-coming professional photographer, meets a mysterious and beautiful young girl. The girl refuses to give her name, nor tell him anything about her past history. Devdoss senses the unhappiness behind the girl's silence, and takes it upon himself to save her from a suspicious ticket collector. When the ticket collector asks her name, Devdoss frantically looks around for inspiration. His eyes light upon a film magazine he has been reading, called *Sitara*, the star. Devdoss renames the girl Sitara.

Being both eccentric and good-hearted, Devdoss decides to take Sitara to his home. Sitara slowly begins trusting Devdoss, and an unusual, innocent friendship springs up between the two. Finding her a good subject for photographic modelling, Devdoss convinces her to model for the assignments he takes on. Sitara gets a career and a livelihood. But she refuses to say anything about herself even to Devdoss who has become her closest friend and respects her silence.

A film director happens to see her photographs and offers her a role in his film. Sitara becomes a great star, but in the privacy of Devdoss's home remains the same woman, reserved, and a little sad. Devdoss becomes her full-time manager and protector, giving up his own profession to look after Sitara's. She has revealed herself to be a dancer and is obviously fond of music. One day Devdoss

Kohila and Raju in a magic world of their own



brings home a gift for her, a recording of bird sounds. On listening to it, Sitara becomes hysterical, losing all control over herself. Devdoss realizes that the record is a key to the mystery that surrounds Sitara, but refrains from trying to ferret out the story that she is so reluctant to tell. But another incident soon causes a storm in their happy relationship.

Sitara is now at the height of her career. For one of the films she is acting in, the shooting is to take place in the ruins of an old palace situated in a remote village called Venkatanarayanapuram. On hearing the description and the name of the place, Sitara categorically refuses to go for the shooting at the last minute. No amount of coaxing by Devdoss would make her budge from her stand. Believing it to be the whims of a well-known star, the director is furious and summoning Devdoss, abuses and humiliates him. As cancelling the shooting at the last minute would involve the loss of a large sum of money, apart from the inconveniences that would directly result from it, Devdoss too finds Sitara's stand highly unreasonable and decides to leave her unless she explains her conduct. Faced by desertion from her only friend and benefactor, Sitara tearfully relates her story.

Sitara's real name is Kokila. Daughter of a once rich Zamindar, she lived in the palace in Venkatanarayanapuram with her brother Chander. When her father died, he had passed on his enormous debts to his son. He had also passed on to Chander his own obsessive sense of family pride. Nothing must happen that will sully the name of the family after he dies. At the same time, one of the people to whom the old Zamindar had acted as a benefactor, begins to lay claims on large parts of the property. All remaining money is drained by the case that Chander fights against this man. The servants leave and Kokila and Chander live in virtual self-imprisonment inside the crumbling mansion. To maintain the outward pretensions of wealth and prestige, Chander does not allow anybody to enter the house. Kokila looks after the house herself. And to warn them of the approach of strangers, Chander has filled the great hall of the palace with caged birds who always raise a tremendous noise whenever anybody comes near the house. Hidden in the darkness of the huge empty house, Kokila often feels that she too is one of the caged birds, forever imprisoned by her stern brother. When Chander goes outside the house he never takes off his jacket so that he may hide the torn shirt he wears under it. To the villagers he appears in his last prosperous looking dressing gown, and keeping up appearances has become a form of madness with him.

The only person who has some idea of the real state of affairs is his father's old manager, but he too is unaware of the extent to



Kokila - released from bondage

which the family fortunes have been depleted. Chander has to leave home to go to the city to fight his case. He leaves Kokila behind alone in the old palace with strict instructions that she must not allow herself to be seen outside the house. But it is the time of the carnival, and as in every year, this year too a group of wandering players come to the village to provide entertainment. Usually they give one of their performances outside the great door of the palace, and the Zaminder comes out to grace the occasion and give the troupe a suitably impressive gift. Nobody knows that Chander is away from home. The troupe come and present their dance drama, but get no response from inside the palace. Raju, the handsome young performer who is the main dancer, feels hurt by the unbroken silence of the palace. Determined to rouse some reaction from the people inside, Raju gives one of the best performances of his life one day. During his dance, he looks up and spies one beautiful eye in the corner of a window high up on the palace wall. The knowledge that he has an audience at last inspires him to present all his skills. But still there is no one who comes out of the palace with a word of praise.

Curiosity gets the better of Raju and he comes alone to the palace one day to see if there really is a princess hiding inside. Kokila, who has been secretly watching Raju's dance everyday, is tempted to open the door. Raju enters a magic world that he has never known before. Kokila who is herself fond of dance and music, shares all her secret treasures with Raju. It is as if they are both living in a dream. Different kinds of drums tumble out of a crowded cupboard. Musical instruments, muted for a long long time, respond to the touch of Raju's fingers. Music flows down the large stone stairs. Kokila's dancing feet pick up the beat of ghostly dancers who have lain hidden in the shadows of the great house for generations. For the first time in her life Kokila finds the bars of her cage breaking down.

Raju forces Kokila to come out of the palace. She visits the carnival with him, dressed as a common village girl. But when she returns at night, Chander awaits her in the great hall. That is the end of her dream. Chander, in a bid to protect the family name, sends his henchmen out to kill Raju. But Chander has lost his case and the brother and sister are now paupers. Consumed with a sense of guilt for having destroyed his sister's happiness, yet at the same time obsessed by a sense of family pride, Chander commits suicide by falling on the sharp edge of a brass lamp. Before dying, he tells Kokila to leave the village without revealing her identity.

While Sitara tells her story to Devdoss, Devdoss's journalist friend who has come to visit him, stands outside, listening to the fascinating narrative. He leaves without letting them know of his presence, much moved by what he has just heard. But he finds it

unable to keep such a scoop to himself and the result is that soon the bookstalls of the city are filled with Sitara's story. She first suspects Devdoss and though Devdoss does discover how the story leaked out to the press, the shock is too great for her to continue her career. Disillusioned with the total lack of privacy in her life now that her story has been made public, Sitara leaves home, and walks away towards an unknown destination.

1984/Colour/35 mm/110 min /Telugu

Production: Poornodaya Movie Creations

Story, Screenplay and Direction: Vamsy

Camera: M.V. Raghu

Music: Ilaiya Raja

Lyrics: Veturi Sundararama Murthy

Dialogue: Sainath

Sound: S.P. Ramanathan

Art Direction: Thota Tharani

Editing: Anil Malnad

Lead Players: Bhanupriya, Sarth Babu, Sumun, Sudhakar, Sriram, Rallapalli, Sakshi Ranga Rao, Saroja.

Enquiries: Sathish Film Exports, 13 Kamdarnagar, Nungambakkam, Madras 600 013

In his late twenties, Vamsy was born in a remote village in Karnataka. Early in his life he developed a keen interest in writing, and has so far written twelve novels and about fifty short stories. Inspired by the films of Bharathi Raja and K. Viswanath, Vamsy decided to enter the exciting world of the cinema, and it is under their guidance that he has learnt the techniques of film-making. Music plays a vital part in his films, a result of his close association with the well-known South Indian music director, Ilaiya Raja. Vamsy's first film, *Manchu Pallaki*, was made in 1982. After *Sitara*, his second film, he is working on a new film called *Anveshana*.

Though built within a framework of a contemporary story on the rise and ultimate disillusionment of a film star, *Sitara* is essentially a fairy tale, timeless and enchanting. Sitara's real story, the story of her mysterious past, which forms a major part of the film, is really that of a beautiful princess held in bondage by a cruel brother, who is freed by a handsome young commoner only to face the tragic consequences of her freedom. There is poetry in the visualization of this story and there is a need for the willing suspension of disbelief. When Kokila allows the young stranger to enter her home, the old palace becomes a magical world where, with one swing of an invisible wand, every corner of the huge ruin reverberates with music. Kokila's dancing feet take on many dimensions, and it is as if the palace is suddenly peopled by the

ghostly dancers of the past. Myriads of dancing feet and hands move across the frame in a fantasia, the anklets ringing to the beat of the music. Isolated from the reality outside, the palace always remains an island of fantasy. Kokila's transformation into Sitara seems to destroy that dream palace for ever, and reality seems pale and colourless in comparison.



Vamshi directing Sitara

Swathi

The Pearl

Swathi is a young girl who will never take anything lying down. After all she has had to fight her mother's battles for her from a very young age. Her mother was deserted by the man she loved and through the years she has brought up her daughter struggling against the constant criticism of society. Swathi has watched her being humiliated and seen her silent suffering. She has herself never been able to keep quiet in the face of injustice and is therefore not the most popular girl in her locality. It is not just that she has to fight her mother's battles. There are other battles she must fight because she is a woman. Slapping a local ruffian when he tries to make a pass at her gets her into serious trouble but also finds her a friend and champion in a young man with political leanings. Her new friend tries to convince her of his political ideology. But Swathi, who by the sheer fact of being a woman finds herself among the socially deprived, is suspicious of all ideologies. 'Why do you wear these clothes?' she asks, looking at the cloth bag on his shoulder, the fashionably homespun shirt and the beard that has become a symbol of the intellectual, and manages to startle him into self-awareness.

Swathi and her mother - an unusual companionship



But when the young man asks her to marry him, Swathi finds herself in a dilemma. Who will look after and protect her mother if she goes away to her own home? While Swathi is looking for a pragmatic solution to her problem, her mother who is a nurse, discovers a distant relation in the hospital where she works. After his recovery, he comes to stay with the mother and daughter, and Swathi soon discovers that his motives are not as innocent as her mother thinks. Her mother is still a youthful and beautiful woman, and when Swathi hears their guest making indecent suggestions about her mother, she acts with great promptness and throws the man out of the house. The incident, however, makes it quite clear to Swathi that her mother needs a protector, and that if she marries and goes away, her mother will be imposed upon by all sorts of selfish people. Something has to be done.

Swathi's mother works under Dr Vivekanand, and has done so for years, long enough for the families to be quite friendly with each other. Dr Vivekanand is a widower with an only daughter. Between father and daughter they have kept alive the memory of his dead wife, by pretending that she is running the household as she used to years ago. But it is only a ruse to fight loneliness on the part of the doctor and on the part of the daughter to fill the gap left behind by her mother. Swathi decides to talk to Dr Vivekanand about her mother's needs. Her mother needs a home and a normal married life. The doctor needs a wife and a mother for his daughter. They have known and liked each other for years. Is it not the obvious solution for them to get married now? The idea rather startles the good doctor. But when he finds that his daughter too approves wholeheartedly of the plan, he gives in and decides to marry Swathi's mother.

The unusual wedding takes place with all fanfare. And if there are people who are critical of the alliance, the obvious happiness of both the daughters silences all doubts. Dr Vivekanand insists that Swathi lives with them. Swathi who has been used to looking after her mother now becomes a self-appointed guardian of the doctor's daughter who is younger than her. But the younger girl has always had her own way. She resents the fact that Swathi should keep an eye on her clandestine romance and scold her for neglecting her studies while Swathi's own boyfriend has free access to the house. Tension mounts at home between the two girls. The situation is made more difficult for Swathi by the fact that Swathi's mother finds it necessary to always shield her step-daughter from Swathi's criticism.

In the meanwhile Swathi has another brush with the cruelty and injustice of the society they belong to. A friend of Swathi who is happily married to a man of her choice, is raped by unknown ruffians who snatch her away from her husband when they are

returning home one night. The husband is manhandled and is helpless to come to her aid. As the girl recuperates in hospital from her traumatic experience, the husband hides at home, consumed by a sense of guilt for not being able save his wife, and tortured by the thought of the pointing fingers of his neighbours. Swathi finds his attitude ridiculous. She urges him to stand by his wife in a time like this when she most needs him. When her friend comes home from the hospital the couple try to pick up the thread of their lives. But a normal life is made impossible for them by the neighbours. Through no fault of theirs they become the butt of local gossip and curiosity, till a point is reached when the couple commit suicide. The neighbours come then to commiserate. In a rage, Swathi turns to the policemen and pointing at the neighbours she tells them of their destructive tongue. It is they who have killed her friends, she says, it is they who ought to be punished.

Swathi's position in her stepfather's home becomes increasingly difficult and she has to leave. This is when she comes across her real father by accident and learns of the tragic misunderstanding which had parted him from her mother. But Swathi's mother is now happy in her new home and has at last come to terms with her unhappy past. How can he destroy that happiness now. He is also a dying man. And his last wish is to see Swathi's mother once before he dies. Swathi goes to Dr Vivekanand and tells him the whole story. The doctor is large hearted and arranges for Swathi's father to have a glimpse of his beloved ruing the marriage of Swathi's step-sister. He does look upon her before he dies. But Swathi and her stepfather do not tell her mother of her father's return. Happiness is a fragile and precious possession. Swathi stands guard on her mother's happiness, and hides her own heavy heart.

1984/Colour/35 mm/135 min/Telugu

Production: Sri Kranthi Chitra

Story, Screenplay and Direction: Kranthi Kumar

Camera: Hari Anumolu

Music: Chakravarthy

Lyrics: Veturi

Dialogue: Ganesh Patro

Sound: Swaminathan

Art Direction: Bhaskara Raju

Editing: Krishnam Raju

Lead Players: Suhasini, Sarada, Samyuktha, Jaggaiah, Sarath Babu, Aruna, Bhanu Chandar, Sudhakar, Rajendra Prasad, P.L. Narayana.

Enquiries: Sri Kranthi Chitra, 27 Thilak Street, T.Nagar, Madras 600 017.

In spite of a post graduate degree in Law, Kranthi Kumar took up film production as a profession. For over fifteen years, he has been associated with directors like K. Viswanath, K. Raghavendra Rao, Dasari Narayana Rao, to mention only a few. So far fifteen films have been produced under his banner, in Telegu, Hindi and Oriya. *Swathi* is his first directorial venture. With its unusual handling of the problems of contemporary women, the film has received critical acclaim as well as public appreciation.

Within its fairly conventional framework, *Swathi* takes a surprisingly bold stand on women. In a society which thrives on its strict and unyielding moral codes, *Swathi* is the offspring of an illicit alliance. Her very existence condemns her mother and *Swathi* to a life of isolation and struggle. If her mother has displayed her strength by bringing up an illegitimate child with the sweat of her own toil as a nurse, *Swathi* has taken it upon herself to protect her mother against all humiliation. She is, indeed, the stronger of the two. In spite of her youth, *Swathi* is able to understand her mother's needs as a woman and helps her to realize them. Amazingly clear-sighted, and with a wisdom acquired through many a bitter experience, *Swathi* fights her own battles alone. She never compromises with social injustice, and her strong sense of pride does not allow for any cheap cynicism. Yet, for all her independence, she never stops being a young girl with a natural desire for affection and warmth. She is extraordinary because she is without any pretence, because she can never lie to herself or to others, because she sees through falsehood as easily as she extends her immense compassion to anyone who needs it. The uncompromising portrayal of a very real woman in conflict with the decaying morals of a society still clinging to obsolete norms, lifts *Swathi* above the level of what could perhaps otherwise be easily described as a drawingroom melodrama.



Kranthi Kumar on the sets of Swathi

Tarang

Wages and Profits

Tarang presents a saga of conflict and betrayal stretching across the boundaries of different worlds. The industrial empire of Rahul's father-in-law has the seeds of dissension within itself. At another level, the working class outside confronts the industrial establishment. While political manoeuvrings bring about a parting of ways within the working class, a clash of divergent ambitions leads to the disintegration of the industrialist family. Finally the real world gives way to the mythical, where all polarities may converge without contradiction to give birth to a new hope for the future, where the exploited and the exploiter can move towards a common destination.

Rahul, the son-in-law of the old Seth, is locked in combat with Dinesh, the Seth's nephew, on the matter of running the old man's industrial empire. Dinesh believes in unscrupulous methods that will finally bring him an additional income. For Rahul, indigenous production provides him with a cover of fashionable liberalism to conceal his personal ambitions. In the centre of the conflict sits the old Seth, a bit bewildered, his own sole concern being still the old-fashioned one of amassing wealth for the family. The Seth's

Janaki and Hanita - women from two worlds



daughter, Hansa, sits on the sidelines and watches with growing anxiety the effect of the conflict on her father, the only man she has ever completely loved.

Janaki belongs to the world outside, the world of shanty towns where the workers in the Seth's factory eke out their existence. Her dead husband had once led the workers against the management, and she herself is still considered potentially dangerous because of the respect and affection she commands among the workers. Thrown out of her shack by the Seth's henchmen, Janaki is picked up from the streets by Rahul and installed in his palatial home, ostensibly to look after his child. For Janaki, Rahul has always been a champion of the workers, and working for him she may even be in a better position to help her old friends. As Janaki grows in self-confidence and becomes increasingly indispensable, Hansa willingly withdraws from her husband's life, pushing Janaki into a relationship with Rahul. Hansa, whose sole obsession is her father, believes that she has done her duty by producing a son and heir for the vast family fortunes. She persistently repulses Rahul who still feels strongly physically attracted by her.

Janaki's role within the family becomes more ambiguous when the old Seth falls ill. Rahul, who has reached a point in his career where he can do without the old man, insists on keeping Hansa away from her father on the pretext that it would only upset her finely tuned sensibilities. As Hansa moves around like a ghost, waiting for the blow to fall, Janaki, under Rahul's instructions, befriends the nurse and takes her away to her own room at the slightest opportunity. Here she plies the nurse with drinks, a secret weakness that she has taken pains to discover, while the sick old man lies alone, neglected. On one of these occasions the nurse comes back to find the old man dead.

Dinesh comes back from one of his sojourns abroad and accuses Rahul of actually killing the old man. But the Seth's death is shrouded in mystery and nothing can be proved against Rahul. Rahul has in the meantime consolidated his position by setting up his designer friend Rusi and marrying him off to Anita, an old paramour of Rahul's and the old Seth's trusted secretary. With Anita's help, Rahul humiliates Dinesh's foreign collaborators and puts him in a false position. With the help of Janaki and the workers he also effectively removes Dinesh's local ally, a crooked self-server and trade union leader who had ingratiated his way into the old Seth's confidence, and instigated a communal riot among the workers.

Meanwhile there is a rift in the ranks of the workers and Janaki's closest friend and old admirer, Abdul, is on the run. Rahul sends Janaki away with the child to a bungalow far away in the hills where



Hansa watches as Rahul and Janaki draw closer

they are supposed to stay till the problems arising out of the Seth's death are solved. But Rahul has other ideas. On the one hand he successfully buys the allegiance of one section of the workers and the leadership, on the other, he comes to Janaki and tells her in no uncertain terms that she is to be accused of the old man's death. Janaki's betrayal is complete. She packs her few belongings and walks back to her old life.

In Rahul's home Hansa moves in a dream, hugging to herself her last possession—her grief for her dead father. As far as she is concerned, it is the strife between her husband and Dinesh that has killed her father. Yet left without her father's protection she tries one last time to rouse herself and respond to her husband's needs. After a long time she makes love to Rahul, and wakes up next morning with promises of a more fulfilling relationship. But by the evening she is dead, lying submerged in the bathtub.

The last link in the chain snaps with Rahul arranging for the murder of Dinesh's business associate in such a way that the blame

will fall on Dinesh. Rahul is now free to run his empire according to his own rules.

Janaki has taken refuge with an old friend, Namdev, who is also on the run from his erstwhile comrades. As Janaki waits for him to come back home one day, somebody throws a lighted cracker in the room. Janaki runs out as the row of shacks goes up in flames. The dissolution has reached her doorstep once more and driven her to the wilderness outside.

The film ends on a conjectural-mythical note when in a dreamlike sequence, on a long, lonely bridge, Rahul approaches Janaki once again with the offer of a life of freedom and equality. Janaki, now a mystical abstraction, rejects the offer with divine indifference. Go back to your destiny, she says. I am like the first light of the sun. I am as hard to catch as the wind...

Production: National Film Development Corporation

Direction and Screenplay: Kumar Shahani

Camera: K.K. Mahajan

Music: Vanraj Bhatia

Lyrics: Raghubir Sehay and Gulzar

Dialogue: Vinay Shukla

Sound: Narendra Singh

Lead Players: Smita Patil, Amol Palekar, Om Puri, Dr. Shreeram Lagoo, Girish Karnad, Jalal Agha, Rohini Hattangady, Kawal Gandhiok, M.K. Raina, Sulbha Deshpande, Arvind Deshpande, Jayanti Patel.

Enquiries: National Film Development Corporation, 13-16 Regent Chambers, Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021.

Born in 1940, Shahani has been among the brightest alumni of the Film Institute in Pune where the greatest influence came from Ritwik Ghatak, the controversial film-maker and teacher, and from D.D. Kosambi, the great Indian polymath. After standing first in his course at Pune, Shahani won a French government scholarship to the Institute of Higher Studies in Cinema, in Paris. There he spent a great deal of his time at the Cinematheque, opted for courses in Western music, worked with Robert Bresson on the *Femane Dance*, and became a keen observer of the cataclysmic events that shook France in May 1968. His first feature film, *Maya Darpan*, was made in 1972 and was hailed for its originality and sensitivity. Six years after his first feature, he was awarded the Homi Bhabha Fellowship, and the subject of his study was the theory and practice of the epic form. Married to Roshan, who is a close collabo-

rator of her husband in the field of script writing, Shahani is also a regular guest lecturer at the Film Institute in Pune. *Maya Darpan* received the President's Award in 1972 and a special mention in the Locarno Festival next year. Among the shorts and documentaries Shahani has produced from time to time are *The Glass Pane* (1966), *Manmad Passenger* (1967), *Rails for the Road* (1970), *Object* (1971), *Fire in the Belly* (1973), and *Our Universe* (1975). *Tarang* is his second feature film.

In an interview with Rajiv Rao and Rafique Baghdadi, published in The Sunday Observer, 29 April 1984, Kumar Shahani speaks at length on his views on the cinema, on film criticism, on the experimental film-maker and on his latest film.

R.R. and R.B.: It's been a long time since *Maya Darpan* was made. Do you perceive any significant changes that affect film makers?

K.S.: It's well worthwhile to try and make films that one believes in. Certainly the whole environment has changed since *Maya Darpan*. The change, I think is two-sided, not unilinear. On the one hand, society is getting very aggressive and more and more people are measuring their own selves in terms of rupees and paise. On the other hand, people are more sharply aware of their condition.

R.R. and R.B.: To what extent do you try to consciously shape your political beliefs in your films?

K.S.: I think the biggest mistake being made about films is that if I, for example, photograph you, most people will say that my film is about you, about the middle class, about Bombay, about a man who wears glasses and has a moustache. But it may not be so. That is only what is being photographed . . .

R.R. and R.B.: Godard said something similar . . .

K.S.: It is absurd to think that if you are depicting something, that is the content. The content emerges through the way you relate to the object, to what you show, your theme. When people say there is visual beauty in the film, it is deeply connected to the editing, the rhythm, the shot taking, the pattern of movement and also, the sound . . . all constitute the content . . . Look at the majesty of Vanraj Bhatia's music, for instance . . . who would say that it is beautiful without implying at the same time that it touched him, that it is was meaningful?

Or, take the example of Buddhist art in India. The motifs of burgeoning wealth—the figures, animals, vegetation on the Sanchi gateways—it is the same as the precedent Hindu iconography; yet the meaning has shifted. The Yakshi image offers a world of nourishment. Nature itself is in a reverie, serene, not overwhelming in its power.

When Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel, he was supposedly depicting Christian mythology. But what he did was to assert the human spirit and celebrate the human body . . . something else.

R.R. and R.B.: You received the Homi Bhabha Fellowship to research the epic form. Could you tell us something about your preoccupations with the epic traditions in Indian art?

K.S.: The fellowship was a great thing for me. It helped me a lot in formulating *Tarang* and releasing the kind of energy which only the epic structure can give you. I long wanted to work on it and signs of it were there in *Maya Darpan*. Ever since I met Kosambi and Ritwick Ghatak in Poona, I wanted to try and evolve something that would be close to a modern epic.

As it happens, other people across the world have been concerned with the epic form—Godard had begun to move towards the epic. Jansco has done some significant work in Hungary. In America, Francis Ford Coppola has attempted it. Rossellini, for many years, worked on the didactic elements in his films with the support of reality. The work of the Soviets after the revolution in 1917 is well-known.

The epic tradition overcomes the division between the giver and receiver of art. It is a pity that societies tend to make museum pieces of art when, in fact, the need for it is as natural and instinctive in people as eating and drinking.

R.R. and R.B.: The process of selection of images and how you relate them to each other shapes and colours the content of your film. Considering that two of the teachers who have influenced you—Kosambi and Ghatak—were Marxists, do you think this influence has exerted itself in your films even unconsciously?

K.S.: If you have to contribute anything while working in a tradition of any sort, Marxist or Liberal, you have to be critical of that tradition itself. Tradition grows through criticism. In my film I must be able to overcome the structure of that very work itself. One must discover something in the process of making the film, not only in the themes one presents.

R.R. and R.B.: There is a lack of a critical tradition in the country. Film critics often resort to making parallels with western concepts and techniques. In your own case, *Maya Darpan* was seen to be Bressonian, whereas it is deeply rooted in the traditions of this country.

K.S.: I think film criticism is still growing. There is an absence of standards, ironically enough, in the countries that lead in film production—India and the U.S. Often critics make no reference to any tradition, not even the cinematic one.

When people speak of a Bressonian influence, they must specify where it lies. If I say that Ritwick was influenced by Eisenstein, then I must be able to show it: that he went to anthropology for sources of reference, that he used sound contrapunctually and so on. . .

R.R. and R.B.: There are a number of film makers in the garb of experimental film makers, who expect to be taken seriously.

K.S.: The experimental film maker has difficulty in surviving. By the nature of experiment, any experiment, he is trying to find out a new language. He will accept criticism if it is made within the parameters of his language. In an abstract painting, you may not be moved at all. When Picasso painted *Les Femmes d'Alger*, everybody was shocked. By the nature of experimental work, it is very rare to appreciate it the first time you see it. If you're uninitiated in certain forms, say classical music, you don't reject the music for that. Tomorrow if I hear an Indian musician trying to experiment with something he has learnt from Korean music, I will be able to get some significance from the slight shift he may make. This is because I am initiated into music. If Kumar Gandharva takes from certain influences of folk music which you or I have not heard of—I would like to find out what it is.

What we have to do in criticism of experimental art is to understand the tradition and then to understand what shift is being attempted; and, within that shift alone can we really appreciate or criticise. It has to be an internal thing to the work of art itself.

R.R. and R.B.: Western critics often claim they have popularised Indian experimental films. Do you feel their critical writing has had some influence in gaining Indian films a wider audience?

K.S.: Certain critics take a lot of trouble and those who do that, wherever they may be from, can come up with some interesting insights. An important fact which I would like to state here is that western critics are not ashamed to say that they like a film. You know that the *Cahiers* group only wrote about authors they liked.

R.R. and R.B.: How did you come to use the epic form in *Tarang*?

K.S.: The traditional mechanistic structure with the beginning, middle and end, is a dramatic structure which originated in the 19th century in Europe. It was closely related to the methodology of physical science—cause and effect in a chain. As far as I know, science today goes beyond this and accommodates fluctuations. One has to find new ways that are linked to our actual perceptions. Ritwickda and Kosambi made me probe into the epic form. You also see it all around. It enters the consciousness of people in such a way that they can take it home with them.

I believe that people like Costa Gavras who claim to be changing lives are really only doing the instant churning up of emotions.

Immediately after a Costa Gavras film you may feel that the revolution has occurred for you. The next day you are faced with a harsh reality, when you can't change your own family or yourself, or, the timing of that train that you have to catch.

Costa Gavras told a film critic here that before showing the torture of men on the screen he tried it on himself—electric shocks on the testicles. You see how sensation replaces significance. The image of torture turns into a thrill.

As against that the epic form makes the sensuous significant. Every life is treated with respect.

R.R. and R.B.: One critic has stated that *Tarang* is a story straight out of the Bombay formula film industry turned on its head. . . .

K.S.: What I wanted to do was to take into account the way our traditions are surviving in popular art. Both folk and popular art always have epic elements. Even pulp literature is a distortion of the epic form. A lot of artists in different parts of the world are trying to understand that. Europe and America have certain disadvantages compared to us. In our classical arts you continue to see a constant dialogue with folk elements, a constant formulation of folk culture. Europe had lost it but now there is a revival of narrative not only in film but in painting as well.

I genuinely feel that Vivan Sundaram has a greater potential of success in narrative painting than say a western master like Kitaj. I am sure that we are better placed to retrieve the narrative.

R.R. and R.B.: The method of acting in *Tarang* is different from the one used in *Maya Darpan*. It was a conscious decision to use that method?

K.S.: The method has evolved from *Maya Darpan* to meet the demands of the epic. I think the actor's own being should never be denied, if you wish to discover the archetype.

R.R. and R.B.: Like Janaki becoming the mythical Urvashi in *Tarang* was the idea inspired by Kosambi's description. . . .

K.S.: Originally yes. I am deeply inspired by his work and I go back to it again and again. For Urvashi's appearance in *Tarang*, there were many experiences that came together. Kosambi relates Urvashi to water and fertility. When we were hit by a drought in Maharashtra, I met a lot of women who bravely shouldered the burdens and responsibilities during those harrowing days and I was inspired by their courage. I was shooting a documentary on the drought. Later, when I was studying the epic form I requested my Sanskrit teacher to read for me the *Brahmanas* and the Rig Vedic versions of the legend.

R.R. and R.B.: Does Urvashi in your film represent the eternal woman, who is everything—seducer, whore, murderer and all the

other characters played by Smita Patil? Or is she also the symbol of the oppressed?

K.S.: Urvashi has fantastic aspects. She is represented in a different way in the Mahabharata. There she tries to seduce Arjuna who looks upon her as an ancestress.

In my film, Urvashi becomes the Universal Mother, standing for everyone who is oppressed.

R.R. and R.B.: How do you see the role of Hansa, the wife of Rahul. Is her passive acceptance of events a reflection of the passivity of Indian woman as well as the democratisation of class?

K.S.: Hansa is certainly not passive. There is a reference to Ophelia (*Hamlet*) in her characterisation, evoked through water and flowers. Her name and the images around her relate her *individually* to the archetype. A lot of tenderness towards Hansa is expressed through the camera. Her own warmth is conveyed through her gestures of giving and her grace... in the song sequence, I wanted her bathed in sensuous light... K K (Mahajan, the cameraman) has done such a marvellous job. . . .

Each character in the film, has in fact, his own little world. The individual warmth of character, the potential of the particular actor's presence and the archetype—all are important for me.

R.R. and R.B.: There is a point in the film when the audience feels that everything will be all right for Hansa. This however is also the point of crisis.

K.S.: There is splitting of the personality. Anything can happen at that moment. Things might turn out right or there could be a disaster. This splitting provides the tension.

R.R. and R.B.: You are making a film on the psychoanalyst, Wilfred Bion. What is his essential world view? At its broadest, his vision is comparable to the twin concepts of cannibalistic violence and nurturance found in the symbolic representation of Kali.

K.S.: Yes he was concerned with archetypes, mythology and dreams. His basic concern emanated from the instinct for knowledge. Apart from that he has done work on the behaviour of groups. He has tried to find neutral symbols for the creation of a theory of emotion, symbols devoid of associative or moralistic or other forms of loaded concepts. Finally, two other things are important. His fictional work puts together his different concerns and his grasping of extra-rational reality goes deep into the mystical tradition of the East.

R.R. and R.B.: Bion as a subject is anti-film and anti-drama. How did you decide to make this film and what kind of treatment are you likely to give the film?

K.S.: I have a friend, Udayan Patel, who is a psychoanalyst. I have made a short film, *Object*, with him. Udayan and his wife Anuradha have been greatly inspired by Bion's work and when they met him in England, they discovered he had an abiding love for India. He had, in fact spent the first eight years of his life in India. He was invited to visit Bombay but he died a few weeks before his expected arrival. It was decided to make a short documentary on him when he was in India. Later, after his death, the idea got expanded through several stages into a feature film. It is visualized as a fantasy.



Kumar Shabani

Utsav Festival

The place is ancient India, the time, the age in which the *Kama Sutra* was written. *Utsav* is adapted from the classic Sanskrit play by Sudraka, *Mrichchhakatikam* (The Little Clay Cart), a tale of romance between a young Brahmin and a courtesan, set against a background of intrigue and political revolution.

Vasantsena, the most beautiful courtesan of Ujjain, is running away from the clutches of Samasthanaka, the king's brother-in-law who is madly in love with her. Her path lies past the house of Charudutt, a handsome, but impoverished brahmin who is just preparing to send a maid servant across to his wife who is spending a night away from home. Samasthanaka mistakes the maid servant for Vasantsena and carries her away. But Aryaka, a revolutionary who is touring the city in disguise spots Samasthanaka and gives him and his man an unexpected beating, allowing the girl to escape.

Vasantsena in the meanwhile has slipped into Charudutt's home and unknown to Charudutt stands watching the young man as he plays on his flute. Charudutt is surprised and charmed when Vasantsena reveals herself. The encounter warms into a passionate curiosity for each other, and Vasantsena spends the night in Charudutt's arms. The roads are unsafe and Vasantsena leaves her heavy gold jewellery in Charudutt's care before leaving. Charudutt's wife and child return the next morning and to hide the

Vasantsena



jewellery from her eyes, Charudutt hands the precious bundle to his friend Maitreya.

Meanwhile, in the house where the courtesans live, the legendary author Vatsyayana, in the process of compiling his masterpiece on sex, the *Kama Sutra*, alternates between instructing the courtesans on the spiritual aspects of his science and spying on their activities with their clients in the hope of gathering new information on the subject.

Outside in the marketplace, a masseur desperately tries to sell himself as a slave to pay his debts, but there are no buyers. A revolutionary saves him from his debtors but the masseur, who is not interested in getting involved in a revolution, runs away from him only to be pursued by his debtors once again. He runs into the courtesans' dwelling and hides under a seat. Overhearing a conversation about Vasantsena's infatuation for Charudutt, he decides to pretend to be Charudutt's emissary. Vasantsena promptly pays off his debtors. Impressed by the effect one man's name has over his own destiny, the masseur decides to leave this materialistic world and become a hermit.

Vasantsena's personal maid, Madanika, has an ardent lover in Sajjal, the cleverest thief in town. But Madanika is a slave in the courtesan's household and must be bought back to be freed. The night before, Sajjal has had a lucky strike. In search of quick money, he wanders into Charudutt's home where Maitreya is having a tough time trying to sleep with the bundle containing Vasantsena's jewellery under his head. Half asleep, Maitreya hands the bundle over to the thief and thinking he has given the jewellery back to Charudutt, falls into a deep, comfortable slumber. Madanika, who recognizes the jewellery as Vasantsena's own, is terrified by the possible consequences of the act. But Vasantsena, who is aware of Sajjal's devotion, accepts the jewellery and frees Madanika in return.

In the meanwhile, not only has the theft been discovered in Charudutt's home, but Charudutt's wife has found out about his husband's brief affair. She sends Vasantsena her last piece of jewellery and leaves home with her child. Maitreya carries the sad news to Vasantsena, but the courtesan, once she hears that Charudutt's wife is away again, feels impelled to go and visit her new lover. She wears the jewellery that is supposed to have been stolen, and Charudutt, relieved to find the jewellery safe, makes passionate love to her.

The next morning the spring festival is to begin and Charudutt plans a secret rendezvous with Vasantsena in a garden outside the city. He promises to send a special cart for her and leaves to make the arrangements. At this point Charudutt's wife returns home and

meets Vasantsena. A warm friendship develops between them and Vasantsena decorates her friend with some of her own jewellery, and gives the rest to the child to play with.

Samasthanaka, who has had a deal with the woman who runs the brothel, also sends a cart to carry Vasantsena to the same garden to meet him. The two carts get mixed up and Vasantsena, finding herself at the mercy of Samasthanaka, runs away from him. Angered by her repeated rejection, the king's brother-in-law follows her, and in the rage, strangles her. In his distorted mind, however, it is Charudutt who is really responsible for the crime, and finding him in the garden, Samasthanaka puts the blame on him and gets him arrested.

The man who is to bring Vasantsena to Charudutt, has unknowingly brought Aryaka, the revolutionary to the garden. Aryaka,

Samasthanaka



who is hiding from the king's soldiers, runs away to meet his friends and plan an attack on the king's fort. Sajjal, who has been helping the revolutionaries, shows them a secret route to the fort. The revolutionaries storm the fort while the spring festival is at its height in the stress and marketplaces of the town.

Samasthanaka's soldiers have discovered Vasantsena's jewellery in Charudutt's home and Charudutt is sentenced to death. At the place of the execution, a remote place in the hills, Charudutt's wife pleads with Samasthanaka to release her husband. But no one believes that Vasantsena has herself given Charudutt's wife and child the jewellery. The executioners get ready to carry out the sentence when Vasantsena herself appears on the scene. The masseur whose life she had saved, and who had turned into a hermit, has paid back his debt to her by massaging her back to life. But the executioners are not convinced. No one has mentioned Vasantsena to them. They were told that Charudutt has killed a courtesan. How do they know that Vasantsena is the woman he was supposed to have murdered. Vasantsena announces that it was Samasthanaka who had tried to kill her. But where is Samasthanaka? Seeing her alive, Samasthanaka hides himself behind some rocks and waits in fear and exultation.

The executioners once again prepare to carry out the death sentence. This time a horseman arrives to announce that the old king has been deposed and the new king has pardoned all prisoners. The women rush towards Charudutt. But it is his wife who reaches him, and is held in a warm embrace. Vasantsena watches the touching reunion, and sorrowfully turns to leave. The poor of the town who were waiting to see the execution, now vent their rage on Samasthanaka.

Crowds of revellers throng the city streets,unaware that a revolution has taken place. As a last act of service, Sajjal, the

The new king joins the festival



daredevil thief, is asked to climb to the pole where the new king's flag must now fly. The revellers stop to watch as the new flag unfurls in the breeze. Madanika spots Sajjal on the top of the pole and another happy reunion takes place.

Dusk falls, Samasthanaka drags his battered and bruised body into the empty courtyard of the courtesans' dwelling, still crying for Vasantsena. He lifts his bloodshot eyes and finds Vasantsena standing at the door far away, in the light of a lamp. Samasthanaka totters up to the door and finds himself lifted by gentle hands that pull him inside the house. Vasantsena the courtesan has returned to her profession.

1981/Colour/35mm/145 min/Hindi

Production: Film-Valas

Based on a classical Sanskrit play by: Sudraka

Direction: Girish Karnad

Screenplay: Girish Karnad and Krishna Basroor

Camera: Ashok Mehta

Music: Laxmikant Pyarelal

Lyrics: Vasant Dev

Sound: Hitendra Ghosh

Lead Players: Shashi Kapoor, Rekha, Amjad Khan, Anooradha, Shekhar Suman, Kunal Kapoor, Annu Kapoor, Shankar Nag, Harish Patel, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Gopi Desai, Anupam Kher
Enquiries: Film-Valas, Janki Kutir, Juhu Church Road, Juhu, Bombay 400 049.

Girish Karnad was born in Maharashtra in 1938. He graduated with Mathematics and Statistics from the University of Karnataka in 1958 and went to England for higher studies. While reading Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University, he received the Rhodes Scholarship, and became president of the Oxford Union Society in 1963. Back home, he worked as assistant manager and subsequently manager of the Oxford University Press in Madras. Throughout his career, Karnad has been writing plays in Kannada, his own language. *Yayati* was written in 1961, *Tughlaq* in 1964, *Hayavadana* in 1971, *Anjumallige* in 1977, and *Hittina Hunja* in 1980. Karnad served as the Director of the Film and Television Institute of India for two years, and received the Padmashree in 1974. Of his feature films, *Vamsa Vriksha*, which he directed with B.V. Karanth, won the President's Award for the best direction in 1972. *Kaadu*, made the next year, won the award for the second best Indian film of the year. His next film, *Godhuli*, was made in Hindi in 1977. A Kannada version of the film was made the same year. *Ondanondu Kaladalli*, made in 1978 in Kannada, was Karnad's homage to Kurosawa, and he made considerable use of the ancient martial arts of Karnataka in the film. Apart from directing his own films, Karnad has also been writing scripts for directors like Shyam Benegal, and acting in films by various directors.

Rinki Bhattacharya interviews Gish Karnad in Cinema India-International, July to September, 1984.

R.B.: What was your first serious written work?

G.K.: This is an interesting thing. I never thought I would be a playwright. Essentially I wanted to be a poet. Then, by the time I was in college, I wanted to write in English. I wanted to be an English novelist. I wanted to be internationally famous. One day I was reading Rajaji's *Mababharata*, just for fun. I read the story of Yayati. It clicked in my mind. I started writing, it came as a 'play'. It appeared in Kannada. Neither of which I had intended. I suddenly found I was a playwright and a Kannada playwright at that!

R.B.: In the first place, I don't think it was unnatural for you to aspire to be an English novelist. You must have been exposed to an immense lot of English literature. And your orientation was in an English High School.

G.K.: That's right. There was also a lot of glamour, writing in English. This was about the time I got the Rhodes scholarship. To go to England. I was already drafting the play. Most of it was written on the ship to England. . . those days students used to go by the good old P & O Liners. It took 18 days to reach. We had a marvellous time. Most of the passengers were students, picked up from New Zealand, Australia, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Pakistan, India and so forth. I began writing on the ship. Completed it in England. That I was writing in Kannada was suddenly a revelation. When I left for England, I went with the idea of never returning. I was sick of India. Thought there was no future, that it was a sick country. This was 1960. I was 22. I wanted some way of getting out. Never to come back. England to me was the land of Eliot, Olivier, and all big names. After three months in England, I realized I couldn't relate there at all. And my writing in Kannada was no 'accident'. Being at Oxford was of course a tremendous experience. Oxford to me was one of the happy things that happened at the right time. At the end of my Oxford days, in '63, it was time to come back.

R.B.: When you returned, where did you settle? Bombay?

G.K.: Yes, Bombay, briefly. I came back with a job. As the Assistant Manager in Oxford University Press, Madras. Then I became the Manager. And stayed on for seven years. That's also when I met Saras (Saraswati, his wife). This was '66. In Madras, I fell in with a group called the Madras Players. Essentially a mixed group. . . Bengalis, Maharashtrians, all non-Tamil speaking. Those who couldn't participate on the Tamil stage. We were socially thrown together—the executive types. With one common passion. Theatre. So, in those seven years, at an amateur level, I think I did a

lot of plays. Continuously. That I think was my real honing. We did Pirandello, Arthur Miller, Shaw. . . .

R.B.: In what capacity were you involved?

G.K.: About everything. We were just twelve of us at the heart-core; we had to essentially get along with each other; if you didn't, you'd be quietly dropped. Basically it was a social group.

R.B.: Did you also act in some of these plays?

G.K.: Oh yes. Acted, directed, did lights, you mention it, and one did it.

R.B.: In which of the plays did you act?

G.K.: These would be plays like Pirandello's *Six Characters In Search of an Author*, Chekov's *Uncle Vanya* or Miller's *The Crucible*. To see these playwrights from inside was great experience. While reading, one doesn't know how a play is structured.

R.B.: What happened after *Yayati* got written, didn't you publish it?

G.K.: *Yayati* had got finished in England. On my way back, I was already writing *Tugblaq*. I chose to return again in a P & O ship. . . those were the last days of sailing, you know. (Pause) In Dharwar, we have a very enthusiastic publisher. He has, over the last fifty years, discovered many literary talents. He has published the best of Kannada works. One Mr. G.B. Joshi. He liked *Yayati*. So it was already published when I came. I then happened to read out the play to Satyadev (Dubey). He at once wanted to produce it. . . That was the first offer of anyone wanting to produce my play!

R.B.: You must have been thrilled!

G.K.: Oh, absolutely! Although it took him another good four years to get a translator and produce it finally. *Tugblaq* had better luck. B.V. Karanth, who is equally conversant in Kannada and Hindi, translated it.

R.B.: I think your career can be split into three compartments: film-maker, playwright, actor. Is that the order?

G.K.: No, the descending order being playwright first, then film-maker and then actor. Acting being the least important. I am often embarrassed when I think of my acting. It was good money, so I did it.

R.B.: Truly, I have often wondered how you became an actor. . . it seems so unlikely!!

G.K.: (Laughs) You know when I was at Oxford, all the great films like Fellini's *8½* and Antonioni's *La Notte* were being shown. I had an inverted snobbery about films. I didn't see any. Back in India, my publisher, Mr. Joshi, gave me a book to read. It was *Samskara*. He wanted to know what I thought of it. He had published this. When I

read the book, it was mind boggling. . . the most exciting novel in Kannada. I felt, my god, if haven't written this, I must at least make a film of it. Then it was like an obsession. As if out of jealousy one wanted to make a film of it. Of all the people I spoke to, there was Pattabhi Rama Reddy in the Madras Players. Earlier, he had produced Telugu films, not very successfully. He agreed to do it. He brought in the finance. Most of the cast, all the women, were from Madras Players. Pattabhi's wife, Snehlata played the main role. None of the women we knew in Bangalore would act.

R.B.: Who roped you into acting in *Samskara*?

G.K.: We were a small group. Making a small-budget film. We could not take outside actors. Pattabhi asked me to act. First I said no. Then seeing him so worried, I agreed.

R.B.: Once you agreed, did you have any problems?

G.K.: No. That's because I had written the script, the dialogue, rehearsed the actors, I knew it backwards. Pattabhi left too much to me. If I had been directed better, I feel the role could have improved. Still, that's how my 'acting' began.

R.B.: Did you have a lot of acting offers after that?

G.K.: The next offer came from G.V. Iyer, now famous for his *Adi Shankaracharya*. He is one of the pillars of Kannada Cinema. He has been around for 40/50 years. In the 60s, he was facing a lot of problems. The only way for him to survive was to make a big hit. He had read Bhairappa's *Vamsha Vriksha*. Then he approached the novelist, who had earlier been deluged with offers from successful film-makers. But he had turned them all down. This time he told G.V. that he would give the rights only if B.V. Karanth directed the film. Adding a sentence which subsequently went on to become a quote: 'The mistakes Karanth makes will be more interesting than the successes of successful film-makers. Actually B.V. Karnath had no experience with film-making. We were good friends. He asked me to be the co-director. There were two roles, I acted in one of them. So that was my second acting film, first directorial. Not entirely independent. But *Vamsha Vriksha* was a great success. So with two successes, there was no problem.

R.B.: Your first independent directorial venture was *Kaadu*. I have not seen it, but heard great things about the film.

G.K.: I can show it, I have a cassette right here. Now, *Kaadu* again was a suggestion of my Dharwar publisher, who has been such a lucky mascot for me. . . it was written by a boy in his early twenties, Shrikrishna. . . based on his real experiences that had taken place in his village, when he was just 8/9 years old.

R.B.: Is the film from a little boy's perspective?

G.K.: The little boy is the link. It is almost documentary-like.

Terrific potential. Using this material I gave it a narrative structure. *Kaadu* is really about how feudal societies are incapable of standing the strain of modernization. They try to escape into shells. Shutting out the outside world. The outside world penetrates. This shutting out creates tremendous violence. Those days Indian villages were shown as nice, romantic places. *Kaadu* was the first film to study this inherent violence in our rural society. The funny thing is, when our unit reached the village, that actual village mentioned in the novel, those very people condemned for the mass murder, referred to in the novel, were just released. They all worked in my film. Not as 'themselves' but as characters. Which itself was a weird experience. Working in the same place with the same people.

R.B.: Which of your films had had the maximum success?

G.K.: *Kaadu*, in terms of investment and return. *Samskara*, of course, was a bigger success. The money put in was so little, the whole film was made in 90,000 rupees. Even in those days, this was very modest.

R.B.: Are you unhappy that *Samskara* was made in black and white? I never missed colour. It was beautiful as it was.

G.K.: It was good as a black and white movie, but you can't make a black and white film today. In the *Samskara* days, even commercial films, at least those in Kannada, were in black and white. Look at *Kaadu*. It was accepted happily, though again, it was in black and white. But by the time I left the Film Institute, things had changed. Producers felt insecure with black and white. They wouldn't get distributors. They wouldn't get theatres, if a film was not in colour. So, that means, between the time I had made *Kaadu* in '72 and *Godhuli* in '76, the cost had tripled. And the audience had not tripled!

R.B.: What sort of violence is there in *Kaadu*? Is it the oppression of one kind of society by another?

G.K.: Most of it is very cold violence. Which comes out of social stresses. Social relationships. Out of a mistaken sense of honour that the feudal mind believes in. In *Kaadu* we have a village which resists urbanization. When there is a fight, they never go to the police. They tend to take the law into their own hands. Absolutely an autonomous village. Now slowly breaking apart. With the younger generation going to cities. Or not listening to their elders. *Kaadu* became a relevant topic for discussion. It brought me real recognition. Soon after that, I was offered the Directorship of the Film & T.V. Institute at Pune.

R.B.: Some people still make uncharitable remarks to the effect that you tried to make an Indian version of Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*, when you make *Oudanodu Kaladalli*. What is your comment about it?

G.K.: I was brought up on a staple diet of 'stunt' films. The tremendous sense of joy that these films could give one—particularly the Nadia-John Cawas films made by Wadia Movietone—is still vivid in my mind. Later on, it was the Westerns—John Ford, Howard Hawks, etc. And since my entry into films, I had been planning to do an action film. Then in 1972, in New York, I saw Kurosawa's films for the first time. There was a Festival of his films in one of the cinemas—and truly I have never got over that tremendous excitement. He has been a real hero to me.

Karnataka in the medieval times was the home of martial arts. People from as far as Nepal used to visit Karnataka to learn this art. Now, of course, the tradition is lost there, but it still survives in Kerala in its pure form. *Kalari Payattu*, it is called. It has an unbroken tradition of at least a thousand years behind it. We had an actual Guru of the *Kalari* School—P.K. Gopalan Gurukkal—to stage the fights and some practising *Kalari* fighters. It was marvellous. Formal, ritualistic, like a ballet. In fact, all the fights in *Ondanondu* were shot mainly in long shots, to capture its dance-like movement. Sad thing is we know all about Judo and Karate but not about *Kalari*—a genuine Indian art.

Ondanondu is based on a medieval Kannada legend, but was planned as a tribute to Kurosawa. People keep trying to compare it—unfavourably, of course—with *Seven Samurai*. But that's because they have not seen the rest of his *oeuvre*. *Yojimbo*, *Sanjuro*, *The Hidden Fortress*, etc. My film makes a lot of references to these films. But most people only know *Seven Samurai*.

R.B.: Another continuous problem all serious film-makers face is getting the right kind of producer. Someone who believes in what you believe in. So the search for the ideal producer goes on, isn't it? Along with other various hassles of making films against the mainstream. You agree? The only other option being producing your own films.

G.K.: Yes. I have been very lucky so far in the sense I have found producers who have come and backed me. For instance, *Utsav* I had written when I was working as the Director of the Film Institute. I nursed it for seven years. Not knowing whom to give it to. It was originally meant to be an Indo-French co-production. Which fizzled out because of the Emergency. I didn't think anyone in India would back it. Until Shashi asked me one day: 'Do you have a script?' I read it out to him. He said: 'Fine, we'll do it'. So I have been fortunate. I haven't had to struggle as much as most of the other serious directors had to. Maybe because all my films have been at least moderately successful. The producer must have the confidence that he will recover his money.

R.B.: Are you happy with *Utsav*?

G.K.: Yes. I think I've done the best.

R.B.: Let me know in detail what you have to say about *Utsav*.

G.K.: I have always been obsessed with Sudraka's play *Mrichchakatikam*. It's an extraordinary work in the context of Indian literature, down to earth, funny, irreverent, sensuous. To tell you the truth, when I started working on *Utsav*, I was quite nervous. It was four years since I had directed my last film *Ondanodu Kaladalli*. But Shashi encouraged me a lot. He had faith that I would deliver the goods. *Utsav* was a huge project, and since we wanted to retain the 4th Century background, a lot of spadework and considerable research were required. I was lucky in my crew—Ashok Mehta, the photographer and my art directors Nachiket and Jayoo Patwardhan. What they have contributed to the film I can't describe in words. You have to see it on the screen.

The film has no message, political, social or of any other kind. The basis is the Sanskrit theory that a work of art should create a *rasa*, a mood, an evocation of emotion—not preach. What I hoped to do was to revive the two qualities which ancient Indian literature had, but which we seem to have lost in the course of the last thousand years—sensuousness and humour. Not sex, but sensuousness, the poetic, tactile quality of it. In the last few hundred years, the Indian middle class has become so prurient, so serious! I dare say the Victorian English only strengthened the already-existing prudery.

Anyway, Sanskrit aesthetics insist that *Sringar* (eros) and *Harya* (humour) *rasas* should be combined. That's what I have aimed at in *Utsav*.

R.B.: Can you compare the original Sanskrit drama to any contemporary works, I don't mean on cinema, but in literature?

G.K.: It belongs to the picaresque form. . . of pimps, prostitutes and pickpockets. You know Boccaccio's works, or Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Probably Thomas Mann, if you want a more contemporary reference. It is in that tradition of the erotic and comic tales. Even in Sanskrit we have this. The *Bhanas* in Sanskrit, or the bawdy farces. Written at the same time as *Mrichchakatikam*. It's the whole tradition. Earthy, bawdy, funny.

It was in deep freeze all these years. I rewrote each scene before we began shooting.

R.B.: Why have you titled your film *Utsav*?

G.K.: It's all about celebration. Celebration of life. It's a superb glorification, not just glorification, but a real celebration of life in all its eccentricities, moods, its whole range. In short, it is a festival of love. That's why it is *Utsav*.

R.B.: You have never thought of producing your own films ever?

G.K.: I suppose some day I might have to.

R.B.: How do you see your works in the future? Plays?

R.B.: How do you see your works in the future? Plays? More films? Is anything afoot already?

G.K.: Immediately, I have an offer from Anant and Shanker Nag to direct a film. I have two or three ideas. I am working on them. I am not yet too sure what it eventually will be. But it will be much tighter, much smaller, much more intimate subject.

R.B.: Another bi-lingual?

G.K.: I hope not. Bi-linguals seem to go on and on, never finishing. Ideally, it should be in Kannada. Now the Kannada film market is booming. Very flourishing. A normal Kannada film is made in 20 lakhs, and a Hindi one in 35 lakhs. That can give you an indication. Although Satyadev is planning to produce one of my plays again—in Hindi.



Girish Karnad on the sets of Utsav

Eleven Short Films

Exploration Antarctica



1984/Colour/35 mm/17 min/English

Production: Films Division

Direction: V.B. Chandra

Camera: Jitu Vartak

Music: K. Narayanan

Enquiries: Films Division, 24 Peddar Road, Bombay 400 026.

The film describes the third Indian expedition to Antarctica, led by Dr Harsh Gupta, a geophysicist. The team also has two women members. They set up their camp in the barren and frozen land battling against the adverse weather and the numbing cold. While experiments are carried on in the camps, a foreign team with international membership come to visit them. When they leave, the core members of the team remain behind to carry on the work.

V.B. Chandra was born in 1935. He received the Ford Foundation Fellowship in Mass Communication and studied cinema and other audio-visual production in various countries abroad. Today, with more than twenty-eight years of experience in documentary production, he is the Joint Chief Producer—Newsreel in the Films Division. His films have won several national and international awards.

Flying High



1984/Colour/35 mm/13 min/English

Production: Films Division

Direction: P.S. Arshi

Camera: B.S.V. Murthy

Music: H.S. Neelkantha

Enquiries: Films Division, 24 Peddar Road, Bombay 400 026.

The film covers the first Himalayan International Hang-gliding Rally with the picturesque Kangra valley as its setting. It also follows the progress of the Indian Army expedition on a Microlight aircraft across the length of the Indian subcontinent. The aircraft starts its journey in Kashmir, and with a few stops in between, finally reaches the sea bound edge of India in the southernmost tip, Kanyakumari.

P.N. Arshi began his professional career as a journalist, followed by lecturership in a college. He joined the Films Division in 1960 as a commentary writer in the Central Information Service, and has written the Punjabi commentaries of nearly two thousand films made by the Films Division. For the last eight years he has been working as Producer (Newsreel). Besides being associated with the production of nearly four hundred newsreels, Arshi has produced and directed documentaries on national integration.

History at the Doorstep—The Rabaris of Kuchch



1984/Colour/35 mm/28 min/English

Production: Sanchar Film Cooperative Society

Direction: Paresh Mehta

Camera: Darshan Dave

Music: Rajat Dholakia

Enquiries: Paresh Mehta, Orient Films, 36 Onlooker Building, Sir P.M. Road, Bombay 400 001

This is the first of four films of a series, *History at the Doorstep*, on the land and the people of Kuchch, a peninsular region in western India which forms a part of the Gujarat state. Different cultural influences have come together in Kuchch and thrived for centuries. But in the post-independence period, with the entry of modernization, these ancient cultures have started to degenerate. The Rabaris are a semi-nomadic community of camel rearers and sheep breeders. The film depicts the lifestyle, the customs and rituals of this proud and beautiful race.

A graduate of the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, where he studied film editing, Paresh Mehta has been an active member of the Sanchar Film Cooperative Society which produced Ketan Mehta's award winning film, *Bhavni Bhavai*. Paresh Mehta comes from Bhavnagar in Gujarat, and his knowledge and interest in the culture and crafts of the region led him to make a documentary on the *Handlooms of Gujarat*. *The Rabaris of Kuchch* is his second documentary.

He is currently planning to shoot his long-awaited feature script titled *Cheetkar*, based on a factual incident which took place in a village on the coast of Saurashtra, near his home town.

Music of Satyajit Ray



1984/Colour/35 mm/45 min/English

Production: National Film Development Corporation

Director: Utpalendu Chakraborty

Camera: Soumendu Roy and Pantu Nag

Editor: Bulu Ghosh

Enquiries: National Film Development Corporation, 13-16
Regent Chamber, Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021

Like his films, the music of Satyajit Ray, the well-known Indian film-maker, is a unique multi-layered blending of Western sense and Indian sensibility. His mastery of the form is the culmination of a long family tradition. The film traces Ray's family background and his development as a composer. Made at the time when Ray began scoring the background music for his latest film, *Ghare Baire*, the film shows Ray actually composing music at home and at the studio on the eve of the recording.

Utpalendu Chakraborty started his career with a documentary, *Mukti Chai*, based on his work among the tribals as a nonformal teacher during 1967 to 1971. His first feature film, *Moyna Tadanta*, won him National Awards for the best director and the best first feature film in 1981. *Chokh*, made in 1982, won the Special Jury Prize at the 9th International Film Festival of India, and the highest National Awards for 1982. It was also the Indian entry in the International Forum for Young Cinema of the Berlin Film Festival in 1983, and received a cash award with a citation.

Pebet

1984/Colour/35 mm/32 min/Manipuri

Production: H. Kanhailal

Direction: H. Kanhailal and Lokendra Arambam

Camera: Mahendra Kumar

Music: H. Sabitri and I. Shyamkeshore

Enquiries: H. Kanhailal, Keishamthong Thangjam Leirak, Imphal
795 001, Manipur.

One of the very few authentic theatre films produced in India, *Pebet* is a documentation of a production by H. Kanhailal, the Manipur theatre director. Drawing upon a Manipuri folk tale, it tells the story of a mother bird and her children, threatened by a cat who tempts the little birds one after another into submission, and violence against one another, even as the mother struggles to reclaim them, and does succeed in the end, when the last of the trapped birds defecates on the cat's hand, and takes advantage of the cat's discomfiture to make good its escape. The cat, in sheer desperation, licks the excreta off its palm in the last ironic gesture of the play. A play made of a rich idiom of gestures drawn as much from the life movements of the hill Manipuris as from the traditional dances of the Manipur valley, it achieves an expressive style that lends to cinematic recording. Critics have read into the play an allegory about colonization—the master race dividing and ruling the colonized, and imposing its cultural supremacy on them, till the latter rejects it in the ultimate gesture of irreverence.

Procession



1983/Colour/35 mm/15 min/No commentary

Production: Aurora Film Corporation

Direction, Camera and Music: Anjan Bose

Editing: Indrapal Kapoor

Enquiries: Aurora Film Corporation Private Limited, 125 Lenin Sarani, Calcutta 700 013.

A farmer's little son reads his school books while his father tills the field. The boy spies a group of villagers going past the field carrying a red flag. They are going to the city to join a procession. Here is a chance to have a glimpse of the magical city. The boy quietly runs away and joins the group. In the city the boy goes to have a drink of water and loses his way. Roaming about the city, he falls asleep under a tree. When he wakes up, there is another meeting taking place around him, this time under a different flag. The boy finds his villagers once again, and returns home with them.

A graduate in Law from the University of Calcutta, Anjan Bose is the grandson of Anadi Nath Bose, a pioneer in the field of the cinema. His earlier documentary, *An Encounter*, received the Bengal Film Journalists Association Award for the best documentary film of the year 1982. *Procession* has won the Silver Lotus as the best information film for the year 1983 at the 31st National Film Festival. Anjan Bose has produced and directed a number of documentaries for the television, the government of West Bengal, the Ramakrishna Mission and the trade. He works as the Executive Producer and Director of films in the Aurora Film Corporation and the Aurora Cinema Company.

A Season in Paradise



1984/Colour/35 mm/30 min/English

Production: Cinedrama

Direction: Samir Datta

Camera: Shekhar Tarafdar

Music: Biplab Mondal

Enquiries: S. Tarafdar 27, Rowland Road, Calcutta 700 020

This is a film about childhood and its inevitable passing. Children grow up and lose their instinctive perceptions, nobody seems to know why. To understand the young minds, the film takes a close look at an international selection of drawings and paintings by children, the fascinating shapes and colours by which the children lay themselves bare for all to see. The film ends with an interview with an elderly professor recalling a palanquin ride in his childhood, and displaying a drawing he was inspired to make of the event half a century ago. His nostalgia reflects the experience of every adult who can remember the ecstatic days of childhood left far behind.

Sundarban: In the Forests of the Night



1984/Colour/35 mm/40 min/English

Production: Government of West Bengal

Direction, Camera and Music: Manash Bhowmick

Sound: Paranjay Guhathakurata

Enquiries: Director of Films, Information and Cultural Affairs
Department, Government of West Bengal, Writer's Building,
Calcutta 700 001

The Sundarban area stretches over 30000 sq.km. in South 24-Parganas district in West Bengal and Bangladesh. The largest delta system in the world, Sundarban has the biggest concentration of mangrove forests. In West Bengal alone there are 54 islands and two-thirds of the area is covered with thick impenetrable jungles. In the rest of the area 3 million people reside. Sundarban is also well-known for its incredible variety of flora and fauna, and the Royal Bengal tiger. But the film is more concerned with the struggles of the people who have made Sundarban their home.

Manash Bhowmick graduated from the University of Calcutta and worked actively in the theatre as well as in the field of photo journalism. He started making documentaries in 1978. In 1979 Bhowmick made a film on child labour in India, *The Accursed*, which received two awards for the best script and the best documentary in the Amateur Film Festival organized by the Film and Television Institute of India in 1981. Bhowmick also codirected *The Wingless Citizens* in 1981, a documentary on the disabled, and has made several sponsored films and commercials.

Vadakath: A Thervad in Kerala



1984/Colour/35 mm/20 min/English

Production: Communication Films

Direction: Muzaffar Ali

Camera: Rajen Kothari

Sound: Krishna Kumar

Enquiries: Films Division, 24, Peddar Road, Bombay 400 026

A film based on the Vadakath family of Anakara village, in the Balghat district of Kerala. The Vadakath family has always been a matrilinear one, in accordance with the prevailing customs of the region. To this family belong the famous Captain Laxmi of the Rani Jhansi Regiment of Subhash Bose's Indian National Army, and the famous dancer, Mrinalini Sarabhai, daughters of Ammu Swaminadhan, a well-known freedom fighter. A beautiful old house built in a traditional pattern, the property has been handed from mother to daughter for generations. A family get-together today is a nostalgic affair, where the women of the family recall their childhood in the midst of a large family in the old house.

Muzaffar Ali traces his descent from one of the more important nobles in Wajid Ali Shah's court in Lucknow. He began his professional life as an executive in Air-India. Though he has had no formal training in film-making, his first feature film, *Gaman* (1978), won a number of national and international awards. His second film, *Umrao Jaan* (1981), also received the National Awards for best actress, best music, best female playback singer and best art director in the 29th National Film Festival. In 1982 he made *Aagaman*. Among his short films are *Vastigedars the Pensioners of Avadh* (1981), *Woodcrafts of Saharanpur* (1982), *Venne India* (1982), *Laila Majnu ki Nai Nautanki* (1982), *Sunhare Sapne* (1983) and *Wah! Maan Gaie Ustaad* (1983).

We

1984/Colour/35 mm/4 min/Hindi

Production: Cinemen

Direction: Baba Majgavkar

Camera: S.D. Deodhar

Enquiries: Cinemen, Pundalik Niwas, Trombay,
Bombay 400 088

The film is a simple appeal for national integration. On a drawing board a hand draws animals, and then a human figure on whom he draws a beard or puts different clothes indicating a variety of religions. A father's voice asks his daughter what she understands of the drawings. A little girl replies that underneath the beards and the turbans and all the other religious symbols the drawings all depict human beings. But then, she asks, if everyone is basically human, why do people fight among themselves over their religions?

Baba Majgavkar received a diploma in film direction in 1971 from the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune. He has worked as an associate director with film-makers like Kantilal Rathod, Basu Chatterjee and Basu Bhattacharya, and directed himself one feature film in Marathi, *Garambiicha Bapu*. Majgavkar has also directed a number of documentaries, among which are *Education for Change*, *For a Better Tomorrow*, *Development through Credit*, *Behind Every Grain*, *Fish Pond* and *Circle of Confusion*.

We Live to Learn



1984/Colour/35 mm/13 min/English

Production: Films Division

Direction: V.B. Chandra

Camera: S.R. Bhagawat

Music: Raghunath Seth

Enquiries: Films Division, 24, Peddar Road, Bombay 400 026

The master craftsmen of India still carry on a tradition of crafts that go back to history. Without proper patronage and professional marketing arrangements, their skills often remain unknown. To retain the cultural tradition of our crafts, it is necessary to make efforts to better the lives of the craftsmen. The film describes the present condition and problems of these craftsmen and the steps being taken to keep both the art and the artisan alive.

(For the director's bio-data, see under *Exploration Antarctica*.)

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Photo credits

K. Misra for still on page 84

Nemai Gosh for stills on pages 87, 89

Aditya Arya for still on page 68

Selection Panels for the Indian Panorama section of the Tenth International Film Festival of India

Central Panel

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G.V. Iyer

Members

Manmohan Krishna

Anil Chatterjee

S. Kumar

Girish Kasaravalli

Basu Chatterjee

Shanta Serbjeet Singh

Ervell Menezes

Bharathi Raja

Shampa Banerjee

Member Secretary

A. Viren Luther

Convenor

Ravi Malik

Western Regional Panel : Bombay

Chairman

Manmohan Krishna

Members

Suresh Jindal

Khalid Mohammed

Siddharth Kak

Bhim Sain

N.B. Kamat

Asha Parekh

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Members

Pinaki Mukherjee

Bhaben Saikia

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