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An overview of new Indian cinema
Twenty-four films

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Oru Nadigai Natakam Parkiral (Tamil): A. Bhimsingh
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Parichay (Bengali): Nirmal Mitter
Rati Nirvedam (Malayalam): Bharathan
Shatranj Ke Khilari (Urdu): Satyajit Ray
Thampu (Malayalam): G. Aravindan
New Short Films: a selected list
'Assuming that any film of strong commercial potential will get a circuit release with no trouble whatsoever, have the others a moral right to quick outlet, or indeed any outlet at all?'

—Penelope Houston in
Night & Sound 1963 Winter Issue

The proper study of mankind is man, wrote Alexander Pope some three hundred years ago. The popular film maker in India has still to realise the wisdom of this. The commercial Hindi cinema, with its elephantine structure and product is unaware of even the basic recording functions of the camera. Far removed from anything as esoteric as art, Hindi cinema exists for only one reason: the selling of dreams.

The term 'Hindi cinema' is misleading. It has come to be so strongly identified with the crassly commercial cinema that a new term should be used for more serious attempts at cinema proper and should rightly be called film making in Hindi.
It is a common enough scene in India now: hopeful young film makers running around with scripts in hands, looking for money and method to beat the highly commercialised, impossibly unprofessional commodity that masquerades as cinema.

The new film makers function under extreme duress; lack of money seems to them the root of all evil, but economics and good film making are often at odds. The good, the real film maker adapts even to difficult economic circumstances. Satyajit Ray, Antonioni or Bresson each managed to find an audience for their spare films. In comparison, in commercial cinema, while the largesse is embarrassing, there is an absolute poverty of ideas.

It is in this context that the realistic film, the low-budget film or the avant garde film, emerges as the true representative of the Hindi cinema. Its makers have faced the same problems as regional film makers. The regional film maker works under tremendous constraints, money-wise and market-wise. His devotion to his craft is unique and almost fanatically idealist. True Hindi cinema has only been made under such difficult conditions.

It is easy to see the faults of the commercial Hindi films. They raise real enough social problems, but solve them by resorting to fantasy. Therefore, there is no real confrontation. So, the poor factory worker continues to queue up to see the agony of a velvet-clad Amitabh Bachchan or Zeenat Aman in the vain hope of finding similar fairy-tale solutions to his own predicament. He is addicted to his opium, the craving for which is endless and self-destructive.

The serious film maker refuses easy resolutions. Whether it is the loneliness of a woman waiting for her husband in the small Punjabi village of Nakoder (Uski Roti), the abstract pattern of a Nirmal Verma story (Maya Darpan), the woes of partition (Garm Hawa), recapturing a slice of history (Shatranj Ke Khilari, Junoon), plight of the dispossessed in the big city (Gaman), the problems of alienation (27 Down, Arvind Desai ki Ajeeb Dastaan), the intention is single: the film maker does not arrange a happy ending.

This was what the government sponsored Film Finance Corporation of India had in mind in the early 70's, when it decided to promote a parallel cinema movement in the country. It encouraged films based on literature with which Hindi-speaking audience were familiar. And then followed a spate of films to which the label 'new wave' was given: Mrinal Sen's Bhuvan Shome (writer Bonophul), Badnaam Basti (Rajendra Yadav), Mani Kaul's Ashad Ka Ek Din and Duvidha (Mohan Rakesh and Vijaydan Detha), Kumar Shahani's Maya Darpan (Nirmal Verma).
Style. Non-formula. Lov
The FFC trend

Suhasini Mulay and Utpal Dutt in Mrinal Sen's Bhuvan Shome (1969)

Raakhee and M.K. Raina in Awtar Kaul's 27 Down (1973)

Nalini Pandit in Mani Kaul's Duvidha (1973)

Geeta Siddarth and Jalal Agha in M.S. Sathyu's Garm Hawa
This new wave which appeared strong enough to sweep anything that came before it fizzled out quickly. The initiators were not quite sure of their aims. Rigid insistence on well-known novels as a base killed many a talent that would not conform to such specifications. And then it was left for others like Basu Chatterji (who began his career with an FFC-aided film) and Shyam Benegal to actually bring masses to the low-budget film.

Gradually, this insistence on realism has transformed even the functioning of the studio-oriented system of the commercial cinema. Quick shooting schedules have become the order of the day and the most extravagant of movie-moguls would now prefer outdoor shootings for that touch of ‘authenticity’. B.R. Ishara and Vijay Anand will now swear by quick shooting schedules and a seasoned director like B.R. Chopra will ask Basu Chatterji to direct his film.

While these are merely superficial changes within a rigid system, the proper depiction of a culture, the ethos and zeitgeist of the people has only been the concern of the low-budget film maker. No one has depicted the life of the Punjabi village as Mani Kaul has in Uski Roti, no one has captured to perfection the last days of the Mughals like Ray has in his Shatranj or the alienation of young people as Awtar Kaul and Saeed Mirza in 27 Down and Arvind Desai.

With so much sincerity and critical acclaim, why has the serious Hindi film not become popular? Why is it that films like Uski Roti and Arvind Desai do not play to large audiences? Why is it that Hindi audiences refuse to accept films that speak their own minds?

The problems involved are communications and distribution. Only now are Indian film makers realising that all art is a quest for new ‘form’. The importance of ‘form’ has never been recognised here. The first surrealist painting in Europe was recognized as radically new form and led to innovations in literature (Apollinaire) and film (Mann Ray). But in India the invention of inferior consciousness in fiction (Mohan Rakesh), led to no parallel development in other arts.

But more important than a feeling for form are the hard facts of distribution. The commercial cinema has nothing to gain by improving audience taste. Under the garb of giving what the audience wants, it exploits existing tastes, which are any day a surer way to rake in money at the box office. To protect an assured and stable market, producers, distributors and exhibitors gang up against “new” films. The distributor will never allow more than the grudging morning show to the low-budget film, lest it become a habit with the audience and lest the commercial goose that lays the egg at the box office be killed. Even so a film like the late Awtar Kaul’s 27 Down finds its audience and is running to packed houses in its 13th week in Bombay.
Agencies like the FFC have done the best they can: giving a film maker the loan to make a film. But the FFC has yet to make a dent in the distribution systems.

Turning film society members into audiences is hardly the solution. How can films like Uski Roti and Maya Darpan (our so-called ‘difficult’ films) be judged good or bad unless a general audience has seen them? So far only film makers, film society members and critic friends have seen them, not the public at large, who make for the final success of the film—financially and in every other way.

The commercial cinema works backwards—the money passes from the distributor to the producer even before an inch of raw stock has been exposed. Therefore, the distributor's control over the product is complete. The low-budget film, like the ones that FFC sponsors, begin with ideas but unless there is more institutionalised backing all the way, the film can hardly reach its intended audience. The audience is corrupted but it can be reached. What keeps new film makers from an audience is the system of film finance in Bombay.

By all accounts, the Hindi film as regional cinema can prosper only under two circumstances: more theatres (here one is not talking of the select screening at the National Centre for the Performing Arts or the film societies) so that there is more exposure to the real audience.

While on this point, what a glorious chance the powers that be missed during the emergency! At least some of the theatres could have been prevailed upon to exhibit FFC films. Take the labour areas of Parel or Dadar. If at least three of the half-a-dozen or so theatres were to show good films, would it not have been something for the local populace who anyway throng these theatres once a week no matter what the film?

The second major circumstance: a ceiling on the budgets of films in general. If there were a ceiling on the budget, the commercial producer would not think of turning every set into a Taj Mahal. Then by necessity, they would have to invent cleaner and simpler ways of making films.

Serious cinema is unavailable to audiences, not because it is obscure, but because the system of distribution never allows serious cinema near general audiences.

J.S. Rao
New films in the making

• Vikas and Aruna Desai, the husband/wife team who work together as director/editor having met (and later married) as students at the Film Institute in Poona, are now busy completing their second film (the first was Shaque.)

  A family of four—father, mother, son, daughter—are normal, happy. Slowly their normalcy is broken up. Things happen that might not belong to the physical world. The family starts disintegrating. The son tries to explore the unseen with dire consequences. The film reveals the world of the unknown through mantriks, spirits, and rituals as they exist in the city of Bangalore today. The cast includes Dr. Shreeram Lagoo, Anant Nag, Indrani Mukherjee, Padmini Kolhapure. Enquiries: N.B. Kamat, 2A Naaz Cinema Building, Lamington Road, Bombay 400004. Tel: 354560.

• Shridhar Kshirsagar (documentary film-maker and the director of the Kannada film Kanakambara) is recording for his two-hour archive film on the history of Indian cinema. Title: The Great Indian Film Bazaar. Due to be completed early 1979. Enquiries: Film Finance Corporation, Regent Chambers, Nariman Point, Bombay 400021.

• Kumar Shahani directs Smita Patil in his second feature film. It is titled Tarang (Vibrations), in colour and cinemascope. It stars Amol Palekar, Smita Patil, Hansa, Girish Karnad, Naseeruddin Shah and Shreeram Lagoo. It is about a family of industrialists who disintegrate even as the business empire gains ground. The flaw in each individual culminates in a crime. Amol Palekar is faced with the breakdown of his marriage at home and the tactics of more ambitious relations on the factory front. In the kaleidoscope of events between men and nature, old myths make dazzling new configurations. The film is scheduled to be completed by mid-1979. Enquiries: Ravindra K. Gupta, Chitra Dhwani, 205 Shreejeet Apartments, 45 J P Road, Andheri (West) Bombay 400058.
DOORIYAN

Short film maker and animator Bhim Sain graduated to feature films with honours. His very first film *Gharaonda* was successful with audiences and critics alike. In his second colour film, *Dooriyan*, also in Hindi he explores the man-woman relationship which is in a state of flux in contemporary Indian society. Kailash is a very successful advertising agency executive and his working wife Ratna devotes evenings to the stage. They have arrived at a mutually acceptable—but fragile—balance between their working and domestic lives, which is jolted by the arrival of the first baby. It is their daughter who brings about both their initial separation and ultimate reconciliation. The film is produced and directed by Bhim Sain. Camera: A.K. Bir. Cast: Uttam Kumar, Dr. Shreeram Lagoo, Priyadarshini. The film will be released in April 1979.

*Enquiries:* Climb Films, 22 Arun Chambers, Tardeo, Bombay 400034.
GRIHAPRAVESH

With Grihpravesh Basu Bhattacharya completes the trilogy that began with Anubhav. The film centres on a typical middle class man awaiting the dawn of a glowing future. Saving for a new home both Amar and Manashi live a lean, uninteresting, routine life. Often Amar's little pleasures are sacrificed on the altar of the all-consuming dream. A young office colleague, Sapna turns up to disturb the even tenor of his life. Amar is faced with this choice— estrange himself from child and wife or begin anew the never-ending game of dreaming about an uncertain future with the new girl. The film is written, produced and directed by Basu Bhattacharya. Cast: Sharmila Tagore, Sanjeev Kumar, Sarika; Enquiries: Basu Bhattacharya, Aarohi Productions, 1 Raj Kutir, 8th Road, Khar, Bombay 400052.
RAMNAGARI

Kantilal Rathod, the director who made Kanku and Parinay is now busy completing his Hindi colour feature Ramnagari. Based on a heartwarming, humorous account—an autobiography by the well-known Marathi playwright and raconteur Ram Nagarkar, the film is about the travails of a barber going up in life, and enjoying his success even while he sees through the humbug that life-styles are about. The film is notable in that it marks the return of Suhasini Mulay, playing opposite actor Amol Palekar (see picture below from the film). Enquiries: Akar Films, 2 Hill Range Apartments, Pali Mala Road, Bandra, Bombay 400050.
The demand for Hindi films continues to be very high; 1977-78 was another profitable year for the Hindi film industry. Bombay produces over one-fifth of the country's total production of 550 films. The argument is no longer over whether Hindi cinema is large; but over why quality films are so rare.

Financiers control production and demand one action-packed multi-starrer after another. The successful financiers and distributors drive out the experimenters, whereas a money-making director with 12 films on the floor has no qualms about accepting the 13th. A newcomer wanting to break into the system doesn't stand a chance to make it without the right connections.

Most Bombay films continue to be shot in studios even after experimental films have proved the possibility of carefully controlled outdoor shooting. Perhaps directors shoot indoors because the unreality considered appropriate for Hindi cinema has to be created, it doesn't exist anywhere. Where is one to find a mansion with a gold-plated staircase and stuffed animals? Or a restaurant with rubber dragons and cabaret dancers sporting Hawaiian skirts? If a film-maker does decide to venture outside, he sets up instant papier mache townships, which finally end up looking as artificial on the screen as the studio sets.
The themes of these films are threadbare from use. High on the list of financially-workable themes is the classic one of good against evil. These days the favourite ‘nasty’ is the smuggler. Burly and bewigged, he has an exotic appeal, sits himself in a gaudily-upholstered hall, chockful of gadgets stroking a purring cat or a panther and is surrounded by henchmen made to look like American G.I.’s. Parvarish, Heeralal Pannalal, Khoon Ka Badla Khoon and Aahutee come to mind.

Though much is being said lately about the hero—that he is undergoing change and has a blemish or two on his spotless character, the anti-hero hasn’t arrived in Hindi cinema yet. If he breaks the law, there’s always a pat justification for it. If the hero is something of a criminal like Kalicharan or Don, wait, his double who is Mr. Nice Guy incarnate, must be lurking around somewhere. The double role also means gold at the box-office.

Equally profitable is what is called the “dacoit drama”, inspired by the phenomenal success of Sholay (over 140 weeks at the biggest cinema in Bombay). These versions have the hero fighting the tyrannical village zamindar in his spare time and a horde of bandidos most of the time. If the hero is bandido himself, sorry circumstances have somehow forced him into that position. This is what happened in Ganga Ki Saugand, Khoon Ki Pukar, Pran Jaaye Par Vachan Na Jaaye, and Heera.

Hindi cinema appeals to prevailing morality; it encourages exclusive loyalty to the family, faith in a miracle-working God, and minimal interest in women as persons.

The hero is motivated by revenge (his parents have been killed and he is sworn to draw blood for blood), emotion (discovering a long-lost brother and going into a tearful embrace), compassion for the downtrodden (cracking safes in order to give to the poor) and shallow patriotism (he retrieves a formula that can set off nuclear warfare).

Then there are films about young love. When Bobby made money, there was a boom in soft romance. A romance is wrecked by a fatal illness as in Love Story (Mili, Ankhon Ke Jharokon Se) or a mismatched horoscope (Karam, Badaltey Rishtey). In a whole decade of Hindi films, not once has a love story dealt with two people learning how to live with one another.

One finds that the single-most underdeveloped genre in Hindi cinema is comedy. Comedy is confined mainly to ‘interludes’ in other kinds of films, interrupting the flow of the story and consisting of only innuen do and slapstick. Lately however, film-makers have attempted full-length comedies. The strain shown in Pati Patni Aur Woh, Damaad, Khatua Meetha and Dilliagi.
It is surprising that films have not borrowed from American comedies; they have borrowed freely from everything else. Stories and scenes have been plagiarized from films like Carol Reed’s *Oliver* and Don Seigel’s *Dirty Harry*. *My Fair Lady* is reported being respun by three different film-makers currently.

Merging with the mainstream are films which are not as violently commercial as the others. These are intimate in size, employ lesser-known actors and are relatively more indigenous in origin. The obligatory ingredients, like a set of songs are there, but kept to a minimum. To this category belong the films of Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Basu Chatterjee, Basu Bhattacharya, Gulzar, Shyam Benegal and producer Tarachand Barjatya.

Judging by current—the super budget—productions the costs of making a film climb alarmingly. Once films were made with Rs. 10 to 15 lakhs; the talk today is in crores of rupees. There is more interest in cinemascope screens, shooting schedules abroad, 70mm, and stereophonic sounds than in depending on the content of films.

In addition, multi-starrers are here to stay. Assuming that people queue up to see their favourite stars, producers are signing six to eight top names for each of their films. The examples of *Sholay*, *Kabhi Kabhi*, *Trishul* and *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar* show that a lot of stars mean a lot of money.

That’s it. Money making remains the primary concern of Hindi films. They have very little to do with understanding our lives.

—Khalid Mohamed

*O.P. Ralkhan launches Ashoka The Great, the Rs. 300 million co-production. Andrew Sinclair is writing the script with Dr. M.N. Das from Orissa providing the historical research.*
What clicks at box-office

The so-called village belle ... Aruna Irani in Khoon Ki Pukar
He-men Vinod Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan, the men who form the backbone of the tough-but-good-guy trend in Hindi formula films. This one’s suitably called Khoon Paseena or Blood and Sweat.

The compulsory cabaret... the Helen of India

The suited-and-booted villains in Nehle Pe Dehla... Ranjeet, Premnath and Anwar Hussain
Cinema—Cinema, a compilation film on the myth and magic of Indian cinema made by Krishna Shah with the use of considerable Archive material.

The kiss returns to the Indian screen in Raj Kapoor’s much publicised big-budget movie, Satyam Shivam Sundaram.

Krishna Shah’s Shalimar—the costliest 1978 co-production starring Rex Harrison (centre) O.P. Ralhan, Dharmendra and Sylvia Miles, Shammi Kapoor, Zeenat Aman, John Saxon,
Film publicity finds its place in the calendar art of Hindu Gods: the latest Shashi Kapoor starrer Suhaag pays homage to Lord Ganesh.

MANMOHAN DESAI'S,
COLOUR COLOSSUS,
Music:
LAXMINANT—PYARELAL

Produced by:
PRAKASH TREHAN &
SUBHASH SHARMA.
Where Comedy is King

Marathi Cinema
Marathi films, in the last few years, underwent a number of changes not all of them for the better. They have become faster, slicker and consequently glossier. A number of film-makers, in particular the affluent ones like V. Shantaram, Vasant Joglekar, Dada Kondke and Kamalakar Torne, have gone in for colour in a big way. And because these film-makers either have close contacts with the Hindi film industry or are greatly influenced by Hindi films, one finds that recent Marathi film themes are derivative of Hindi film themes: Good over Evil (most of Dada Kondke films), teenage romance (Preet Tujhi Majhi, Tooch Majhi Rani), the generation gap (Chandoba Chandoba Bhaglas Ka?), crime thrillers (Shantata Khoon Jhala Aahe, Ha Khel Savlyancha, Adhikar).

Technically, too, Marathi film-makers have tried to achieve the perfection of the Hindi film by the repeated, if somewhat illogical, use of certain film techniques like the freeze and the flashback. Though one readily admits that Marathi film-makers have shown a growing awareness of film language, there is no denying that they have still not learnt to use it in the right context. One, therefore, finds them striving for effects that rarely serve any purpose.

In spite of all this superficial modernity, the rural bias in Marathi Cinema still persists. By and large, films in this genre faithfully follow the pattern set by Baburao Pendharkar's Jai Malhar (1947): a villainous village patil who exploits the villagers for his personal gain, the commoner hero with his sweetheart/wife who take up the challenge of fighting him, the difficulties that they face and their ultimate triumph. But not all films with a rural background are clichéd; socially relevant films like Samna, Choricha Mamala and Ek Gaon Barah Bhangadya have been made - but they have been few.

This obsession for rural themes is not difficult to explain. In spite of a common region and language, different sections of Maharashtrian society choose different kinds of entertainment. The educated upper and middle classes, largely urban, prefer to patronise the more powerful and aesthetic state, less affluent groups are attracted by the glitter and glamour of the Hindi film. What is left? The unsophisticated rural audiences, and to them the Marathi film maker caters unabashedly. Why? This also explains why, in a desperate attempt to woo the urban masses, he is slowly turning towards Hindi films as an inspiration for his themes — oblivious to the fact that the Hindi film, with its national appeal, functions on a much larger budget.

Comedy has been popular with Marathi audiences from the days of Master Vinayak, who, in literary collaboration with Acharya P.K. Atre, gave some of the best comedies of all time: Brahmachari, Brandichi
Batti. Since then we have had a series of comedies like Vast Chukkle Navre, Mumbaicha Jawai, Donhi Gharcha Pahuna and more recently Navra Majha Brahmachari. In most cases, a serious theme runs under the humorous one as in films like Mumba'cha Jawai, Donhi Gharcha Pahuna (housing shortage in Bombay), Kaka Mala Vachwa (widow re-marriage) and Navra Majha Brahmachari (fake Godmen). The comedy film is perhaps the only lively genre of the Marathi Cinema. But the humour, though situational, is so region and language based that the film would be practically unintelligible to anyone not familiar with the language and customs of Maharashtra.

Dada Kondke's films are recognisable by their broad comedy. He was once a tamasha artiste. The humour is crude and the laughs are provoked by slapstick and innuendo. But this style begins to pall as the later Kondke films show. These lack a point of view—and are easy to tamper with Kondke's latest film, Ram Ram Gangaram, originally titled Gangaram Veeskalmi ('20 Point Gangaram'), was intended as a homage to Indira Gandhi's 20 Point Programme. But Mrs Gandhi was defeated in the post-Emergency elections. Kondke was able to make some last-minute changes in the film. Another popular theme with Marathi audiences is that of the virtuous, perpetually suffering woman—usually the daughter-in-law. This genre, too, goes way back to the fifties with examples like Stree Jamma Hi Tujhi Kahani, Molkarin, Ekta Pahuni and Laxmi. The depiction of physical and mental torture as inflicted on a woman by her inlaws is found even in Hindi Cinema. Indians make martyrs of their women so they can continue both to worship and ill-treat them.

However, there have been attempts, particularly on the part of younger directors, to break away from these hackneyed themes. Among those who have tried to break the stranglehold of these themes are Murlidhar Kapdi (Ashi Hi Sataryachi Tarah, Naav Mothe Lakshan Kho') Babasaheb S. Fatehlal (Choricha Mamla, Sasurwashin) Dr. Jabbar Patel (Samna, Jait Re Jait) and the Yukt Film Co-operative (Ghashiram Kotwal). Among the older directors, the only one who seems to have moved with the times is Rajdutt (Ya Sukhano Ya, Devaki Nandan Gopala).

It might be interesting to devote individual attention to two films -- Paradh and Devaki Nandan Gopala-- not only because they are recent releases, but also because they are indicators of the two contrasting directions in which the Marathi Cinema today is being pulled.

Paradh is the prototype of the Marathi film which derives its inspiration from the Hindi Cinema and is strongly reminiscent of Hindi Films like Mahal and Madhumati. To quote a recent review: “there are songs and
dances, romantic scenes with the hero and heroine running around trees. There are smugglers and their hide-outs, fights galore, car chases and comic interludes. Then comes the climax..." Add to this the fact that the entire cast, from the leading pair to the character artistes, are drawn from Hindi films and the mimicry of Hindi Cinema is complete. Devaki Nandan Gopala on the other hand, is firmly rooted in Maharashtra. Based on the life of philosopher-saint and social worker, Sant Gadge Maharaj, the film is a straightforward biographical if one can ignore the director's (Rajdutt) self-conscious attempts at low-angle shots and sudden freezes.

In an attempt to give direction and stability to Marathi Cinema, the Maharashtra State Government has proposed a number of schemes. The Maharashtra State Awards, which enter their 16th year in 1978, are given annually to artistes, technicians and films in 20 different categories and total nearly Rs. 70,000 in cash. The three best films of the year, in order of merit, are awarded Rs.25,000, Rs.15,000 and Rs.10,000, to be shared on a 80%-20% basis between the producer and director of the film. But not only is the prestige of the awards dubious, the amount of the award is almost negligible.

More profitable is the Entertainment Tax Refund Scheme, under which Entertainment Tax up to rupees eight lakhs (in the case of a colour film) and rupees four lakhs (in the case of a B/W film) is returned, provided that the film maker undertakes to make another film and shows three edited reels of his film to a government appointed committee.

This scheme has not been effective because of bureaucratic delay, tedious paperwork and cumbersome account submitting. Besides, the comparatively new producer has no cash on hand to make a new film and wait for his refund to come in. Consequently, this Scheme has benefitted only the affluent producers like V. Shantaram and Dada Kondke, who admit that they can pull on without the aid of the Scheme. The Government is now thinking of a Loan Scheme, on the lines of the Film Finance Corporation to assist new film makers. Yet another incentive to the Marathi film maker, which has come into effect from 1978, is the completion of the Film City complex in Goregaon, on the outskirts of Bombay. The Film City, which covers an approximate area of 350 acres has two sound stages and 20 standard locations. Plots for film offices and technical facilities are being sold at the ridiculously low price of Rs. 25 per sq. metre. Equipment for the Film City is already being imported and it is expected that the Film City will be a self-contained unit by the end of the decade. At present, however, the chief users of Film City are the Hindi film makers, in spite of the fact that hire charges are much
lower for the maker of Marathi films.

Probably the State Government's best scheme will be setting up of the Film, State and Cultural Development Corporation, which will have a separate Film Wing, directed to minimizing bureaucratic tangles.

The Gujarati film industry is facing problems similar to those of the Marathi film industry. Here, too, Hindi Cinema wields influence. To attract urban audiences, Gujarati film makers are 'importing' popular Hindi film artistes like Kiran Kumar, Asrani and Aruna Irani to star in their films. On the other hand, the traditional Gujarati Cinema continues to rely on the folk art of Bhawai (the Gujarati equivalent of the Marathi tamasha) to satisfy its rural audiences.

True, one finds a couple of cinematically sensitive film makers like Kantilal Rathod (Kanku) and Govind Saraiya (Gunsundari No Ghar Sansar). But their off-beat films have failed to make money and the directors themselves have shifted to Hindi — where even off-beat films have some chance to make a profit.

Sanjit Narwekar

Mohan Agashe in Jait re Jait, directed by Dr. Jabbar Patel, which won the National Award for the best Marathi film, 1977
Nanda in Lavani Zali ga Ragini, the first film produced and directed by Jaiprakash Karnataki

Vishwas SarporDar's Laxmi, about the suffering Indian woman

Drunal, Nilu Phule, Arun Sarnaik (1 to r) in Nav Mothe Lakshman Khote directed by Murlidhar
Nilu Phule is the only Marathi actor to have won the Maharashtra State Best Actor Award for (Kshinth Lavin Tith Sone), 1975 (Samna) and 1976 (Choricha Mamla)
Gujarati Cinema
One of the oddities of the cinema in India is that Bombay, capital of the 
Hindi feature film in India, has done more to hinder than to help the 
regional cinemas of the geographical areas that it dominates: the Marathi 
and the Gujarati. You would have thought that the powerhouse of money 
and talent that the city has created would have helped the films of its 
mother States into a major take-off.

But, no — Marathi and Gujarati films languish and need the stern 
medicine of State aid to show evidence of vitality. Against this positive 
influence is the exodus towards the Hindi film of Marathi/Gujarati talent 
and, what is worse, of audiences.

The more interesting of the two is perhaps the Gujarati Cinema be-
cause it is at the moment before dawn. The Marathi film has just 
negotiated a precarious colour of morning.

Gujarati cinema is some 45 years old. The region and language have 
made important contributions to Indian cinema: top marquee names like 
Sohrab Modi, Motilal, Sanjeev Kumar, Asha Parekh, directors, musi-
cians, technicians and, above all, the producers and financiers but for 
whom the Indian industry would have been a faltering backyard trade.
And yet, it was not till 1975 that the number of Gujarati productions 
burst, like inflation, into double figures. In 1976, some 30 productions 
aссaulted the theatres and in 1979, fifty are expected.

What explains the spurt? It's the old story of commercial incentive. 
Why it should have taken Gujarat, heartland of Indian business, so long 
will remain a puzzle. The fact is that the government of Gujarat is now 
interested in making the State a major centre of film production — not 
just for its own sons and daughters, but also (in an amiable and un-
parochial gesture) for all comers, from wherever they may hail in India.

The incentive comes in the form of exemptions in the State from 
entertainment tax on all films shot in Gujarat. As sometimes tends to 
happen with Government, there is some re-thinking on the decision: it 
delivered results! The State is wondering whether it did not go too far. 
Can the same results not be achieved at a lower sacrifice to the State 
exchequer? The exemptions will come up for review in 1980. The debate 
continues.

In the meantime, Kantilal Rathod and Kanku have happened, to say 
nothing of Shyam Benegal, Manthan and his milk cooperative financiers. 
Also, of course, Rathod (Gujarat's first venturesome 'off-beat' film
Under production: Amjad Khan (the Gabbar Singh of Sholay) starring in Ramanand Sagar’s Gujarati film Mangdavalo
maker) has drifted to the Hindi feature with his latest Ramnagari. But before the defection, Rathod showed that it was not Gujarati audiences that resisted new themes. Kanku did quite well at the box office. As elsewhere in India, it was the country’s distribution and exhibition systems, hostile to anything but the formula film, that prevented a bigger success. Kanku was the first Gujarati film to win a National Award. Its feminine lead, Pallavi Mehta, even won personal recognition in an international film forum.

Benegal’s Manthan was exceptional in having some 2 million individuals as producers. They were members of a Kaira District Milk Cooperative. Small contributions of a few rupees each built up into substantial backing for his story of the founding of a village milk cooperative — an absorbing filmic biography of the cooperative movement in Gujarat (today one of the show States for this type of development in the country) Manthan made money. But the distribution/exhibition system won again. The film’s success was contained.

But Kanku and Manthan are in no sense representative of Gujarati Cinema, standing as they do for what is called the ‘parallel cinema’ stream in the major tide of the country’s films. The stock film is the same ‘formula’ that producers and directors, on the whole, still hesitate to back. The quantity of productions has grown; quality remains where it was. There are crises of content, form and style. Of these, possibly the most critical is the first. Gujarati films are increasingly saying nothing — or what is said is worthless. There have been protests against films propounding mystic cures for small-pox and reactionary social attitudes. Contemporary reality is notably absent. There is even importation of stars into Gujarati film from the Hindi film. The capitulation to box office is near total.

Like anywhere else, the problem is the overall state of the arts in the State. Literature, that important ‘co-relative’ of Cinema, is going nowhere particularly. There is an outstanding lack of material upon which film makers can draw. The vigour of the Kannada film is traceable to a renaissance in Kannada letters. The Bengali film, that first prodigy of India’s regional cinema, is founded on perhaps the richest vein of literature in the Indian languages.

Gujarati Cinema has now been nourished to adolescence. There is a time limit for it to attain adulthood: 1980, which is when the tax law comes up for review. Today, a question-mark is the centre of its being.

Shanta Gidwani
Kannada cinema is now recognized to be one of the most vigorous regional cinemas in India. The National Award for the Best Film has been given to Kannada films three times in the last eight years: ‘Samskara’ in 1970, ‘Chomana Dudi’ in 1975, ‘Ghattachraddha’ in 1978. Kannada films have developed an energetic neo-realism and a new combination of social observation with entertainment which might be called “folk cinema”.

Four interesting new film-makers were introduced this year—they were all either writers or theatre people. Srinivas wrote, directed and acted in Spandana, a story about a dreamy housewife who longs for the wider world. Bargur Ramachandrappa’s Ondu Oorina Kathe was either panned for its inept cinematography or praised for its political theme. The
film is about an educated Harijan boy’s feeble revolt against the caste system. Chandrasekhar Kambar’s Kaadu Kudre explores his favourite literary theme—decaying feudalism challenged by peasant strength. The director is versatile—poet, folk singer, teacher and playwright. T.S. Nagabharana, also from the theatre, has made a film Grahana about caste conflicts at an annual religious fair.

As in 1977 there were a number of films half-way between commercial and parallel cinema made by relatively unknown film makers. Of these, Parasangada Gendethimma and Aparachitha fared unusually well at the box-office.

In their second films, the young directors whose first films were seen in The Madras Panorama, have moved away from their predominantly rural themes. The notable exception is T.S. Ranga, whose Savithri reveals the costs to a village, of rivalry between two landlords.

Girish Kasaravalli has made Akramana which shows the sexual awakening of a young man in a college. The film is loosely adapted from a novel by Vaikunth Raju, the film critic of the well known Kannada daily Prajavani.
V.R.K. Prasad moves from the dream world of his previous film to the middle class milieu of a large city. His Prema Kama is about a woman-husband-lover triangle. The lover owes no loyalty to conventions but fails to convince the viewer of his liberation from inhibitions. The film is part of a three-in-one venture involving the irrepressible G.V. Iyer, Prasad and S. Divakar. They used a single location and a common cast to shoot three entirely different films.

Chandrashekhar who made Huli Bantu Huli has a clever whodunit called Doddamane Estate.

Among the older directors of parallel films there is a trend away from the neo-realist style. The new cinema, like Kannada theatre of the 1920's, explores narrative which allows convincingly for fights, songs and spectacle. The most successful of these films is Girish Karnad's Ondanondu Kaladalli, an inspired tale of mercenary warriors set in 14th century Karnataka when the Hoysala Empire had vanished and the Vijayanagar Empire was being established. Fight scenes are superbly staged and photographed.

M.S. Sathyu's Chitegu Chinte uses songs and dances for light-hearted political satire. An actor, wonderfully in love with himself, is assigned by an unseen boss to run for office. The actor imagines that he makes his own moves, while we in the audience watch the puppeteers pulling strings—sometimes the CIA, sometimes the Arabs, sometimes the Japanese and all the time the unidentifiable boss. The film’s comic energy trivializes, without effort, the pretensions of politicians. We catch bearable glimpses of our own gullibility: we will run after anybody who promises to save us from thinking for ourselves.

P. Lankesh, the “enfant terrible” of the Kannada cinema has just made the first Kannada sex film of the type which has proved very popular in Kerala. Malayalam sex films sensationalise the lives of whores but Lankesh in his Khandavideko Mamsavideko shows prostitution derived from a sick society.

The film society movement has been particularly active in Karnataka and accounts for the vigour of Kannada cinema. Besides co-ordinating the activities of the film societies in the state, the Karnataka Film Industry Development Corporation plans to provide studio, post-shooting, and laboratory facilities for both 35mm and 16mm, as well as setting up a parallel distribution system for non-commercial 16mm and 35mm films throughout the state.

Meanwhile, a number of new film-makers have formed a co-operative and plan to build low-cost cinemas throughout the state to distribute and exhibit parallel films. This sort of co-operative activity is not unusual in
India but the festival of classical films held in Heggodu, was remarkable. Heggodu is a small village in Shimoga district, where a festival of world cinema was held in 1978. The festival was organized by K.V. Subbana, eminent playwright, publisher and director. The theatre in Heggodu was built recently by the villagers themselves. When the festival was over, the theatre continued to screen films for Heggodu and nearby villages. The villagers watched classics of the world cinema with great interest; it was apparent that the ‘rural masses’ do not always prefer escapist films to serious cinema.

Kannada cinema is entering a new phase: Ghatashraddha was probably the last of the Ray-inspired rural films. These films drew on the childhood experiences of many of the film-makers who grew up in the villages and felt nostalgia for the life they had known. The new films are more critical of Indian social life, but limited to personal concerns. What the films lack is passion and a deep desire for social change.

Shama Zaidi

News on new Kannada films

B.V. KARANTH has recorded the songs for Sattvaram Nerulu (Shadows of the Dead) based on his popular stage production of G.B. Joshi’s musical play. He hopes to complete the film during summer vacation from his job as Director of the National School of Drama.

G.V. IYER is planning an ambitious multi-lingual film on the life of the great saint Sankaracharya, probably with actors from various parts of the country.

GIRISH KARNAD is considering a return to black-and-white with a small-budget small-cast film that will explore nuances of relationship between those few characters. In the meantime, his assignments as lead actor in Hindi movies pile up.

Two films are planned on the works of writer U.R. Anathamurthy, author of Samskara. One is Bara, to be directed by M.S. Sathyu, about a government civil servant tackling the problems of famine. The other is Avasthe, to be directed by Pattabhi Rama Reddy, whose Wild Wind is being dubbed in English and his later film Paper Boats is currently nearing completion.

T.S. NAGABHARANA is making what he calls a ‘comedy-thriller’ scripted by Girish Karnad and casting Anant Nag, Smita Patil and Girish Karnad.
Writer/scholar P. Lankesh, after the success of his first feature *Pallavi*, has made *Anuroopa* (Made For Each Other) starring Anant Nag and Arathi. He is now working on a film titled *Yellindalo Bandavaru* (Those Who Came From Somewhere) starring Suresh Heblikar and Lokesh.

**V.R.K. PRASAD**, who won awards and applause for his first feature, the incredibly low-budget colour film *Rishyashringa*, goes on to create a stir with an impassioned treatment of love and sex within and outside of marriage in the film *Prema Kama* starring Rekha Rao and Devadas.

**GIRISH KASARAVALLI**, who now heads the ‘Adarsh Film Institute’ has just completed *Akramana* (Conquest) and is already busy with the groundwork for his next film based on a story by Chittal.

The Kannada film *Ghatashraddha* (The Ritual) has surely collected the maximum awards in 1978. It won the country’s highest honour, the Golden Lotus, awarded to the best feature film of the year, and with it National Awards for best music director (B.V. Karanth) and best child artiste (Ajit Kumar). At the Mannheim festival, it bagged the Ducats Award and the Catholic Church Award. It won its director Girish Kasaravalli for his first film, Dada Saheb Phalke award, the Bangalore: Lions award, the Bangalore Film Journalists award and the R. Nagendra Rao award. And it is tipped to win the Karnataka State Award for Best Picture of the year as well.

A scene from *Ghatashraddha*
B.V. Karanth and Rekha Rao in G.V. Iyer's Kudure Motte (The Horse's Egg) which portrays the moral collapse of an orthodox Brahmin family. Since 1942, the prolific Iyer, Karnataka's 'barefoot director' has directed films roughly at the rate of one per year, not to mention a near-100 films he has been associated with either as assistant, script writer or producer.
Gods, Heroes, And The Box Office Demon

Tamil Cinema
Tamil cinema is easily derided. "The films are as bad as Hindi films. The only substantial thing Tamil cinema has made is a Chief Minister." What is the contribution of Tamil cinema to society? It is especially sad that while film makers of the neighbouring states of Karnataka and Kerala are making increasingly more sensible, and socially relevant films, Tamil cinema continues to wallow in melodrama, loud, noisy dialogues, overdone make-up and gaudy sets.

What is wrong with the Tamil film industry? "Nothing. The same jigsaw puzzle of commercial trend and people's taste," say the industry-wallahs. Was the Tamil scene always like this?

Way back in 1952, in M. Karunanidhi's (the DMK chief) Parasakti, a pujari corners a young widow in the temple for sex. Her brother attacks the pujari with a knife. The case goes to court. The accused declares in obviously rhetorical language that he has attacked the pujari not because he is against temples and worship, but because he is against immorality in the temple. The film was banned for its anti-Brahmin, atheistic attitude. In another film, Thirumbipar (Look Back), a double-crossing labour union leader is exposed. C. N. Annadurai wrote screenplays like Velaiykarai, drawing attention to the plight of the downtrodden.

On the other hand, Gemini's S.S. Vasan produced Hollywood style extravaganzas like Chandrakala, and Avvayyar, which were big hits for their scale. A.V.M. Studios produced intense family dramas.

Still earlier, in the 40's, it was musicals all the way. Singing stars (when there was no playback singing) like P.U. Chinnappa, Thyagaraja Baghvadar, would break into songs every three minutes; films would be advertised for having thirty and more songs.

The 50's brought a change in style. When superstar Sivaji Ganesan, who played the fire-brand youth in Parasakti left DMK and joined the National Congress party, abandoned his iconoclasm and took to theism, M.G. Ramachandran became the new hero. Two definite groups emerged in the film industry: one pro-DMK and another pro-Congress. From then on it was a war over mass appeal.

Fights, duets, sexual overtures in songs, rapes, the perpetual triumph of the hero over evil, each side laid these on. But people like Bhim Singh and P. Neelakanthan (Veera Pandiya Kattabomman, Kappalottiya Thamizhan) continued to make subdued social and biographical films.

Tamil cinema continues to roll out formula films. But there is evidence of change.

Ten years back, Jayakanthan, the most controversial novelist and onetime Communist Party card-holder, made Tamil cinema's first realistic film. Unnai Pol Oruvan was shot entirely on location, using natural lights and unknown
artistes. Though a technically poor film, it was a successful essay in neo-realism. It won Jayakanthan the bronze medal for the third best national film at the National Awards.

John Abraham, a young graduate from FTII, Pune, a thorough non-conformist, took the Tamil film scene by storm when his black and white, low-budget film *Agraharathil Kazhuthai* (A donkey in the Brahmin Village) won the National Award for Best Tamil film. Though the ‘donkey’ kicked up enough dust and news, the film has not been released. An orphan donkey is adopted by a college professor and housed in the professor’s village. The professor is himself a Brahmin. The presence of the donkey in their street disturbs the village Brahmins, who finally contrive to kill it. The social criticism of the film is lightened by the consternation of the Brahmins whenever the donkey appears.

K. Balachandar, an accountant turned film maker has explored off-beat themes. He also pleads in interviews and articles for his audiences to be more discerning. His latest *Thappu Thalangal* has not much of a story but presents a prostitute and a hireling, who try to change their life styles and become “decent” citizens. It shows how their attempts are frustrated by society. Balachander is an “intelligent compromiser”; even on an off-beat film he makes a marginal profit to the producer.

Bharati Raja’s (*16 Vayadinile* amd *Kizhake Pohum Rail*) forte is down-to-earth conversation and characterisation. He includes songs in his films, and explains that he is trying to render a rural India where folk songs are an integral part of life.

The Madras Film Institute graduates formed ‘Jwala’, the first cooperative film unit in the state. Their film *Kudisai* (Hut) has been stalled without finance, though the film has reached the re-recording stage. Now a bank and some well-wishers have come forward to help ‘Jwala’.

Rudrayya, another Madras Institute product, made *Aval Appadithan*—about a girl’s thirst for that affection which is hard to get in broken home. Mrinal Sen liked the film. “I only hope people will learn to welcome and help sustain the new trend”.

K. Rajendran, a seasoned editor, journalist sums up the anxiety of the discerning Tamil filmgoer, when he pleads in an article, “Unless we change our taste and accept films like *Mullum Malarum*, the Tamil cinema will be soon written off as muck.”

R. Krishnamohan
Aval Appadithan (That's the way she is) directed by Rudrayya.

Sujatha in K. Balachandar's Avargal (The Others)
Tamil Film Industry In Clover

Why The Boom Will Last

The film industry in Tamil Nadu is riding high on the crest of a wave of prosperity. No studio is easily available to a producer. Processing and other laboratory facilities are overstretched. Artistes, nowadays, are so busy that the more popular stars work for several producers simultaneously but seldom more than two hours a day for any one of them instead of the normal eight hours. In short, the Tamil film industry has never had it so good.

TAX REFORM

During 1977 the number of Tamil pictures produced was 66. Currently their number on the sets is about 150. This dramatic upswing has been triggered by a tax reform announced by the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government a year ago. It had then compounded the entertainment tax (collected from the film viewer) and the show tax (paid by the exhibitor) into one levy. Some 1,300 out of the 1,700 odd theatres in the state have now to pay the new impost which, on the whole, is much less onerous. Touring cinemas and those in the villages have also benefited from the tax relief which has cost the state exchequer an aggregate sum of Rs. 2.5 crores in a single year.

Not surprisingly, Mr. D. Ramanujam, secretary of the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce and an exhibitor himself, is un stinting in his praise for the chief minister, Mr. M.G. Ramachandran who owes his political eminence to a large extent to his success on the silver screen. Thanks to Mr. Ramachandran's initiative, entertainment tax on cinema tickets has been slashed to a flat rate of 33.3 per cent from 55 to 70 percent charged earlier. Rural audiences are swelling at the rate of 20 per cent annually compared to a mere eight per cent rise in the number of tickets sold in city theatres.

The industry, moreover, is confident that this boom will last. As it is, the film producers in the state are on a good wicket. Out of 9,000 cinema houses of all types in the whole country, half are in the southern states, the largest number — some 1,730 — being in Tamil Nadu. With the spurt of production, the increased patronage in the villages, and encouragement from Mr. R. M. Veerappan, the state information minister, who was closely connected with the industry for decades, scores of new theatres are coming up, moreover, in the rural areas.
OPEN-AIR THEATRES

The state government has, in fact, also decided to allow the establishment of open air theatres (not to be confused with the drive-ins meant for the car-owning elite) in the villages. There are already more than 100 semipermanent theatres, 70 of them financed by the Tamil Nadu Theatre Corporation. The corporation is now trying to bring down the cost of these theatres to Rs. 3 lakhs each, including the price to be paid for the projector, equipment and furniture. It is laying down the specifications to be complied with capacities ranging from 600 to 800 each.

The new turn for the better has not come gratis. In 1974, the film people - studio owners, producers, distributors and exhibitors - rose in revolt against the then DMK government's decision to hike the show tax from Rs. 10 to Rs. 150 for the city theatres at one go. Following this, the industry downed shutters for a while. The move hit rural cinemas, too, with the tax going up from just a rupee to Rs. 25. The Government soon climbed down, however, and a compromise of sorts was reached. But the industry continued to be "sick" with the failure of films at the box-office, dwindling audiences and swelling revenue from entertainment tax for the government.

Out of the gross collection of Rs. 30 crores in 1973-74, the government took Rs. 13 crores, leaving the rest to the industry. But the next year it gathered Rs. 17 crores out of Rs. 32 crores.

In 1975-76, the government benefited to the tune of Rs. 21 crores and, though the gross collection increased to Rs. 33 crores, the industry got only Rs. 12 crores.

Under attack from all sides in the assembly, the government then appointed a high-level committee, including leading film-personalities like Mr. B. Nagi Reddi and Mr. A. V. Meyappan, to suggest, among other things ways and means of rationalising the tax structure, which consisted of entertainment tax, a surcharge and an additional surcharge on this tax (all to be collected from the filmgoer) and show tax, a surcharge on show tax and an additional surcharge on show tax (all to be collected from the exhibitor). Thus the aggregate incidence of tax on every rupee earned by the industry was about the highest in Tamil Nadu among all the states in the country, being two to three times as high as in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala or Maharashtra.

PROMPTLY SHELVED

The committee, therefore, proposed that the government should introduce a fixed show tax for all the cinemas up to the panchayat level so
that the tax evasion is eliminated and at the same time the burden of multiple taxation on the industry is eliminated. Further, it felt that exhibitors should be allowed to screen films more often during the day. The DMK government, however, promptly shelved the committee’s report, nor did the adviser’s regime under President’s rule bother to implement it.

When the AIADMK Government assumed power in July last year, Mr. M.G. Ramachandran did not forget his promise to the film industry. On December 26, 1977 he introduced the compounding system not only for cinemas in panchayats but also for those in second grade municipal towns, going beyond the committee’s recommendation. It is now certain that the new system will eventually cover all theatres in the state.

The average annual capital outlay on the production of Tamil films is Rs. 7 crores (assuming a production of 40 black and white films at Rs. 8 lakhs apiece and 20 colour pictures at Rs. 15 lakhs each). In addition, Rs. 1.5 crores is spent on the reissue of old pictures and publicity. The tax relief of Rs. 2.5 crores during the last 12 months has, therefore, sufficed to galvanise the industry. Some 150 pictures are on the sets.

The number of touring cinemas has shot up from 700 to 1,000. The distributor has more money to pay the producer. The producer has more to meet studio and other expenses and satisfy the artistes. “There are no lock-outs, no strikes and everyone in the industry is keeping a very busy schedule,” says a prominent industry spokesman.

**EVASION REDUCED**

The government, too, has reason to be gratified. Tax evasion has been drastically reduced, if not eliminated altogether. Under the new formula the total number of cinemas in a locality in the specific classification is taken into account to calculate their gross collection capacity and at one remove, the tax payable by each to the government. The government is not losing any of its revenue through leakage and can save much of the outlay of its enforcement and prosecution machinery.

The industry, on the other hand, is flourishing. All the extra money now legitimately acquired - can be ploughed back, and is being ploughed back. No exhibitor fears the commercial tax officials because the tax payment is now on the gross collection capacity of the theatre. One more avenue for corruption has been effectively blocked.

V.G. Prasad Rao

(Courtesy: Times of India)
Sex and Sensibility
Malayalam Cinema
A new kind of Malayalam cinema came into being with Adoor Gopalakrishnan’s Swayamvaram (One’s Own Choice). With it the usual melodrama gave way to the plausible and visually convincing narrative. Melodrama hasn’t died in Kerala since Adoor made his film, but alongside it a more serious cinema has become established, in part following Adoor’s example, and in part because graduates of the Film and Television Institute of India have taken up film-making in Kerala.

Quantitatively, Malayalam cinema has developed rapidly: the number of films increased from six in 1950 to seventy-seven in 1975 to ninety-four in 1977. Ninety-eight films has already been released by October 1978 and the year’s tally is expected to be 130. Unfortunately, very few of these films are substantial cinema.

Adoor’s Kodyettam (Ascent) was the major film of 1977. It won the National Award for Best Malayalam Film and State Awards for Best Film, Best Director, Best Script, Best Actor and Best Art Director. Adoor records the slow awakening of a drifter to responsibility to others: his camera is sensitive to grades of timidity and humiliation; he is particularly sensitive to the plight of women in a male-dominated society.

Aravindan’s Kanchana Sita (Golden Image of Sita, 1977) won him the National Award for the Best Director. His Thampu (Circus Tent, 1978) looks in slow attentive black and white at performers and audience gathered under the circus tent. Aravindan doesn’t use the camera: he sees through it. What the film lacks in narrative is held together by sheer accuracy of observation. P.A. Backer’s Kabani Nadi Chuvanappol (When River Kabani Turns Red, 1975) was literally manhandled during the Emergency. A policeman is said to have broken into the projection room during the film’s screening and hacked away at the print. P.A. Backer has since made Manimuzakhom (Tolling of the Bells, 1976) and Chuvanna Vithukal (Red Seeds, 1977). The film reveals the social and economic pressures which defeat the efforts of the poor to live in dignity. Malayalam cinema has acquired some notoriety for a series of wishful soft-porn films, including Rathi Nirvedam (Sexy Dreams), Vadakachu Oru Harudayam (A Hear for Hire), and Satharathil Oru Rathri (A Night in the Rest House). It is all the more remarkable that in a context so commercial, Adoor’s Kodyettam was a financial success and easily recovered its costs.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair’s Bandhanam (Bondage) deserves special attention. The film observes a boy’s return from city living to the village. The film’s mood is sorrowful: the boy cannot shake himself free of the experience of the city and fails to adapt to village life. Adoor is
working in colour on FFC-backed *Kiraatam*, a surrealistic film which deals with our habits of visual perception; he is also working on a black and white film about contemporary life.

Pavithran, producer of *When River Kabani Turned Red*, is now directing a film *Yaro Oral* (Someone Unknown) based on his own script. Madampu Kunhikuttan’s accomplished novel on the decadence of the Nambudiri families, *Aswathama* (Wandering Soul), is being adapted to cinema by K.G. Mohan, an Institute alumnus. P.A. Backer’s *Sangha Ganam* (Chorus) based on M. Sukumar’s story and *Manninte Maril* (In the Bosom of the Earth), based on Cherukad’s famous novel, should turn out to be serious cinema. Veteran Mrinal Sen is directing his first Malayalam film, *Kayyorinte Katha* (The Story of Kayyoor) based on Niranjana’s Kannada novel *Chirasmarana* which tells the immortal story of the peasant martyrs of the village of Kayyoor in Northern Kerala. Padmarajan who contributed scripts for those dream-sex conglomerations like *Rathi Nirvedam* is now directing his first film based on his own novel *Peruvazhi Ambalam* (The Waiting Shed). Bharathan, an art director whose first film *Prayanam* (The Journey) won critical acclaim, is currently making his third film *Aaravam* (Uproar).
There are some grounds for hope. The first development is the construction by the Chitralekha Film Co-operative of a studio complex in Trivandrum. (Chitralekha Film Cooperative was formed in 1965 by a group of FTII graduates. The Cooperative has been producing films as well as distributing them. It publishes film literature, sponsors film societies and runs a centre for film studies in collaboration with the National Film Archive of India). The new Chitralekha studios are located on a 20-acre plot and provide complete facilities for shooting, processing, editing and recording. The cooperative is deciding on a scheme which favours the serious and the experimental film-maker: if, on the basis of his previous work, a film-maker is considered worthy of support, he receives on credit production equipment, and processing, recording and editing facilities. These facilities will be made available to the film-maker without regard to his bank balance, or to the box-office potential of the contemplated film. The distribution of a sponsored film will be handled by the Co-operative, saving the film-maker the usual rejections from commercial distributors.

Another development is the scheme drawn up by the Kerala Film Development Corporation to construct and run cinema houses in all the districts of the State. The cinema houses are to have a seating capacity of one thousand. This large capacity is unlikely to favour experimental cinema.

A. MEERA

Sukumaran and Kanchan in
M.T. Vasudevan Nair's second film
Bandhanam (Bondage) based on his own story.
Malayalam Cinema

Gopi, National Award best actor of 1977 with actor Azeez in Adoor Gopalakrishnan's highly acclaimed second film Kodiyettam (The Ascent)

Adoor’s Swayamvaram
Telugu Cinema

Shameless, plagiarised versions of other successful language films, especially Hindi, is the present trend of Telugu Cinema. A record number of 95 films were released in 1978 out of which only 13 did well at box-office. The industry is being dominated by a couple of male stars, a trend borrowed from Hindi films.

The State Film Development Corporation helps only as far as giving publicity to films in newspapers. It is financing studios and laboratories which is not the priority need by any means.

One welcome feature in Andhra Pradesh is the tremendous growth of the film society movement in the past four years despite the lukewarm attitude of the State Government. There are at present 42 film societies functioning in the State.

It was only in 1977 that a feeble beginning was made to introduce good cinema to Telugu audiences. Chillara Devulu (Petty Gods) was a sincere film based on the exploitation of workers by landlords in the Telengana area, directed by the young Madhava Rao. Unfortunately, it fared badly. Voorummadi Bratukulu was the second film. It showed the brutalities of two village heads in their rivalry and how innocent people struggle for existence. Then came Taram Marinki (Wind Changes) directed by Sangeetam Sreenivasa Rao. The film reflected village life and politics.

Shyam Benegal’s Anugraham (The boon) was a breakthrough for Telugu Cinema. Though the film was completed in 1977 it was not released until June 1978. The film was too complex for the general public. Strangely, it did not attract comment from critics either.

Chali Cheemalu (Black Ants), a worthy attempt by Devdas, (the actor-turned-director from Institute of Film Technology, Madras) enjoyed a reasonable success. It was based on bonded labour. Mrinal Sen’s Oka Oori Katha (A village story) is based on the short story “Kafan” by Prem Chand. It explores the subject of the ultimate poverty
in the country. The film was exempted from Entertainment Tax in the country after much deliberation. And now, the anxiously awaited film is Maa Bhumil (our land) directed by Gowtam Ghosh, an eminent short film maker from Bengal who made the controversial documentary "Hungry Autumn" in 1974 on the Bengal famine. The film is entirely shot in a remote Telengana Village, Mangalaparthi, in Medak District. Maa Bhumil is the story of those people in India who resisted exploitation and slavery.

One notable feature is the trend towards biographical films. Alluri Seetharamaraju made in 1974, was a runaway success. Karunamayudu is another successful film, based on the life of Christ, directed by the late Bhimsingh.

Unless State help is extended more positively in Andhra Pradesh to those people who strive for quality Telugu films, good cinema will remain out of their reach, leaving room for outsiders and outside influences to dominate.

I.S.K. Deva Rayalu

After Hindi, the largest number of films are made in Telugu (though this last year the Malayalam production surpassed those in Telugu). Two of the most outstanding recent films, however, have been made by non-Andhras, Mrinal Sen and Shyam Benegal. Reportedly Ramu Kariat, the Malayalam film maker is planning to make his debut in Telugu films as well, with a film on revolutionaries in the Srikakulam area. The general trend today is towards the low budget film, in colour and shot on locations. Two important films are K. Devdas' Chall Cheemalalu and Mana Oorie Pandavalu by Bapu, who directed Sita Kalyanam. Both films are about exploitative landlords being overthrown. One of the big budget films, and a big letdown as well, was Rajendra Prasad's Rama Krishnulu which brought evergreen heroes N.T. Rama Rao and Nageswara Rao together on the screen after a gap of nearly twelve years. It leads among the 'big money' films to fail. The biggest moneyspinner though, has been the middle-budget Jagan Mohini described as a "mantra-tantra" film. It is directed by Vithalacharya and features cabaret star Jaya Malini.

B.S. Lakshmi
The exploiter and the exploited, a recurring theme, presented in the new film, Chali oommallu directed by Devdas (an alumni of FTII).
Under production: Chillana Devallu (Petty dolls) directed by Madhava Rao.

Bapu’s grand mythological Sita Kalyanam (1976) rejected due to its unusual operatic presentation now receiving plaudits abroad.
Shim Singh’s successful Karunamayulu, based on the life of Christ, using a Hollywood approach and biblical themes.

Jyotshila Shankar in Mrinal Sen’s first film in Telugu, Oka Oorie Katha, a breakthrough also in terms of tax exemption.
A Case of Lost Identity
Bengali Cinema

Bengali cinema has lost its energy. Mriganka Sekhar Roy, a leading critic says, "The Bengali cinema scene is bleak and there is no tinge of hope". Mrinal Sen, in a recent article draws attention to the curious fact that while the socio-political scene in West Bengal remains aggressively different, and the Calcutta theatre remains inspirational for the rest of the country, there is total barrenness in Bengali cinema.

Various reasons have been advanced for its sorry plight today—limited market after partition, outdated equipment, lack of theatres for good quality films, lack of finance, absence of colour laboratories. Over and above this, Tollygunge has been hit by the continuing power crisis. However, good films have been made in other regions despite adverse factors. The root of the trouble seems to lie in a drying up of creativity or even of ordinary invention.
From my personal observation I attribute this to two factors—Bengal's perpetual economic crisis which has not only limited film production but has also tied would-be film makers down to routine jobs. Secondly, in spite of film societies, young film makers are unable to see very much world cinema.

It is to the credit of West Bengal Government that it has realised the seriousness of the crisis facing the Bengal film industry. In late November, the West Bengal Minister for Information announced grants totalling Rs. 1.4 million to eleven producers for making films within the state. The outright grants replace the loans by which previous ministries supported serious cinema in the state. The grants are not limited to film makers from Bengal. M.S. Sathyu is one of the recipients this year. Mr. Budha Dev Bhattacharya hopes the grants will help "to rescue producers from the clutches of distributors"; they will also provide work for technicians and under-utilised laboratories. The hope is that low budget directors from other states will find Calcutta laboratory costs more reasonable than Madras or Bombay costs and that Calcutta will once again become a national center it was in the thirties. There are specific schemes (worth over Rs. 4 million) to modernize equipment and studio facilities and to build in Calcutta an art theater and film library.

The State Government, in collaboration with private distributors, is sponsoring six films for the International Year of the Child. It is also negotiating with the Central Government for equipment to set up a "Film Division" of its own, so that the making of documentaries and film material for children becomes an efficient enterprise.

Three film makers Utpal Dutt, Mrinal Sen and Tarun Majumder, have been advanced funds for three feature films. Utpal is working on Jhor (Storm) based on the life of the famous Bengali rebel, De Rozio, Mrinal Sen has made Parasuram, a film about pavement dwellers. Tarun Majumder has completed his Ganadevta based on a novel by Tara Shankar Bannerjee. Ganadevta deals with the growing year of a zamindar's son in the twenties and thirties.

Compared to recent past, '77-'78 saw an encouraging increase in the number of films released. Thirty seven films appeared in 1977 and 21 upto October '78. The films fall mainly into categories—the Bombay, formula-based, action dramas and family melodramas.

A good copy of the commercial action drama like Lal Kothi is both commercially successful and tolerable as entertainment. It is the other films (and this accounts for most of the productions) which ape the action dramas without the necessary expertise that do not deserve any sympathy. Even a family social drama which is produced today does not
have adequate emotional content or technical smoothness which such films had twenty years ago. There is no dearth of young film makers who passionately want to make films. If that passion is backed up by a corresponding degree of technical proficiency and plain market sense, we would have films which, though run-of-the mill, are still interesting and visually tolerable. As far as the ‘quality’ film makers are concerned, the problems facing them are no different from those in other regions. Effective help to them will involve substantial assistance from the Government and public sector organisations.

A few films released in 1977 and 1978 deserve mention. Tapan Sinha’s *Ek Je Chillo Desh*, a fable about a truth drug, was a comic examination of the hypocrisy and cruelty of the ruling classes. The last sequence, in which members of consortium of the affluent destroy the truth drug while competing to acquire it, was reminiscent of *Dr. Strangelove*. Choppy editing and poor camera work in places distracted attention from the central theme. Dipankar Dey and Sonali Gupta provided ample evidence of new acting talent in Bengal.

Ray’s latest film *Jai Baba Felunath*, was to be released in early December. Ray’s delight in Benaras is apparent in this story of a golden Ganesha, sacred to its owner and a commodity to an antique-smuggler.

Ritwik Ghatak’s last film, *Jukti Takka O Gappa* was made in 1974 but released in late 1977. It is Ritwik’s apologia and valediction. A seriously flawed film—there is a note of self pity even of self indulgence rarely heard before in Ritwik’s work. *Jukti Takka O Gappa* is a key Ritwik movie because it is both a gathering together of Ritwik’s major concerns and a report on the last year of his life.

The film revolves around four rootless characters intended to typify specific problems and dilemmas of post-Partition Bengal. The film ends with a salute to the Naxalites and the alchcoholic intellectual ‘heros’ encounter with the police. The film is deeply divided: utopian in longing, skeptical in realism.

The road taken by Ritwik seemed to lead to a dead end. What could one say after *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, *Titash* and *Jukti*. But Buddhadev Das Gupta’s *Dooratwa* extends Ritwik’s form of analysis. Buddhadev started out teaching economics in a college. He was drawn to cinema because it was ‘a haunting medium.’ He has already made an impressive documentary *Dholiya Raja* (about Khiroda Natty, master drummer) using the drum as symbol of an intricate rural culture destroyed by cheap movies. *Dooratwa* measures the distance between thinking radically and living radically in a bourgeois society. The narrative makes use of dramatic flash-backs, flash-forwards and voice-over commentary and
reminds one of the structure of Godard’s political films. And yet the film will attract not only activists but the mass audience.

A movie like Dooratwa inevitably invites reference to and comparison with Satyajit Ray’s Pratidwandi and Jana Aranya. The nightmarish and stifling quality of the City which Ray had stamped on those films in such a masterly fashion will for long remain unequalled. Ray is a master when looking with compassion at the city’s pain. Dooratwa, with all its simplifications, is a report from the battlefield.

IQBAL MASUD

JAI BABA FELUNATH

Like Agatha Christie’s immortal Hercule Poirot, Satyajit Ray created Detective Feluda in the adventure stories he writes for young people. The exploits of Feluda were first projected on film in Ray’s Sonar Kella. In Jai Baba Felunath he detective returns to the screen, this time to recover the precious, stone-studded, golden idol of Lord Ganesh. Lord Ganesh’s image belongs and brings prosperity to the Ghosal family. Meghraj, a leading businessman now fallen on evil days, threatens to steal the idol when his offer to purchase it is turned down. Then the image is actually stolen! Following up a clue that’s provided by a teenage boy nicknamed Captain Spark, Feluda ultimately tracks down the precious family idol and the real villain—in family-friend’s clothing.
The ebullient Utpal Dutt, stage director, playwright and actor, is now making a film called Jhor based on the last two years of the life of the revolutionary teacher-social reformer H.L.V. Derozio.

It is 1829. In the Hindoo College, Derozio teaches his pupils—each a celebrity in later life—the value of scientific doubt and the necessity for patriotism. A woman, Saraswati, is rescued from committing suttee and from her tormentor Nehush Sharma who is after her property; she is given shelter in Derozio's house; complaint is carried to Raja Radha Kant Dev, the undisputed leader of the Hindu community. Dev, along with police chief Barwell almost playfully requests Derozio to return Saraswati but he refuses point blank. Whereupon Dev declares war on Derozio because of his arrogance and not because of his ideas.

On the one hand Hindu fanatics rouse mobs, the college is picketed, Derozio is stoned; On the other hand—his pupils pour over Voltaire and Rousseau, eat beef publicly and disrupt religious meetings.

Suttee is abolished by law. Saraswati goes home once again to fall into the hands of Nehush Sharma who tortures her son to force a public confession from her that Derozio has outraged her modesty.

In the meanwhile, Derozio's sister Emilia and his favourite pupil Dukhina develop a kind of love for each other which causes consternation in Hindu society. Dukhina is chained and whipped by his father, drugged and detained. But he breaks free to rejoin his master.

But finally the charges add up and, despite his stout defenders, Derozio is sacked from the Hindoo College. Tragically the favourite—Dukhina—testifies against the master. (History explains this variously—either the boy was shattered by Emilia's refusal or excessive drugging damaged his brain).
Derozio does not recognise defeat. Dukhina abuses him publicly; Saraswati is forced to renounce him; Derozio continues undeterred to attack Hindoo superstition and British exploitation.

Cholera then strikes him. Outside a mob burns his effigy; at sickbed within, Derozio's pupils break college rules to gather by his side...


Grants for Eleven Film Producers

Eleven producers have been sanctioned grants totalling Rs. 4 lakhs or making films in West Bengal. Five films will be made in black-and-white and six in colour. M.S. Sathyu, the well-known producer of Kannada and Hindi films, is among the eleven producers.

The State's Minister for Information and Public Relations, Mr. Buddhadev Bhattacharya, said in Calcutta that the grants were given to rescue producers from the clutches of distributors.

The Minister said that the Government had produced three films. Two of these—Taran Majumder's Ganadevata and Mrinal Sen's Parasuram—would be shown during the international film festival to be held in Delhi in January 1979. Utpal Dutt's Jhor was almost complete. Rajendra Tarafdar would make Naggapash based on the lives of fishermen in the Sunderbans for the State Government. The loan scheme was wound up after eleven film-makers were given Rs. 1.5 lakhs each this year, he said.

The State Government would ask private firms to sponsor children's films for International Children's year. The subjects of six such films had been decided on; two of these would be based on stories by Tagore.

Orders had been placed for equipment to set up a "Films Division" in Calcutta. This would boost short film-making. The State Government had sponsored 22 documentaries and bought four this year, he added.

While the grants would increase the number of films produced in West Bengal, it was necessary to give regional films 'adequate release facilities' as well. The State Govt. propose to introduce a Bill on the licensing of theatres. The Bill would ensure that films were released according to the censorship dates and that regional films got priority, he said.

Work will begin in January on an "Art theatre" to be set up near the Calcutta Information Centre, which would include an auditorium, and a library. The scheme for a laboratory to process colour films had been finalized. The State Government was trying to ensure the implementation of minimum wages for technicians and workers in theatres and distribution offices.

Courtesy: Excerpts taken from Ananda Bazaar Patrika
The Picture-Postcard Cinema
Assamese Cinema
The usual Assamese film is either a picture postcard of Assam: pretty hills, majestic elephants and tribal innocence; or it is a weak imitation of Bengali and Hindi commercial cinema. The beginnings of Assamese cinema in 1935 were however rich in promise.

The first Assamese film made, *Jyoymati*, drew on literary and historical sources and had a coherent (in its case, Gandhian) point of view. But few subsequent films (at the rate of two three a year) advanced beyond the inventions of the first film. Only in the last few years has Assamese cinema recovered its power.

For spectators unaware of Assamese cinema, the maturity of Dr. Bhaben Sakai’s *Sandhyarag* (1977) was revelation. Two village girls have been employed as domestics in a city. They return to their village many years later and fail to adapt to the web of interdependence they find in the village. The film avoids melodrama—the very directness of the narrative enables the audience to detect cross-currents and eddies.

Atul Bordoloi’s *Kallo* (1978) is temperamentally another kind of film, operatic rather than subdued. Bordoloi has made two other films, *Bonoria Phul* (1973), which he calls ‘a romantic musical’, and *Anutap* is about some Assamese villagers and their human predator-fishermen and zamindar; this relationship has an aquatic parallel in fish and shark. The young man who kills the shark is also the first person to challenge the zamindar. The struggle against the shark is not treated in the style of Hollywood illusionism: the moonlight and the very broad river become symbolically grand settings. Bordoloi willingly heightens confrontations. A zamindar gallops down on horseback while the villagers crouch at grass level from fear. Or later the zamindar astride his horse whips the hark-killer. The young man snatches away the whip, the zamindar falls off his horse, the villagers trample him.

Assamese cinema is largely improvised; the actors and technicians work at other jobs and come together briefly for individual films. There is no government-owned studio in Gauhati. Most of the shooting is done outdoors. The locations are sometimes of great anthropological interest.

The Assamese government is encouraging cinema in the state by returning the entire entertainment tax from a film to its producer. Theatres are also required to save 84 days in a year for Assamese cinema.

With lively backing from the State Film Finance and Development Corporation, Assamese Cinema may become important to other regions in India as well. It is free of the star system and its social values are generally clear.

Samil Banerjee
Plenty of Films, Not Enough Cinema

Film Societies
The importance of film societies in India is very great; we have no art theatres and film societies are the chief source of serious cinema for film-makers and film-goers alike.

Although a film society was started in Bombay in 1942 (almost two decades after the first English film society), it was only with the Calcutta Film Society (started in 1947 by Satyajit Ray and Chidananda Das Gupta) that the film society movement took hold in India.

According to Chidananda Das Gupta, India was slow to perceive the cinema as an art form because "the film was an importation from the West, a foreign body introduced into a system unprepared to absorb it." He argues that cinema in the West fed on the conflict between humanism and technology: a form had to be discovered which used highly technical means for humanistic ends. In India, technology itself was not very advanced; cinema began more as a novelty than as a necessity. To us, this explanation seems limited. Russia, after all, was no more technologically advanced than India, but it took to the cinema fiercely and produced films like Battleship Potemkin. Had India not continued a colony and created a revolution as the Russians did, our cinema too, might have quickly grown powerful.

Film societies had also to counter opposition from the film trade and the guardians of morals.

Satyajit Ray has written, "For the first two years of its existence, the membership of our club refused to go above twenty-five. Our enthusiasm was beginning to acquire a tinge of cynicism. We could see we did not have much of a field to disseminate over. We were also being subjected to a two-pronged attack. One came from the film trade, which spread the word that a group of subversive youngsters was running down Bengali films at meetings and seminars. The other came from a household which included one of our club members. It was an isolated case, but may well have been a typical one. This member offered us the use of his drawing room for one of our meetings. Since we did not have a regular club room, members took turns to provide facilities in their own houses. On this occasion, in the middle of our discussion, our friend was summoned by the owner of the house and summarily told that he would not put up with film people spoiling the sanctity of his house. We were thrown out of the place."

This "sanctity consciousness" is typically Indian, born out of a traditional society's failure to respond to an experimental and scientific culture. Films were "impure" but they were also delightful. The ordinary man resolved this conflict by taking secret pleasure in films, the elite kept aloof. While the founder members of the world's first film society
included such illustrious persons as G.B. Shaw, H.G. Wells, J.B.S. Haldane, Julian Huxley, Augustus John, J.M. Keynes, H.F. Rubinstein, in India the task of initiating and developing the movement was left to a few film enthusiasts. The film society movement was born in India in less than an encouraging climate and must still struggle for support and access to films.

The Film Enquiry Committee of 1951 drew the attention of the Government and the public to the need for the creation of film societies. The International Film Festival of 1952 gave a fillip to both film-making and the growth of the film society movement. In July 1959, the Federation of Film Societies of India was formed with six societies as members. With intensified activities such as seminars, discussion meetings, publication of journals besides screening of films and occasional patronage from the Government and the press, the movement grew and, by 1965, the Federation had 50 member societies. Recognition came from the Central Government which was granting censorship exemption to any film recommended by the president of the Federation. The movement continued to grow, receiving further support from the International Festivals held in 1962, 1965, 1969 and 1975 and the international acclaim earned by a number of Indian films. There was more interest seeing Indian films in the context of world cinema; the film society movement grew rapidly. By early 1978 the number of societies swelled to 160, with about 60,000 individual members spread over as many as 18 states. In the four southern states of Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the development of film societies was particularly rapid since 1973. Significantly this was also the period during which films from these states became more realistic. Many of the new film-makes were inspired by films screened by film societies. The National Film Archive of India, Pune, helped this growth in no small measure by lending films to film societies.

A few years ago, the Calcutta Film Society made three short films and the Film Forum, Bombay, made one. The Chitralekha Film Society in Trivandrum took a novel step in forming a co-operative which provided a springboard for new and young film-makers. Cine Central, Calcutta, has recently completed a short film. Last year the Suchitra Film Society in Bangalore organised a film workshop. Film appreciation courses were held at Trivandrum, Calcutta, Vijayawada and Madras by film societies and the Federation in collaboration with the National Film Archive and the Film and Television Institute, Pune.

Film societies have always taken a lively interest in regional languages productions. The Federation of Film Societies and a few societies held
screenings or festivals of such films in a collaboration with the Film Finance Corporation. But their efforts to popularise regional films all over India have not been very successful. Both the film trade and the government have failed to support these efforts. Early this year, a new film society, ‘Drisha’ was formed in Bombay to ‘promote the best cinema that India has to offer’. The formation of a society devoted exclusively to Indian Cinema, marks a new stage in Indian awareness of the range and quality of our films. Its first venture, a festival of Kannada films held in Bombay in April 1978, proved immensely beneficial to the film-loving public as well as the industry.

The movement is poised for further growth. About 300 applications for affiliation to the Federation are pending with its regional offices at New Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Ironically, at this very time, the movement’s existence is also at stake. More societies demand more films. The foreign missions in India, the source of films can supply only so many films. Moreover, dependence on the foreign missions severely restricts the Federation’s choice of films and consequently the standard of films circulated. The only alternative is to import films. Once in the early 60’s the Federation was allowed to import a few films. Now, the Film Finance Corporation has decided to import films appropriate for film societies and University film circuits. The Federation’s negotiation with the Corporation is however at an impasse over rental charges.

Although the Federation has been receiving films from the National Film Archive for a few years now, the latter is yet to play its role fully as the repository of films for the film societies. The Archive has, of course, its own financial and administrative limitations.

Referring to the other difficulties a joint Secretary of the Federation recently wrote, ‘Money is scarce. So is the number of willing workers. No society has a show-place of its own. A few are blessed with projectors. Most make do with what one or two individuals have in their private collection.’ The income of film societies come from the subscriptions by members, who, except in a few urban areas, are mostly middle class people. Very few are financially viable.

Film societies in India are performing the function of the art-theatres by screening films from all over the world. What is needed now is a chain of art-theatres, the construction of which may be possible through collaboration among the societies, the State Governments and the Film Finance Corporation.

The film trade has regarded the film societies as subversive. The picture was no better in Britain in the early stage, but it did not take long to
change. As Lord Bernstein (a founder member of the Film Society, London) recalls, "the trade came to realise that a controversial film, so long as it has artistic merit, need not be totally uncommercial". In a vast country like India this realisation should have come sooner, for here, film societies themselves can provide an alternative circuit for "parallel cinema".

The Federation is affiliated to the International Federation of Film Societies. Perhaps the Indian Federations can join with others in Africa, Australia and Japan to form a Regional Centre. Such a regional centre would lead to cross-fertilisation of 'film culture' between these countries and should be supported by the Government of India (and if possible, by UNESCO).

Ajoy Dey and Mohammad Zamir

B.K. Karanjia, Editor of the popular film weekly 'Screen' and member of the 7th IFFI jury hands over to Girish Kasaravalli the coveted Dada Saheb Phalke Award, given annually by Film Forum, Bombay's leading film society for film technicians.
In what might well be the first of its kind and hopefully a trend-setter as well, the Kerala University Students Union organised a film festival and seminar to co-incide with the opening of their Film Club in the University. Young graduates from the Pune Film Institute showed their films and participated in the Seminar. Some of the leading lights of the Institute who were present were Mani Kaul, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Saeed Mirza and Hariharan. Along with the feature films, award winning shorts of the students were also screened.

Aagraharathil Kazhuthai made by John Abraham, an institute alumnus, was a big draw and set off heated discussions.

Students from far-flung colleges of Kerala gathered to make the week-long festival and seminar a success. Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Dastan (Hindi—directed by Saeed Mirza); Ghashiram Kotwal (Marathi—directed by Mani Kaul and Hariharan); Uski Roti (Hindi—directed by Mani Kaul); KODIYETTOM (Malayalam—directed by Adoor Gopalakrishnan) were well received by the audience. The festival indicated a growing film culture among the people of Kerala.

On the heels of the University's festival and Trivandrum, yet another festival seminar was organised at Eranakulam by Janasakthi Films and Deshabhimani Study Circle.

In the picture, P. Jayapala Menon of Janasakthi Films welcomes those attending the festival, held during the last week of October, 1978. To his left are directors Jayakanthan, A.K. Seshadri, Chief Justice P. Subramaniam Potti, directors Mrinal Sen of Calcutta and P. Lankesh of Karnataka.
WHY PRESERVE FILMS

When National Awards for films were instituted in 1951, it was thought important to collect and maintain award-winning films. Later, the value of collecting significant cinemas in general came to be recognized and the National Film Archives at Pune began acquiring both Indian and foreign films. The chief objection to enlarging the scope of the archives beyond award-winning films was that trivial ‘escapist entertainment' should not be preserved.

Very few people understand that an archives preserves material for future history; it is impossible to say what, as a fact of the present, a future historian or sociologist might find significant. And Archive has to declare some independence of current standards of value. From an archive’s point of view, a cheap film is as valuable as a record as a world masterpiece.

A number of producers who had the foresight to deposit their films/negatives with the Archive in its early days now enjoy the benefits of
a well-preserved negative or master positive. The average Indian film-maker is not in the habit of taking out a master positive or dupe negative of his film before scoring the required number of release prints. Often the original negatives have become totally unserviceable four or five years after the release of the film due to excessive scoring of prints.

Preservation of national cinema is the primary concern of any film archive. If we ourselves are not going to preserve our films, nobody else will do it for us. Therefore, top priority has to be given to the acquisition and preservation of our own national cinema—specially the little that is left of our older films. At the same time we cannot forget international cinema. In fact, no study of Indian Cinema would be complete without understanding the trends in world cinema and the work of the masters. The Archive membership of FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives) has helped in building up our international collection to some extent. Some recent "trend-setting" films have also been acquired against foreign exchange. The prices vary according to the use negotiated for. Rights of duplication and circulation to film societies involve additional payment. This makes it necessary to collect nominal service charges from film societies and other borrowers of the Archive Distribution Library.

Since after every projection, the usable life of the print is reduced, preservation copies can never be projected. For purposes of study projection within the Archive premises, as well as special screenings.

The Advisory Committee meeting of National Film Archives of India: (l to r) T.S. Bhaskaran (filmologist), M. Bhaskaran (Vice-President of Film Federation of India), P.K. Nair (Curator) and film-maker Adoor Gopalakrishnan.
outside, it is necessary to have an additional positive print apart from the preservation material, which is either the negative or a fine grain master positive. The purpose of the Archive is served only if we have the preservation copy for duplication purposes and a projection print for study use. One can imagine the costs of purchasing both types of print. The costs of storage is particularly high in a tropical country like India. The films need to be stored in airconditioned vaults under ideal conditions of temperature and humidity and also subjected to periodical checking, cleaning, repair and chemical treatment to ensure long preservation.

Apart from films, the Archive has to preserve ancillary material like stills, song booklets, wall posters, programme brochures, disc-records etc.

Preservation has no meaning unless the films are properly classified and annotated and are available for constant study, reference and research. Archive should not become godown where films are dumped to collect dust. An archive's film should be constantly viewed, discussed, studied and written about. Public education in cinema is, after all the point of all the preservation.

The National Film Archives conducts short-term courses in film appreciation at Pune and in other towns. Weekly screenings of film classics are held in Pune and in Bombay. Monograph projects, to document the contribution of film pioneers to the development of cinema are under way. A distribution library has been set up for the benefit of film societies and film clubs. And these activities are to make an audience more aware of cinema. Without the participation of and support of such an audience a film archive is only another cold museum.

P.K. Nair
Children’s Films

SEEING FILM THROUGH A CHILD’S EYES
Deceptively simple as a good children's film appears, the making of it is a highly complex undertaking. Children's tastes differ from country to country, and region to region, from age to age, and between boys and girls. But in the selection of subject matter the hardwon experience of other countries can provide valuable pointers. Various scientific tests have established that children do not appreciate or even understand films made for adults with an adult plot and adult motivation. A children's film has to look at the world not with the adult's eye, condescendingly downwards, but with the child's, in wonder, outwards and upwards. Children tend to identify completely with children on the screen, copying their movements and attitudes. They like children to resemble themselves and shun goody-goody characters as well as stories. They are able to identify themselves more readily than adults with animals.

We certainly have no excuse to neglect this most fertile and most promising aspect of cinematic art, for India has been the magic fountainhead of many of the world’s favourite fairy stories, and in its "Panchatantra" and "Hitopadesa" is enshrined the wisdom of the ages.


Children’s films should delight children; they should also make children aware of their kinship with people very different from themselves. An Indian film-maker faces the usual problems of learning to see the world through a child’s eyes. He faces the additional problems of making his film intelligible to children from different language groups and cultural backgrounds.

In order to encourage the production of quality children’s films and distribute such films to theatres across the country, an Indian Children’s Film Society (CFS) was formed in 1955. The Society is an autonomous body funded by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

The CFS (1) produces children’s films, in Hindi as well as in the regional languages; (2) distributes films, (3) maintains a 16 mm film library for schools, clubs and private screenings.

Under the sponsorship of the Britannia Biscuit Company, and independently, under the sponsorship of V. Shantaram’s Motion Picture Scientific Research and Cultural Foundation, a few centres have been established for showing children’s films on a regular basis.

Distribution of Children’s films has not yet been established on the 35-mm circuit. Even where theatres are available, the cost of publicity for one Sunday morning show is very high. On the other hand, 16 mm shows have become more regular. A Reaching the Unreached programme of Maharashtra Council of Child Welfare and the CFS takes 16 mm films to
New Films For Young People

Enquiries: Children’s Film Society, Hingurand House, Dr. Annie Besant Road, Worli, Bombay 400018.

A scene from Satyen Bose’s colour film Anni Tasseer.

Mrs. Shakuntala Sharma and Pasang Tsung in Kamal Rashid’s colour film Zangbo and Zing Zing Bar.
slum areas of Bombay. The Municipal Corporation of Greater Bombay in collaboration with CFS has instituted mobile film shows for schools. Under this programme, children see films once a month. Much work remains to be done to establish a children’s film circuit, as well as to secure intelligent dubbing into regional languages.

Recent productions of CFS are: Kantilal Rathod’s Zangbo and Zing Zing Bar, a thriller; Shivendra Sinha’s Uranchoo, about the escapades of two dwarf runaways from a circus; Satyan Bose’s Anmol Tasveer, featuring the well-known Ashok Kumar; and a short animation film Ju Ki Kahani (Louse Story), directed by Rani Burra. Two new CFS films are awaiting release: Hangama—Bombay Ishtyle by Ayesha Sayani, featuring slum children, and an animated short, Pawan Putra Hanuman, Directed by Ajoy Chakravarti.

Under its regional language programme, CFS is currently producing in Telugu Goddess of the River, directed by T. Prakash.

CFS’s acquisitions from abroad have been the award-winning Glitter Ball from the Children’s Film Foundation in London, Jumping Over Puddles Again from Czechoslovakia and Lone Wolf from Yugoslavia.

The commercial Cinema, too, is venturing into children’s films. Tapan Sinha’s Safed Hathi won the National Award for the Best Children’s Film in 1977. Its commercial run (which continues) has recovered the film’s costs in less than a year.

Bahadur Bacche, which also did well at the box office, tells the story of a group of children who get lost in a jungle. In true commercial style there is an unreal sequence where a girl battles—and kills—a python.

Ramu Kariat’s Ammu’s Little Goat is an endearing story set in Kerala, about a little girl and her attachment to her pet goat.

Satyajit Ray’s new film for children Jai Baba Felunath continues the adventures of the boy-and-detective duo of Sonar Kella (The Golden Fortress); the hunt this time is for a golden Ganesha which disappears from the family room of a Benaras household.

To celebrate the International Year of the Child, CFS plans to produce full-length films in each of the Indian languages. These films will be produced over the next five years with a budget of Rs. 24 million. CFS will also sponsor week-long showings of Indian films in each of the state capitals. The Panorama will begin with a showing of films in Hyderabad on 1st January 1979. It is also intended to sponsor a competitive international festival of children’s cinema in November 1979.

Shiamin Melvill
Amrish Puri and Naseeruddin Shah in Asitika Sayani's Hungama Bombay Ishq Style.

The wicked King at home—before he is overthrown by the lovelie and her ‘army’
—in Ravi Burro’s Loose Suzy, unimated by Ram Mohan and designed by Mickey Patel
A musical in colour, it is based on traditional Kalamkari art and a Telugu fairy tale.
A week-long festival of children’s films, both Indian and foreign heralding the International Year of the Child.

Announcing this at a news conference, Mrs. Parvathi Menon, Producer-in-Charge, and Mr. V.B. Aggarwal, Chief Executive, of the Children’s Film Society, said that seven feature films for children would be screened at three theatres in the twin cities. The Children’s Film Foundation of England had promised to send some good films for the festival.

Mrs. Menon said that the first Telugu film for children, “Ganga Bhawani”, in colour, produced by the Society, would also be screened.

(Courtesy: Screen weekly)

Music Director M.B. Srinivasan has launched a two-reeler in colour dedicated to the International Children’s Year and aimed at arousing in the adult population, the people and elders in India, a sense of dedication and responsibility to the growing lives of our future citizens so that every child would gain the birthright to live a life of satisfaction, love and fulfillment.

(Courtesy: Screen weekly)
His method was to provoke enquiry
Film Bhavan in Bombay buzzes with its usual activity: the clattering of typewriters, busy huddles of people, the sounds of papers being shuffled in cabins. But this room is quite still. The furniture is dusted, the money-plant shines with a sober light. A photograph on the wall shows a film crew in heavy snow clothing. The man with the sharp, straight glance is S.N.S. Shastry, maker of I am 20, Take Off, And I Make Short Films, an internationally recognised maker of documentaries, now dead in November. While driving his daughter to school, he suffered a fatal heart attack.

I remember the green meadows of Kashmir. Shastry is filming Land Of Enchantment. His camera lingers over lotuses, over the soft ruins of Mandu, sweeps up from the green floor of a valley to the white edge of snow-covered rock. The commentary is mischievous: "Did we bring you here to show you picture post-cards?" Yet the film’s attitude is romantic. It is only in the later films, such as I am 20, that Shastry will introduce dissonance, pretty images mixed with harsh sounds, softly photographed young men who talk bitterly, "What is democracy? Is it freedom to starve, to go naked, to die of starvation?" ... "Well, I don’t love my country ... And even if I love it, to whom should I speak of my love?"

Films Division documentaries play before the main feature. But audiences don’t want the documentary, they are impatient for the bright colour and carnival sound of the main feature. Shastry recognised this indifference of his audience and began to make nervous, flashy films. Instead of a predictable point of view, his films raised questions. Jai Jawan (Long Live Our Brave) shows shining metal, polished shoes, starched uniforms, a marshalled row of gallantry awards. "But who derives benefit from these awards?" A line of soldiers guard a Himalayan pass. Far away, a soldier’s wife and daughter live alone, deprived of the safety and support of a man. "Who derives benefit from those soldiers?"

Shastry was considered gimmicky by some. His intercuts were rapid, sometimes clashing; his sound tracks puzzled audiences. But his method was to challenge, to provoke inquiry. Why do we choose our goals as we do? Are the human benefits of the choices we make worth the human cost? Are the tall buildings worth the homeless migrants who sleep on the pavement below, huddling close for safety?

The room is strangely empty. Although Shastry was promoted to the rank of Producer in 1975, his room rang with the energy of a creative artist. I knew in this room the feeling of conspiracy, of urgency, of surprises about to be sprung on audiences. I knew that wakefulness mattered, that our national experiment was too precious for us to settle back into habit. I imagine that Shastry has gone to a recording theatre or to an editing room. He might be instructing a commentary writer or a reader. I know him dead, and yet my mind sees him continuing, through the films he has already made and through the personal excitement he always felt for film.

—P.B. Pendharkar
Nagarjunakonda/1958

• Production: Ezra Mir. Direction & Photography: S.N.S. Shastry.

Call of the Khedda 1962.

• Production: Mohan Wadhwani. Photography: S.N.S. Shastry.
• Special Trophy for its meritorious photography, World Forestry Congress, Madrid, Spain, 1967.
• Specially selected for Screening, Cork International Film Festival, Cork, Ireland, 1962.

I am 20/1962

• Production: J.S. Bhownagary and K.L. Khandpur.
• Direction: S.N.S. Shastry.
• Film Critics Award with a Certificate and a Diploma of Participation, International Film Festival of Short Films, Cracow, Poland, 1968
• National Award 1967.
• Selected for Screening, International Short Film Week at National Film Theatre, London, 1967
• Certificate of Participation, Sydney Film Festival, Australia, 1969
• Certificate of Participation, Melbourne Film Festival, Australia, 1970.
• Diploma of Participation, the Week of Asian Films, Frankfurt.

Malwa/1963

Production: Mohan Wadhwani.
Direction & Photography: S.N.S. Shastry.
• National Award (Certificate of Merit) 1963
• Specially Selected for Screening, Cork International Film Festival, 1964.
• Selected for Participation, Melbourne Film Festival, 1965
• Certificate of Participation, Brisbane Film Festival, 1966
• Selected for Exhibition, III International Film Festival of India, 1965.

Nefa—Then and Now/1965

Production: Mohan Wadhwani.
• Diploma of Participation, International Film Festival, Mercurio D'Ore, Venice, 1965
Invitation to Enchantment/ 1965

Production: Mushir Ahmed. Direction: S.N.S. Shastry.

That Delta—That River/1965

Production: Mohan Wadhwani.
Direction: S.N.S. Shastry.
- Certificate of Participation, Brisbane Film Festival, 1967

Jai Jawan/1967

Production: Mohan Wadhwani. Direction: S.N.S. Shastry.
- Diploma of Participation, International Film Festival, Moscow, 1967
- Certificate of Participation, Cork International Film Festival, 1967

And I Make Short Films/1968

Production: K.L. Khandpur. Direction: S.N.S. Shastry
- National Award 1968
- Certificate of Participation, Annual San Francisco International Film Festival, 1969
- Diploma of Participation, International West German Festival of Short Films, Oberhausen, 1970
- Selected for Exhibition, Sydney Film Festival, 1971

On the Move/1970

Production: Mohan Wadhwani.
Direction: S.N.S. Shastry. Silver Medal,
- International Leipzig Documentary and Short Film Festival for Cinema and Television, Leipzig, East Germany, 1970.
Yes it's on/1972
   Direction: S. N. S. Shastry
   • Best of Category Award, annual San Francisco International Film
     Festival, California, 1972
   • Certificate of Participation, Melbourne Film Festival, 1973.
   • Diploma of Participation, International
     • Documentary and Short Film Week for Cinema and Television,

This Bit of That India/1972
Production: Shanti S. Varma.
Direction: S. N. S. Shastry.
   • Diploma of Participation, San Francisco
     International Film Festival, 1973.

The Burning Sun/1973
Production: Shanti Varma.
Direction: S. N. S. Shastry.
   • Diploma of Participation, International Film Review on

Flashback/1974
Production: Arun Chaudhuri.
Direction: S. N. S. Shastry.
   • Certificate of Participation, International Film Festival, Thessaloniki,
     1975.
   • Diploma of Participation, 20th International Cork Film Festival, 1975.

The First Leap/1976
Production: S. N. S. Shastry—Direction: Sankar Gangooly.
   • Diploma of Participation, XXth Anniversary of the International
     Gold Mercury Film Prize, Venice, 1977

Love in Action/1976
   Production: S. N. S. Shastry.
   • Certificate of Participation, 19th International Festival of Documental
     and Short Films, Bilbao, Spain, 1978.
Publishing discovers The Cinema
Books and magazines

1978 should go down as the year when publishers began to realize, with the slow, disbelieving smile of a prospector that India's film audience is inexhaustible. It does not get bored seeing the same faces in film after repetitious film as it does not get bored hearing variations of the same shrill songs. Publishing houses have now discovered what magazine editors knew already; that there is a readership for any writing about the mythic world of films and film stars.

There are over 630 film magazines, 45 in English and the rest in regional Indian languages, and none of them ever fails. But in July this year, Stardust, India's premier film monthly, acted on a hunch that there was a much wider market for their magazine. The magazine had been selling between 98,000 and 1 lakh copies per issue in the hands of India Book House, their longtime distributors. Stardust took over its own
distribution and set up an in-house agency called ‘Stardust Distributors’ and the magazine was boycotted. But sales did not drop and in October 1978, ‘Stardust’ sold 1,180,000 copies, not counting its 4,000 subscribers countrywide.

The success of ‘Stardust’ proved something: that even though more than 45 journals in English alone are competing for readership, there is room for them all. ‘Stardust’ is the closest competitor, Super, which is two years old and full of life, moved into the breach left at IBH by ‘Stardust’ desertion. Super’s sales rose, between July and November, from 50,000 to 75,000 copies per month. To maintain even that level demands ingenuity, because the subject matter is limited. To stay ahead of the rest of them, ‘Stardust’ and Super have introduced new gizmos into film journalism. ‘Stardust’ began a feature in which stars interview each other. Super recently allowed Zeenat Aman to edit an entire issue of the magazine. ‘Stardust’, seeing the fog lift to disclose new vistas of readership added 32 pages to a already bulky magazine. The sales figures confirm that these changes are bringing in new readers. A new magazine, Star Monthly, joined the list of film publications last November. The print order for the first issue alone was 20,000 copies. Film writing sprouted a small green shoot this year when Vikas Publications brought out a book titled Actors on Acting, by Mohan Bawa. The book, a collection of rather sketchy interviews with about a dozen Hindi film stars, examines—but only superficially—the methods to which different actors subscribe. Mohan Bawa, a film journalist for many years, is now the first of his profession to be read by the hardcover market, and his book is a maiden attempt at selling ‘film’ journalism in book form. There have been other books concerned with stars, such as Vinod Mehta’s excellent biography of Meena Kumari, but Actors On Acting breaks new ground. It did tolerably well despite its dillfare. Mohan Bawa’s second book, How The Stars Ate A Reporter For Breakfast, with its catchy title, promises more action, and already some excerpts from it have been serialized by Super, a case of cousins helping each other out. The book itself is due for release soon. It’s apparent that book publishers have bought the idea that books on films can ride on the film industry’s shoulders. As an executive at Orient Longman puts it: “Booksellers and film-makers are waking up to their mutual interest. They are realizing that it is possible to sell the book through the film and the film through the book.”

The latter is not a new idea. Hind Pocket Books have regularly released novelized versions of films such as 27 Down (by author Ramesh Bakshi), Rajanigandha (Mannu Bhandari), Achanak, Khushboo, Mere Apne and
Faraar (all by Gulzar) The book version of K.A. Abbas’s Bobby, released by Star Publication in 1973, thrived on the film’s popularity. The terrain is a charted one. But not before this year has the idea been packaged so competently that it appears brand new. Krishna Shah’s Shalimar, about which the film-makers themselves said so much that everyone else began talking, establishes a trend. A very high-pressure promotional campaign announced the book version of Shalimar. It was billed as more readable than James Hadley Chase, Alistair Maclean, Ian Fleming and a number of other thriller heavyweights. Its author was Manohar Malgonkar, well-known for his novels such as A Bend In The Ganges. The publicity also named a book to follow: one about the making of Shalimar, being written by publicist Bunny Reuben.

The only hollow note here is that the published product does not match the vigour with which it is pushed. Shalimar the book, does no credit to an author of Malgonkar’s stature, and it is debatable whether the making of the film was so epoch-making as to warrant another book. Still, it seems that books on film are here to stay. Most Indian film-makers fancy their work to be polished gems about which too much cannot be written or said.

Sadly, the ones who avoid such sensational publicity are also the ones who could make powerful contributions to film publishing. Satyajit Ray’s Our Films, Their Films, published by Orient Longman in a Rs. 60 hardback edition, is the only book on a major Indian film-maker’s views about cinema. The hardback edition was out—and sold out within a month of its release in 1976. The paperback reprint soon followed. Now, in the wake of Ray’s controversial and brilliant Urdu film, Shatranj Ke Khilari, interest in Our Films, Their Films has picked up, and second paperback reprint is due this year. Had Shatranj itself faced fewer problems in its own country, we might have seen another valuable addition to film literature: the screenplay of the film. For the present, that project remains shelved.

Elsewhere, on a smaller scale, India is seeing published screenplays. Akshara Prakashan in Karnataka has brought out the screenplay of the award-winning Ghatashraddha in February 1978, making a first in the Kannada language. The second screenplay, of the film Ondanondu Kaladalli, is awaiting release this year. Orient Longman published the screenplay of Ray’s Seemabaddha in an English translation called Company Limited.

But screenplays are not sellers. They cater to an elite, cine-aste (rather than cinema loving), professional audience. Despite their content, they are not a match for ‘film’ magazines or books based on ‘film’ journalism. Aruna Vasudev’s Liberty and Licence in the Indian
Cinema—another Vikas book priced at Rs. 40—is described by reviewers as a must for anyone interested in the history of film censorship in India. The book is lucid but its audience is limited.

Two trends have emerged on the film publishing scene in India in 1978. On the one hand there are the few solid books on the film medium and these move slowly in the bookshop. On the other hand there are growing numbers of books and magazines on films, stars, and their activities—and a million people waiting to buy these. The two trends reflect the balance between art and frippery in the Indian Cinema.

C.Y. GOPINATH
An overview of new Indian Cinema twentyfour films
JUNOON
(possessed)

Nafisa Ali, Jennifer Kendall

Naseeruddin Shah

Nafisa Ali, Jalal Agha and Shashi Kapoor

Hindi/Urdu/Colour/141 mins/1978

Production Company: Film-valsas, Readymoney Terrace, 4th floor, Worli naka, Bombay 400036.
'JUNOON' is a serious historical film with a major budget backed by a box-office star of the Bombay cinema. The collaboration between the commercial industry and an innovative director is already interesting; what makes 'Junoon' a test case is its combination of spectacle with analysis. If it succeeds with audiences, it will bring money and taste closer than they have managed to come in several decades of Hindi cinema.

The historical film is certainly not a genre new to Indian cinema, but clearly Junoon's kind of historical film is. Traditionally, historical films in India have emphasized lavish sets, a sky full of stars, numerous songs and dances. In sum: kitsch, for which the Hindi film is infamous. If Junoon is a commercial success, Hindi film barons will have to think again about the reliability of their old formulae.

True, Bengali's Junoon has its quota of stars (Shashi Kapoor and Shabana Azmi). But it is a coherent, personal film.

Against the turbulent background of the Indian Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, Bengali's Junoon tells the story of a noble savage's obsession (in this case, a Pathan) with an adolescent English girl.

In a small (unnamed) town North India lives a Pathan, Javed Khan (Shashi Kapoor), with a childless wife (Shabana Azmi) and the English cantonment lives Ru Labadoor (Nafisa Ali), a young girl whom he has seen from a distance and dreams of. Ruth lives with her civil servant father (Tom Alter) and Anglo-Indian mother (Jennifer Kendal). Javed Khan's in-law, Safaraz (Naseeruddin Shah), leads band of rebels against the British and massacres the congregation Church on a Sunday morning.

Everyone except Ruth, her mother, and grandmother, are killed. When he hears of this, Javed Khan hunts for Ruth. He discovers that a Hindu money lender (cleverly played by Kulbhushan Kharbanda) has hidden the women in his house. Taking them away from there, Javed Khan installs the 'firangees' in his own home, much against the wish of his wife. The wife is even more upset when she learns of his husband's desire to take the English girl as his second wife. The girl mother too is against the marriage and, with the help of Javed Khan's aunt (Sushma Sheth), extracts promise from Javed Khan that he will marry Ruth only if the sepoys take Delhi.

Meanwhile, Safaraz brings home news of the war and is shocked at his brother's disinterest in the fighting Delhi is lost, he says, to the horror
Javed Khan and the relief of Mrs. Labadoor. Javed Khan keeps his word and leaves the girl Ruth alone. It is only when his cousin dies in a skirmish with the British that Javed decides to fight along with the Sepoys. In a major battle, Sarfaraz is killed and the Sepoys routed. News of brutal retribution by the British spreads among towns, the people flee. Javed Khan finds that his town is deserted and rides out with the exodus. All he wants to know is where the ‘firangees’ are. When he hears that they have stayed back, waiting for the British forces, he returns and finds them in Church. The mother refuses to allow him to see the girl. As he turns away despondently, Ruth comes out, calling his name. He keeps his promise to her mother. He leaves Ruth behind, looking after him as he rides away. A caption tells us that Javed Khan was killed in battle soon after. The girl died in England 55 years later, still unwed.

Within this narrative are Bengal’s oblique comments on the society of the time, its harshness and the gulf between the two cultures. Govind Nihalani’s photography brings to JUNOON the professional lushness he has given all of Bengal’s films. The music by Van-raj Bhatia with an emphasis on strings seems strangely inept at times and simple and elegant at others.

The single most vivid character in the film is Mrs. Labadoor as played by Jennifer Kendall. Through her the hundreds of Mrs. Labadoors, the Memsahibs who helped build the Raj with their destination to survive in an alien environment, become credible. It is a shame that this very fine actress is so rarely seen on the screen. Shabana Azmi and Naseeruddin Shah, despite their brief roles, prove yet again that they are gifted actors; their performances are a pleasure to watch. Shashi Kapoor’s Pathan is a professional blend of the roughness and sensitivity the role requires.

Unhappily, Tom Alter’s civil servant is most unsuited to this talented company. Nafisa Ali, much publicised by the gossip magazines as Bengal’s new find, is very beautiful. She has a ravishing smile, but her role calls for too much screaming and crying and not much subtlety.

Incidentally, apart from playing Javed Khan, Kapoor is also the producer of JUNOON. One must be grateful that he has made this important Bengal film possible. For the director has made JUNOON into more than just a genre film. By focussing on the human story of one Pathan and one English girl, he has made the complex background of colonial conflict intelligible.

Shridhar Kshirsagar
1974

1975


1977

GAMAN
(Going)

Smita Patil and Firoozeh Sheikhi
Gita Siddharth as Yashodhara and Jalal Agha as Lallulal Tewa, the ill-starred lovers.

Smita Patil as Khairun, the wife of Ghulam Hasan (Farooque Shaikh), the villager who comes to Bombay in search of a job.

Hindi/Colour/ 120 mins
Script/Producer/Director:
Muzaffar Ali.
Music: Jaidev.
Lyrics: Makhdoom Mohiuddin Shahryar.
Camera: Nadeem Khan.
Editing: Jethu Mandal.
Lead players: Farooque Shaikh, Smita Patil, Gita Siddharth, Jalal Agha.
Production Company:
Integrated Film, A.I. Mandar, Juhu Village, Bombay 54.
A Film Finance Corporation film
GAMAN

A new tribe is born in our country. The tribe of the dispossessed, consisting of people with a new non-culture all their own. The numbers of this tribe are swelling in an alarming manner. Everyday, millions of villagers having no control over their circumstances, flock to the big cities, dreaming of lucrative jobs and bright futures. They soon get swallowed in the mire and are lost to their homes and themselves forever.

In Gaman, Bombay is the city of no return. A cave with footprints pointing only inwards. The footprints in this case belong to Ghulam Hasan, a poor lad from Kotwara, a village in U.P. Ghulam Hasan has no education, no land and is without hope. Like countless others before him, he hears the call of the city, and sets out, for better or for worse. ‘For worse’, is what the film sets out to depict, in an effective and direct manner.

Muzaffar Ali begins the narrative in the tranquil, picturesque village of Kotwara. The peace and sense of well-being of a village—until the landlord inevitably intrudes—is beautifully captured, making the later city scenes all the more grim and oppressive. Especially lyrical is the morning scene between Ghulam Hasan and his bride, when she comes to wake him up with a cup of tea. This scene is sheer poetry. When Ghulam has to leave home, there are no tearful farewells. The tragedy of their separation is therefore all the more poignant and heart-rending. When Ghulam Hasan, now a cabbie, plies his taxi along roads leading nowhere, memories of his wife keep flooding his mind. The images are vivid.

Muzaffar Ali has a potent contemporary message to deliver and he does it with conviction. He gets admirable support from his cast especially Farooque Shaikh, Smita Patil and Jalal Agha. Farooque acts with feeling and restraint and his self-effacement brings a rare distinction to the portrayal of Ghulam Hasan—a faceless man in a crowd. Smita in a small role achieves a lot with a mere sigh or a smile, and rings true as the woman left behind, pining for her man. The scenes with the Marathi family jar. Geeta Kak is nowhere close to the tragic working-class girl torn between her love and her family. She looks too prosperous and is too well made-up. Arvind Deshpande has been relegated to the background, otherwise the role of an ex-cabbie gone to seed could have been a memorable characterisation.

Bombay, the main performer in Gaman, is remarkably shown and Muzaffar has managed to draw out different facets of its personality. The unique indifference, the hectic pace, the bawdy humour, the
hopelessness of life—Muzaffar has portrayed a lot within two short hours.

At the end of the film, Ghulam Hasan is behind the grill gate of V.T. station, staring wistfully at the trains chugging in and out of the station. We leave him there, inevitably rooted to his own destiny and we leave a part of our hearts behind with him, and with the millions of Ghulams all over the country.

Sai Paranjpye
Courtesy — Youth Times

Muzaffar Ali

Whether on canvas or celluloid the artist in Muzaffar Ali has the same meticulous use of minutae, colours and background to evoke the mood, atmosphere and emotion for total effect.

Muzaffar Ali, by profession an executive in an airline, has had no formal training in the art of film making. Yet he has the vision of a true artist... He believes that a film should not be a subjective expression like painting. ‘It is the medium of the people and my main involvement has been with creating an environment for good cinema.’

He is the initiator of MUKT (Marketing Union of Kinematograph Technicians) which is a body of film makers brought together for the marketing and distribution of films which are ‘non-compromising, but not non-commercial.

Courtesy: Sunday Times
ONDANONDU KALADALLI

(Once Upon a Time)

Kannada/Colour/156 mins./1978
Nachiket
Nag, Sunder Krishna Urs, Akshata Rao, Sushilendra Joshi.
Production Company: LN Combines, 4 Lakshmi Rd., Shanti Nagar,
Bangalore 560 027. Phone: 53756

Sunder Krishna Urs and Shankar Nag
ON DAN ONDU KALADALLI
Once Upon A Time and
Once Again

Girish Karnad’s intention in his Kannada film Ondanondu Kaladalli (Once Upon a Time) is to look strongly at a lost major classical tradition. The stylized medieval ritual in the martial arts that he resurrects in his film is deft obeisance also to Kurosawa.

Here the classical choreography of single person combat, rooted in the Kalaripayattu school of fighting (and still lingering feebly in a few Illams tucked away along coastal Kerala) is caught in all its medieval glory. The result is a film authentic in atmosphere and period. The long curving Urumi, the spring sword, flashes in finale to some of the most authentic fight scenes in Indian cinematic history.

The cost in terms of injuries and discomfort was considerable. Two doctors are mentioned very unusually in the credit titles. They patched up injuries from weapons .long forgotten and also from more contemporary snakes, mosquitoes, thorns.

The story is set in Karnataka, in the period after the Hoysalas and before the Vijayanagar Empire. Small village chieftains used mercenaries in their constant quarrels. Maranayaka and Kapardi are two brothers at war. They have murdered a third, depriving his son Jayakeshi of a throne rightfully his.

Gandugali is almost the outsider from a Western epic. An unemployed fighter he comes into the miniscule palya (kingdom) of Marayanaka. Permadi is brother Kapardi’s general. Slowly the struggle between paid fighters becomes a fight between the servants and their masters. The codes of conduct are rigid, but fashions have changed, even in valour. The ageing warrior Permadi (Sunder Krishna Urs) and the younger Gandugali (Shankar Nag) have their own rhythms even in slaughter.

The film is woven together in the Dandeli forests and Turmuri village which will be flooded once the Malaprabha dam is built. The bright sunny modern light is deliberately kept that way with deep focus shooting and matching interiors and exteriors. There is throughout the film the detached atmosphere of a ballad in the midst of all the ritual slaughter. The theme song ‘Once Upon A Time’, outlines the elemental but simple conflict of once long ago. Except that the good fairy is a paid killer and the new king is likely to be bad as the old.
The protagonists gain momentum among fields of cattle and the weekly fairs. A small kingdom is at stake; the sensitive, unspoken affection of the young warrior for the village girl slides gently across the narrative.

There is use made of the heroic warrior's skills, he is betrayed and he fights his one-time enemy in revenge against a dominant class. On the red rth of the brick by-lanes of a timeless Karnataka hill-side village, laughter begins. The long curvingords are unwound, blazing like lightning and clanging shields catch their lethal lash in oppressive midday sun. The manorial household, here the war-lords huddle together, brings Gandugali to his final body victory and release. Girish Karnad's classical metaphor brings our screen a slice of history, eternal even if no contemporary references are read into it.

The fights between the chieftains' misgivings appear almost like street fights. But as Girish Karnad, the m-maker, explains, even major events of the time were mere skirmishes involving only a few people.

The producers (Narayan and Lakmipathy) gave full freedom to the rector, who in turn took the view that if fights are basic to the Indian film, why not make use of its classical heritage in an unalloyed way.

Shankar Nag as Gandugali makes an explosive first appearance in a film where each part is filled carefully and faithfully. The three main actors were rigorously trained in fighting by P.K. Gopalan Gurukkal, the well-known teacher of Kalaripayattu.

Writer G.B. Joshi's North Karnataka dialect, art direction by Jayoo and Nachiket, Bhaskar Chandavarkar's music, Bir's quiet camera, a rich screenplay by the director and Krishna Basrur—all make this two and a half hour film an unusual exercise in exploring a totally neglected aspect of our classical heritage.

—S. Shankar Menon

GIRISH RAGHUNATH KARNAD

Education
B.A. (Mathematics & Statistics), Karnataka University 1958
Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University 1960-63.
President of the Oxford Union Society 1963.

Professional Career
Asst. Manager, later Manager, Oxford University Press, Madras 1963-70
Director, Film & TV Institute of India, Poona 1974-75
Plays in Kannada
Yayati 1961
Tughlaq 1964
Hayavadana 1970-71
Anjumallige 1977

Awards & Distinctions
Homi Bhabha Fellowship for Creative Work 1970-72
Padma Shri 1974
Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya Award for the Play of the Year (awarded by Bharatiya Natya Sangha) 1971
Sangeet Natak Academy Award for the Best Indian Playwright of the Year 1971

Filmography
Script
Samskara 1970
Bhumika, with Dubey 1976
Kondura 1977
with Benegal, Arudra

Acted in
Samskara 1970
Vamsha Vriksha 1971
Nishant 1975
Manthan 1976
Kanakambara 1976
Swami 1976

VAMSHA VRIKSHA (1971)
B.V. Karanth and Girish Karnad.

KAADU (1973), Black-and-white

GODHULI (1977)
The major difference between Godhuli and abballyu Neenade Magane (Kannada) is that dialogue of the latter was written by Anakanahalli Gopi, and Manu and Sundarajan replaced Kulbhushan Kharbanda and B. V. K. Puri.


KAADUV

Sharada in Vamsha-Vriksha, the first feature film co-directed by Girish Karnad and B.V. Karanth

Kulbhushan Kharbanda and Paula Lindsay in Godhuli

101
AGNI
(Anger which burns)

Balan K. Nair and Vidhubala

Malayalam/
black-and-white/
100 mins/1978
Direction/script:
C. Radhakrishnan.
Producer: P. M.K. Bappu,
Hassan
Lyrics: Sakuntala.
Camera: U. Rajagopal
Editing: G. Venkatraman.
Lead players: Madhu,
Vidhubala, Balan K. Nair,
Bahadur.
Production Company:
Sheeba Art, Chamravatham,
Tirur, Kerala
How do you explain the success of untrained film makers like M.T. Vasudevan Nair, a literateur (Nirmalyam); Bharathan, an artiste (Prayanam, Rathi Nirvedam); G. Aravindan, a cartoonist and an executive of the Kerala Rubber Board (Uttarayanam, Kanchana Sita and Thampu). Their very first films were remarkably mature. And now another well-known novelist and short-story writer, C. Radhakrishnan (38), joins this select company of new film makers with Agni, a film based on his own novel.

Moosa is a methodical person, and works as a butcher in a small village. He does not look up from the block as he chops his meat. His mind is elsewhere but his movements are practised and precise. Like a man cutting grass, he moves a goat into position and brings his knife down, goat after goat. Moosa loves his daughter Amina fiercely and is enraged to discover that Amina is in love with a man accused of murdering his own father. When Moosa forbids Amina to meet her lover, she walks into the sea, hoping to drown. He rescues her and carries her to shore. As he bears her in his arms, all his anger melts. He finds himself unable next day to butcher goats.

But Amina elopes with her lover. The old anger rises in Moosa. He rushes after the lovers to take revenge. The lovers have gone away by bus. Moosa discovers their hide-out and like an avenging god stalks them. But something has changed within him. He has acquired the knowledge that even his own daughter has feelings and desires beyond his control; they are her personal feelings and desires. The knowledge is vague and imperfect, but it is evidence of change in a strongly opinionated and bitter man.

C. Radhakrishnan
Born at Chamravattom in Malappuram district. Obtained his post-graduate degree in Master of Science from Kerala University. Worked in the office of the Meteorological Survey of India, Bombay; later as Assistant Editor of Science Today and as Editor of Link. Left his job and took to writing seriously. Has written a lot of novels and short stories, and a few of his books have won awards. Some of his novels have been made into films. Agni is his first film. He is currently working on another film.
Agraharathil Kazhuthai
(Donkey in a Brahmin's village)

Tamil/black-and-white/
95 mins./ 1978
Direction: John Abraham.
Camera: Ramachandrababu.
Music: M.B. Srinivasan.
Lead players: Swathi,
Veeraraghavan, Krishnaraj
Production Company:
Nirmithi Films, 3 Lady
Madhavan Nair Road,
Madras 600039.
Agraharathil Kazhuthai is a satire on certain aspects of Brahmin obscurantism, bigotry and superstition, told through the story of a little donkey whose mother is beaten to death, and who takes refuge in the home of a college professor.

It has a very strong central portion, but a rather thin, slow beginning, and a long drawn out end. It takes time for the story to jell: we watch prank after prank that the donkey is blamed for in the Brahmin village to which the professor finally takes it. The priest in the college had said that the professor was becoming a figure of fun because he kept a donkey, and that the institution was “demoralized” as a result.

At the same time we watch a developing romance between the deaf-mute girl, who is a servant in the professor’s parents’ home in the village, and a village painter. At the beginning it is not sufficiently clear in what way these stories are related.

Things begin to take a serious turn when a priest steps in some donkey dirt. Then the mid-wife who delivers the deaf-mute girl’s still-born baby wraps it in rags and leaves it on the temple premises. This is too much for the priests: they surmise the donkey has done it, and the midwife, to escape trouble, blames the donkey as well.

The Brahmins have the donkey killed by hirelings. But some nomads who pass through the village at night predict that curse is to fall on the village, and the priests are stricken by guilt. In the morning one of the Brahmins thinks that he sees the donkey and thinks that it has come back: “miracles” follow. An ascending son returns, a lame woman walks and so on. The priests now talk well of the donkey and build a temple to it.

John Abraham has assembled a good cast for this film: the Brahmins are impressively awful. The film does succeed as well in creating the sense of claustrophobia in a small, rigid society.

Eunice de Souza
(Courtesy: Economic Times)

JOHN ABRAHAM
Born at Changanachery
Graduated from Kerala University
Worked as a clerk in LIC, Bangalore
Passed out of FTII, Poona.
-First Feature Film:
Vidhyarthigale Ithile Ithile
Won The National Award for the best story
Agraharathil Kazhuthai Tamil)
Won The National Award for best Tamil film.
ANUGRAHAM
(The Boon)

Direction: Shyam Benegal. Script: Satyadev Dubey
Music: Vanraj Bhatia. Lead players: Vanishree,
A Raviraj International production, 41 Sarangapani
Street, T. Nagar, Madras 17.
Anugraham tells the story of a young man caught in a dilemma — between his free will and the belief in the pre-determined nature of existence.

Parsuram is a young Brahmin who has recently married. His elder brother supports the family and resents Parsuram’s idleness. One day, after a quarrel, Parsuram leaves home to make his fortune. On the way, he is stopped by the legendary sage, Apikondaswamy, who gives him a root as a boon, saying that it can abort pregnancy. He asks Parsuram to observe strict celibacy and also to return home.

Parsuram is awed by the vision and returns to his village, conscious of new power. He begins to neglect his newly-married wife (Anusuya) and hears temple bells ring at night. But no one else can hear them and his wife begins to doubt his sanity. Each night he hears the bells and goes to the temple as if the bells summon him there. The priest warns him that if he sets eyes on the Goddess he will go blind.

But, he does see the Goddess, who has an uncanny resemblance to his wife, Anusuya. Instead of blinding him she tells him that evil is spreading in the village and that only renovation of the temple can check it. Parsuram, a man of limited resources, approaches the local landlord, Bhairava Murthy, who agrees to finance the renovation.

The landlord’s house is a strange one; it includes a childless wife, a dead brother’s handicapped son Vasu, and the son’s pretty wife, Parvati. Local gossip and household servants tell Parsuram that the landlord is responsible for his brother’s death and that the misshapen Vasu is his own misbegotten son. The landlord is also accused of coveting his nephew’s wife. Parsuram is confused. Can this evil man help to rebuild the temple?

Parsuram does not find an answer. The landlord continues with his debauchery, while Parsuram becomes a saint in the eyes of the villagers. Evan his wife becomes a devotee. Though living a life of celibacy, Parsuram dreams longingly of the landlord’s daughter-in-law (Parvati). Soon he learns that Parvati is pregnant.

At the ceremony to bless Parvati’s pregnancy, the landlord notices Anusuya and makes advances to her. She is shocked and she runs away. Later, the Goddess tells Parsuram that the landlord has fathered Parvati’s child. The landlord does not deny the allegation. Meanwhile, Parsuram gives the sacred root to Parvati. After she has swallowed it, the landlord tells Parsuram that he is sterile and could not have fathered Parvati’s child. Parsuram rushes to the temple in a panic and then to his house where he breaks his vow of celibacy.
The next day, he finds that his wife Anusuya, frightened that she has abetted her husband in an act of sacrilege, has committed suicide. The last strand of reason snaps and Parsuram runs screaming for the sage Apikondaswamy.

Shabana Azmi, Anant Nag, Sadhu Meher in Ankur

Benegal with Smita Patil on the sets of Bhumika

A scene from Charandas Chor, a black-and-white film made for Children's Film Society
Has lectured on Film to students at the Film & T.V. Institute, Poona.

Was Honorary Lecturer in Mass Communications at Bhavan’s College of Mass Communications 1966 to 1973.

Homi Bhabha Fellow - 1970 to 1972.

(a) Worked as Associate Producer TV at W.G.B.H. TV, Boston, U.S.A.

(b) Studied Children’s TV at Children’s Television Workshop, New York, U.S.A.

SHYAM BENGAL

EDUCATION
M.A. in Economics from Nizam College, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

WORK EXPERIENCE
With Limitas Ltd. as Films Assistant and Copywriter from 1959 to 1963


Was Guest Professor at the UNESCO Scriptwriting Course at the Film & T.V. Institute of India, Poona - 1969.
ARVIND DESAI KI AJEEB DASTAAN
(The Strange Fate of Arvind Desai)

Dr. Shreeram Lagoo, Abha Dhulia, Sudha Shivpuri
Akhtar Mirza, a graduate of the Poona Film Institute. The seductive photography is by Virendra Saini, also FTII-trained, and also doing his first feature. Just completed, this second venture of the enterprising cooperative Yukt (their first was GHASHIRAM KOTWAL) has enough of the standard features of a very conscious, deliberate "experimental" film.

The ambitions of the 'personal cinema' inevitably haunt the film—the narrative seeks to articulate the film maker's feelings and beliefs about the urban consumer society.

Echoes of Ben Barka's ONE THOUSAND AND ONE HANDS and Antonioni's ZABRISKIE POINT can be discerned in the film. The script-written by Saeed Mirza and Cyrus Mistry with Vijay Tendulkar providing "consultation"—avoids linear narration.

Another deliberate deviation from the rut is the title character—the sort of hero whom you look askance at rather than identify with. Son of a rich businessman and "no different from other young men of his class," Arvind's chequered everyday life embraces business management in his father's sumptuous export shop, romantic outings with a petite secretary, a dalliance with dialectics with a leftist friend and visits to a particular favourite in a mangy brothel. He has, however,
the ability to question the "value system that he is expected to live by". What that ability is worth in this case is one of the things the film tries to examine.

The film makes subdued comments on the relationship between those who produce goods and those who make the profits and the hero, a "mass of contradictions," is suggested to be dilettantishly disturbed by the exploitation inherent in his father's business of buying handicraft articles cheap and selling them dear. The motions of revol that the hero goes through have something farcical about them and his submission to the status quo has the touch of a wound-up mechanical toy.

There is much that is jarring about the film. Whether the social critique attempted by it is penetrating enough, whether the central character, contradictions and all, is a sufficiently expressive symbol of "urban decay," whether the script measures up to the ideological impulses implicit in the theme, are questions that are likely to be hotly debated. It does seem, initially, that the film itself could have profited from the slumming that it prescribes for the hero’s sister.

Towering above everything else in the film is one scene of the workers being subjected to the routine search before leaving the premises. The easy candidness of the shot and its savage meaning in the film's context imbue it with a percussive power. It is tempting to visualise it as the film’s lingering epilogue marking, somewhat in the manner of Che Guevara’s prolonged freeze shot at the end of the Argentina film THE HOUR OF THE FURNACES, a desirable switch from grey documentation to war invocation.

The film may be weak in dramaturgy, but Saeed Mirza emerges as a cinematic talent that cannot be ignored.

Bikram Sing

Courtesy: Sunday Times

Saeed Akhtar Mirza graduated from the Film & T.V. Institute of India in Film Direction in 1976. Got off to a very quick start by directing ARVIND DESAI KI AJEEB DASTAAN for his Yukt Film Co-operative.
Chameli Memsahеб
(Madam Chameli)

Bengali/
black-and-white/
129 mins/1978
Direction/script: Indar Sen.
Story: Nirode Chowdhury.
Camera: Pantu Nag
Editor: Arobinda
Bhattacharya.
Music: Bhupen Hazarika.
Art direction: Subohd Das.
Lead players: Rakhee Gulzar,
George Baker, Anil Chatterjee,
Chinmoy Roy, Gita Dey,
Tarun Kumar.
Production Company:
M/s N.R. Productions,
6/3 Madan Street, Calcutta-13
A young doctor, newly appointed to a tea garden in Assam is puzzled by a strange wailing he hears at night. The bungalow from which the sound comes is said to belong to Chameli Mem- sahib. The doctor is also disturbed by the hostility of the tea workers towards Mr. Berkeley, the former manager of the tea estate. The doctor imagines that the wailing and the ostracism of the former manager are related. He seeks Berkeley out and hears the following story from him.

Berkeley tells the doctor that he came to India many years ago and fell in love with a young labourer, Chameli, and against the usual conventions, proposed to her. Berkeley's family was horrified and disowned him. But Berkeley was happy with Chameli and with his work on the estate.

The peace Berkeley and Chameli knew together was shattered when a harmless-looking rash on Chameli's stomach proved to be leprosy. Chameli had to be isolated to a small bungalow on the estate and Berkeley was forbidden visits. Chameli was already pregnant at the time. The doctors predicted a healthy child and told Berkeley to continue treatment on the estate instead of taking his wife abroad.

The child that was born was lovely, but Chameli was deprived of the pleasure of nursing her. She was by turns elated and despondent, and was one day found hanging from the ceiling of her room. Chameli's mother went and began to circle Chameli's bungalow wailing for her daughter.

For Berkeley, the young child was his only comfort. He had given up his job to devote himself to his daughter. The other Englishmen left for home when India became independent but, Berkeley stayed on.

INDAR SEN

This young and promising director was assistant to Mrinal Sen in the early phase of his film career. Indar Sen's first independent Bengali feature film was Pratham Kadam Phool, which proved to be a hit. His style has now been associated with a strong narrative combined with a more imaginative approach to film technique. His films, Picnic, Arjun and Asamoy were well received.
Chitegu Chinte
(The restless corpse)

Ramprakash as the karate stooge of politicians

Kannada/ colour/129 mins./1977
Director: M.S. Sathyu.
Producer: G.N. Lakshmipathy
Screenplay: Javed Siddiqui.
Venkatesh/ Valdyanathan.
Lead players: C.R. Simha, Manjula, Paula Lindsay and introducing Ram Prakash.
Production Company: G.N. Lakshmipathy, Sawan Movies, 13 Crescent Road, High Ground, Bangalore 560001.
Many years ago in the past, present or future, it's not exactly certain when, there was a large and shining island called Gajadweepa or the Elephant Isle. On that fabled and mysterious isle there rested a master politician who controlled the destinies of his land from his sick-bed. He was referred to in hushed whispers and only by his initials “T.K.”

Now, there also existed on that same isle an epic hero Gajasimha (the elephant-lion), who was the idol of the populace, a shining figure from their secret dreams. A thousand women swooned every time he appeared on the screen, a million young men practised his gestures in front of their mirrors every morning.

After a ten-year lag Bruce Lee had become the rage on the island, and a young karate expert was required for Gajasimha’s next film. Such a young man was found, but neither he nor his new employer knew that he was to be used by T.K.’s gang for the sinister purpose of getting rid of the too-popular Gajasimha. The plot failed but the young man was arrested for attempted murder and went to prison convinced that Gajasimha had framed him. T.K. decided on the policy of “if you can’t kill them co-opt them” and persuaded Gajasimha to stand for the elections. Once Gajasimha found that politics required the art of dissimulation more than the cinema, he easily won his way to the top and became the ruler of the land. Like all great patriots whose hearts bleed for their people, he started imagining that he was Gajadweepa and Gajasimha was Gajasimha. He became so uppity that he thought of T.K. as no more than a sick old man. T.K.’s camp once more hatched a devious plan. The young man was sprung from prison and used once again to try and assassinate Gajasimha, but this attempt succeeded no better than the first. Gajasimha was aware that his enemies were plotting against him had meanwhile sent for a foreign agent, and so it was that Agent 009½ was despatched to Gajadweepa to play a “C” grad Modesty Blaise. What with the foreign agent, the karate-chopping young man and his dancing lady friend, the villains were brought to an untimely end. How they used a corpse to destroy a rogue forms the gripping finale to the film.

What this film leaves unresolved will find momentous conclusion in the sequel to “The Restless Corpse”, called “The Son also Rises”

Review

Director M.S. Sathyu has tried to spin a hilarious spoof in his latest Kannada film, Chitegu Chinte, lampooning the pretentiousness in the film world and philistinism in the political arena.

When the signboard “Leave your reasoning behind” greeted me at the theatre entrance, I thought the pic-
ure must be an idiotic entertainer. The film, no doubt, could have been utterly idiotic had it not been imbued with the ingredients of a political satire.

The main thrust of the film is to ridicule hypocrisy of all kinds, both in the world of films and politics. That the message is driven home without didacticism or rhetoric is certainly no mean achievement.

But the tone of satire is not maintained consistently. As a result, the narration loses its initial grip and assumes as it progresses the character of a regular James Bond adventure film. Another drawback of the film is that it largely depends more on witty one-liners for its punches than the more subdued situations which could have made the impact of the film more lasting and meaningful. Barring the central protagonist, Gajasimha, the depiction of other characters is not as effective as it should be.

As an uninhibited laughter-raiser with occasional rapier-thrusts at the upstarts who go about as leaders, the film is worthy of our appreciation. But it also proves that Director Sathyu is more at home in dealing with serious drama than handling the difficult comic craft.

In the pivotal role of Gajasimha, C.R. Simha excels and with his superb performance steals a march over others, though at times he looks stagey in his gesture and expressions. Newcomer Ramprakash as a karate fighter gives a cameo performance.

(Courtesy: Deccan Herald)

M.S. Sathyu
Working in Theatre and Films
as designer and director since 1952
Designed decor for nearly 36 plays and ballets
Directed about ten stage plays in Hindi, Urdu and Kannada

Filmography
1974 Garm Hava (Urdu), producer and director (Indian entry at Cannes).
1977 Kanneshwararama (Hindi/Kannada), director, 1978 Chitengu Chinte (Kannada), director.
Produced over 20 short films.
Made about 12 documentaries.
Made one children's short film, "Irshad Panjatan" for CFS.
Directed one children's feature film "Ek Tha Chotu Ek Tha Motu" for CFS.
Art Director for three feature films.
Filmfare Award for best Art Direction B/W 1965 Film: "Haqeequat"
Chuvanna Vithukal
(Red Seedling)

Malayalam/ black-and-white/
88 mins/1977
Direction/script: P.A. Backer.
Producer: Salam Karassery.
Music: Devarajan. Camera:
Vipin Das. Editor: Ravi. Lead
players: Rehman, Shanta
Kumari, Zeenath, Nilambur
Ayesha. Production Company:
Navdhara, Y.M.C.A. Road,
Calicut, Kerala.
Bharathi lives in the brothel run by Rudrama. She has a younger sister Lekha whom she supports with her earnings. Her main hope in life is to see Lekha happily married and established in society.

Bharathi is arrested in a police raid in the brothel and Lekha loses her only source of support. A young man follows her around and finally Lekha submits to him. When Bharathi returns from prison, she finds her sister gone.

Now Bharathi wanders through the city. She meets a truck driver, Kesavan, who brings her home for pleasure, but quickly takes her to a doctor when he discovers that she has fever. This is the first time in Bharathi’s life that some man has shown any feeling for her beyond lust. Bharathi’s heart goes out to Kesavan.

One day Bharathi is sifting rice, lost in pleasant thoughts of Kesavan, when she hears a child crying. She looks up to see a haggard Lekha standing at the door with a weak infant in her arms. The baby whimpers; Bharathi hears that rumble of thunder which, destroys her world.

P.A. Backer

Born in 1940 in Trichur, Kerala State. His interest in films began by producing one called Olavum Theeravum (Wave and Shore). It won the State Award, a gold medal as the best feature film. He then took to directing films. His first was Kabani Nadi Chuvannapoli (When River Kabani turned Red, 1975). His next, Manimuzhakkam (Tolling of the Bell, 1976) won the National Award for the best Malayalam film for the year 1976. Chuvanna Vithukal (Red Seedlings, 1977) is his third film. His latest film, Sangha Ganam (Chorus) is almost ready for release. He is now working on a film titled Manninte Maril (In the bosom of the earth).
Devaki Nandan Gopala

Directed by Raj Dutt. Producer:
Daddy Deshmukh. Screenplay/
Dialogues: G.D. Madgulkar, Vithal
Wagh. Camera: Manohar Acharya.
Music: Ram Kadam. Lead players:
Asha Poldar, Suhasini Deshpande,
Nana Palskar, Seema, Ramesh
Deo, Dr. Shreeram Lagoo. Production
Company: Akshar Films
Distribution, c/o Nauroop Chitra, Dr.
V.L. Vaidya Road, Dadar, Bombay
400028
Devaki Nandan Gopala is a miracle—a masterpiece of organizational effort in an industry which does not care either for realism or aesthetic values. The film revolves around Gadge Baba—a real-life Maharashtrian saint, who was born in the region of Vidarbha and who died there two decades ago. A legendary character, Gadge Baba travelled widely throughout Maharashtra on his proselytizing mission, performing Keertans and leading villagers to chant his favourite bhajan “Devaki Nandan Gopala”.

Shreeram Lagoo, a veteran of the Marathi stage, and now in films, is outstanding as the Baba. The film remains true to the man who disdained being called “Maharaja”, by not making him a miracle magician. His life story is a familiar one, but is still touching.

Debu is the son of a humble washerman (veteran Hindi film actor Nana Palsikar in a rare Marathi role). The role of the child is endearingly played by a boy called Parag. Debu’s father loses all he has in drinking and, with his widowed mother (Suhasini Deshpande), has to move to his uncle’s house.

Portraying the various events of Debu’s childhood, the film presents real people in his life—his kindly uncle, his shrewish aunt—who watch Debu grow up.

Debu is married when still a boy. The wedding ceremony as well as the child-like pranks of the couple, impart their own charm to the film.

Debu grows to be a young farmer, but when he tries to fight irrational beliefs in the efficacy of deities, the village orthodoxy successfully implicates him in a theft of the village idol’s ornaments. The film shows a number of events which ultimately drive him to the wall and make him renounce even his family links.

The young man (now played by Shreeram Lagoo) goes into the wilderness, crushed by the iniquity of his experiences. In one of the best filmed episodes in the movie, Lagoo encounters a mysterious holy man who explains to him the riddle of living, and stresses the need for service of his suffering fellowmen. Sunlight filters through the tall trees in the wood, and the holy man asks Debu to take his earthen pot (gadge) and bring him some water. When Debu returns with the water, the holy man is gone. The pot falls and, taking up the shallow half that is left, Debu sets off on his wanderings.

It is because of the earthen pot, which he began to use for eating and also for covering his head from the sun, that this slightly whimsical-looking saint, walking amongst suffering men, began to be called Gadge Baba.
In the second half of the film we see Gadge Baba undertaking a chain of social service assignments. He translates into deeds, saint-poet Tukaram’s lines that only he “should be called a saint who calls his own those who are troubled or exploited”.

The film wisely employs the Vidarbha dialect spoken by the common masses to whom Gadge Baba belonged. This has a musical lilt and all the leading characters—including Lagoo—handle it with the utmost naturalness.

Manohar Acharya has shot the entire film on location and has done his job superbly. The film captures realistically the texture of the locations associated with Gadge Baba.

The most surprising aspect of the film is that till almost the last episode, the subject and central character of the film appears to dominate Lagoo instead of it being the other way around, as it invariably happens in his major stage performances. It is only when he dons the make-up of Gadge Baba’s last years that he comes into his own. Call this total identification with the role, or what you will, but there is a performance which those who have seen Gadge Baba in real life will hardly complain about. Also, this is not just another miracle-working saint but a social worker and philosopher who lead thousands of people for several years.

DNYANESHWAR NADKARNI

Director: Shri Raj Dutt
Raj Dutt (alias Duta Mayalu) comes from Vardha district of Maharashtra. He obtained his Bachelor of Commerce degree from Govindram Sakaria College but could not stick to one job. Basically, he is a good sportsman and an artiste. He started writing reviews on Marathi plays while in college. For some time, he worked with ‘Tarun Bharat’, a Marathi daily at Nagpur as a sub-editor. He is a good actor, and has acted in several films/plays such as ‘Gurukilli’, ‘Adhar’ and ‘Jagachya Pathiwar’. He worked as an assistant director for twelve years to Raja Paranjape. He directed ‘Madhuchandra’ independently. He has for two years (1970-1971) consecutively won the best director award given by the Maharashtra State.

Filmography
Gharchi Rani
Apradh
Ya Sukhano Ya
Jhep
Dev Manoos
Devaki Nandana Gopal
Due for release
Asta Vinayak
DOORATWA
(Distance)
Bengali/black-and-white/
96 mins./1978
Direction/script: Buddhadeb Dasgupta
Music: Aln Rasheed, Mahmud Mirza.
Editor: Mrinmoy Chakrabarty.
Photography: Ranjit Roy
Lead players: Mamta Shankar, Pradip Mukerjee, Bijon Bhattacharya, Niranjan Roy, Singdha Banerjee
Produced by Buddhadeb Dasgupta, 29 Jatin Das Road, Calcutta 700029.

Mamta Shankar and Pradip Mukerjee
The plot in Dooratwa is kept simple — deliberately so. Mondar (Pradip Mukherjee) a young lecturer has both turned away from his leftist political ideas and divorced his wife Anjali (Mamta Shankar) on discovering that she was pregnant by another man when he married her. The film charts Mondar’s descent into loneliness and frustration and the long process of his recovery, when he starts to consider rapprochement, both with Anjali as well as with his political group.

What would seem a naive theme is handled with sophistication. Ranjit Roy, a product of FTII, handles the camera in his first feature film with confidence and sensitivity. He promises to become the next poet of the city after Satyajit Ray. His images linger — Calcutta’s topless towers in the morning, the glimmering lights of Chowringhee seen from the “load shedded” darkness of Ballygunge, Mamta’s hand running along the balustrade at Hooghly. He also has the special gift (again like Ray) of eliciting a special Indianness from beautiful women, Mamta Shankar and Spi ghda Banerjee.

Buddhadeb and Ranjit Roy have brilliantly captured the seediness, the genteel poverty, the finely shaded misery of the bhadralok — the image of “some infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing”. Whether Buddhadeb has equally successfully linked the emotional sterility of the Indian middle class with its abandonment of political responsibility is difficult to say.

For me, the themes didn’t jell. And it was enough that Buddhadeb has established credibly the pain and suffering of a human couple in one of our urban hells.

— IQBAL MASUD

Buddhadeb Dasgupta

Born in 1944 at Anara, a village of Purulia District in West Bengal. Spent most of his childhood days outside Calcutta. A student of Economics from Calcutta University, was a Lecturer in Economics in a Calcutta College from 1968 to 1976. One of the most important and controversial poets of modern Bengali literature. Contributes regularly to serious writings on films in Bengali and English journals. Made a few documentaries and short films, and ‘Dooratwa’ (The Distance) is his first feature film.
GANADEVATA
(The People)

Bengali /Colour/172 mins./
1978
Director: Tarun Majumdar.
Screenplay: Rajan Tarafder
Tarun Majumdar.
Camera: Sakti Banerjee.
Editor: Ramesh Joshi.
Music: Hemanta Mukherjee.
Lead players: Soumitra
Chatterjee, Sandhya Roy,
Samit Bhanja, Madhabi
Chakraborty.
Production Company:
Department of Information and
Cultural Affairs, Government
of West Bengal, Writers
Building, Calcutta.

Samit Bhanja and Sandhya Roy
Ganadevata is based on Tarashankar Banerjee’s epic novel about the awakening of choice in villagers who have lived for centuries by habit. Tarun Majumdar’s film renders both the placidity of an established life and the commotion arising from single, individual acts of rebellion.

Two men, Aniruddha, the blacksmith, and Girish, the carpenter, announce that they will not work on barter. The barter rates were established long ago and have taken no account of the rise in costs of raw material. The village teacher perceives the injustice but hesitates to advise direct action. He tells the carpenter and the blacksmith that the old ways of doing things are wisest. But the single unexpected declaration of rights by the two men stirs among other villagers knowledge of the injustice concealed in all the customary ways of life in the village.

A rich farmer, who has rather more money than diligent farming alone can provide, perceives the danger to his power in the action of the carpenter and the blacksmith. This farmer imposes his idea of order on the village through a collection of henchmen and easy relations with the police. He sets fire to a “rebel” part of the village. The police arrive and enact a token investigation. In the very next scene, we see the policemen sitting in the landlord’s courtyard, drinking something stronger than tea.

A revolutionary from the city is incarcerated by the British in this far-off village. He spreads among the villagers the idea of collective action. The previously-devout school teacher has meanwhile experienced first-hand the tyranny of the rich farmer and government officials colluding together. For making a whimper on behalf of some wronged villagers, his school is taken away from him and he himself is hauled off to jail. He returns from jail committed to changing prevailing feudal arrangements.

Majumdar’s camera is animated. He renders particularly well the life racing through the village initially diverted to small fights and gossip instead of to social change. The film closes with a wide tableau of villagers standing next to one another. In numbers alone, these villagers are impressive. The camera shows us that the real power, once the villagers are awakened, lies with the villagers themselves and nowhere else.

—Jagdish Banerjee
Filmography
1959  Chawa-Pawa
1960  Smriti Tuku Thaak
1961  Kancher Swarga
  • President’s Silver Medal (Best Bengali film)
1963  Palatak
  • Three Bengal Film Journalist Association (BFJA) awards
1965  Alor Pipasa
1965  Ek Tuku Basa
1967  Balika Bodhu
  • Indian entry at Berlin, Locarno, Mannheim, Tashkent festivals
  • Seven BFJA awards plus Filmfare awards
1979  Rahgir (Hindi)
  • Five BFJA awards
1971  Nimantran
  • Silver Medal as the best regional film (National Awards)
  • Seven BFJA awards and the Filmfare awards
1973  Sriman Prithviraj
  • Five BFJA awards

Taran Majumdar
Born in 1931 in Bogra (Bangla Desh). Migrated to Calcutta in 1946 where he studied Science in the St. Paul’s Cathedral and Scottish Church College.

Joined films as an Assistant Director in 1954, and became a full-fledged Director (under the pseudonym Yatrik) in 1959. In 1965, he started directing films under his own name.

1974  Fuleswari
  • Three BFJA awards
  • Thagini
1975  Sansar Seemanney
  • Soviet Woman’s Committee award (Tashkent festival)
  • Eight BFJA awards for best film, director, actor, actress, supporting actress music, art, direction, make-up.

Has just completed Balika Bodhu (Hindi).
Kaadu Kudre
(The Wild Horse)

Kannada/Colour/102 minutes/1978
Director: Chandrasekhar Kambar.
Screenplay: Shama Zaidi.
Lyrics: Chandrashekhar Kambar.
Photography: Sundarnath Suvarna
Music: Bhaskar Chandavarkar.
Editor: Stanley.
Lead players: Oligonâ, Mani,
Sundershree, Jay, Shreelata, Malathi Rao.
Production Company: Wheel Productions, 75 Basanankari Market
Jumma Masjid Road, Bangalore 560002.
The raw material of Kambar's plays and stories are the themes of fertility, regeneration, oppression and feudal decay. These are never discernible as separate elements, but are wonderfully fused in his work. His latest film though technically his first, is actually his second essay at film making. The first film Kari Mai or the "Black Goddess" based on one of his novels has been held up on completion of shooting because of legal complications.

"Kaadu Kudre", Kambar says, is inspired by Lorca's "House of Bernarda Alba" but Kambar has adapted it to his experience. In place of the closing dance, Kambar had originally wanted to put a lavani (a folk ballad) about his magic horse but when he started to write a lavani it developed its own energy and became a full-length narrative poem and had to be dropped. The present film is technically unsure but one gets caught up quickly in this whirl of outward rituals, concealing intense human feelings.

Huligonda is a poor boy, full of dreams and courage. One day, on his way to the neighbouring village, he meets a young girl with long hair. Her beauty melts him. He follows her to her house, comes home and lies down under a blanket.

When the village elders ask him what is wrong, he says that he has seen a girl with long hair and wants to marry her. The elders consider: "She is the daughter of the neighbouring village chief. Will such a rich chief agree to marry into a poor village, whose people cannot manage one square meal a day? But let us try". His father takes him to the neighbouring village chief.

The village chief is inspecting a wild horse in front of his house. All the young men who have tried to tame the wild horse have failed. The boy's father asks the chief to give his daughter in marriage to Huligonda. The chief casually shows the horse to the boy and says that the boy can have his daughter if he tames the horse. Without a second thought, Huligonda jumps onto the horse's back and is carried headlong into the forest. By the time Huligonda returns from the forest, he has mastered the horse.

When Huligonda comes with his wedding party, he discovers the girl with long hair moving among other girls. His bride-to-be is one of the chief's other daughters. Huligonda is persuaded to accept the chief's wishes, but his love for the girl lives in him and torments him.

The rest of the film studies the tragic consequences of Huligonda's first act of acquiescence.

Unlike some of our other film makers, Kambar doesn't use rituals merely as interesting touristy visu-
als, but to contrast their meaningless with actual happenings. In- 
spite of the unreal fable-like quality of his film he has not tried to set the 
story in some perfect pastoral setting, but has allowed contemporary 
intrusions into this setting, like electricity pylons, plastic utensils and 
yellow sari. The end is a bit awkward and someone did suggest that it 
would have been better for the horse (a symbol of fertility) to have been 
injured. But such criticism is quibbling: the film enters your awareness 
inspite of its weaknesses unlike many other "well-made" but lifeless 
films.

The Director

CHANDRASEKHAR
KAMBAR is a leading poet and 
dramatist in Kannada. He has 
published nine plays, four 
collections of poems and six 
books on folklore. Three of his 
books have won awards given 
by the State Literary Academy.

His well-known play
'Jokumaraswamy' has won the 
prestigious Smt. Kamaladevi 
Chattopadhyaya Award of 
Natyasangha as the best play of 
the year.

He has directed two films and 
one documentary, and has 
composed the music for three 
films. He was a Fulbright 
Scholar in 1968. He has taught 
in various colleges and in the 
University of Chicago. He is 
currently teaching at Bangalore 
University.
KALLOL
(The Wave)

Lachit Pookan as the peasant, Mani

Assamese/col./ 95 mins/ 1978
Direction/story/ screenplay/
dialogue: Atul Bordoloil
Producer: K.C. Sarmah
Lyrics/music: Rudra Barua.
Camera: Nalin Dowerah
Editor: Tarun Dutta
Players: Chandra Barua
(landlord), Lachit Pookan
(Mani), Bishnu Khargharia
(Tomi), Bharat Rajkhowa
(Rupai), Moinuddin Ahmed
(Hiron), Bina Saikia(Bogi)
Production Company: Gati
Chitra, Gauhati, Assam.
*Kallol* is about the power and the great weakness of feudal relations. A landlord, Ananga Prasad Chowdhury, lives off the daily tribute of fish that his tenants bring him. A shark finds its way to the stretch of river by which villagers live and eats up most of the fish. The peasants are unable to make a catch either for themselves or for the landlord.

The landlord is enraged. He resents the popularity of a young and courageous peasant who manages to catch some fish and also sets out to kill the shark. The landlord weaves around this peasant (Mani) a net of accusation. He also commands for his pleasure the young girl Bogi, to whom Mani is very attached. Bogi counsels Mani to let her become the landlord’s concubine and to work secretly for the welfare of the villagers. But Mani understands that this arrangement will preserve the tyrannical authority of the landlord. When the landlord seizes Mani and punishes him for the crime of boldness, the other villagers rebel and bring down Ananga Prasad’s doddering power.

**ATUL BORDOLOI**

Khatta Meetha
(Sweet and Sour)

Pearl Padamsee and Ashok Kumar as the elderly couple choosing to live happily ever after.
Homi Mistry works in a factory as a foreman. He has four grown-up sons. Mrs. Sethna is a widow who is struggling to get along with two teenage boys and a grown-up daughter. Mrs. Sethna and Mr. Homi Mistry get married for convenience, at the insistence of their common friends, as they both need a father and a mother for their children. When they start living together, hilarious friction develops between the children and of course between their step-mother and father.

Mrs. Sethna's son Feroze is in love with Zarine, who is also in the same university. Zarine loves Feroze against the wishes of her father Mr. Kerawala, a multimillionaire, who is not pleased at his only daughter's going out with a foreman's son. Mr. Kerawala tries to use his authority on his motherless daughter and on Feroze, so that they should not meet, but he doesn't succeed. Then Mr. Kerawala orders some men to beat up Feroze: this only leads to Zarine's leaving home and marrying Feroze. Mr. Kerawala is dispossessed and starts a vendetta against Feroze, Zarine and Feroze's family. He stops Homi Mistry's income by getting him fired from his job and arranges to have the family thrown out of their house. Adversity prompts the step-children to join together to fight their formidable enemy. Friction gives way to love, and they win their war.
It was Rajnigandha which made him a commercially successful film maker, introducing two new actors who likewise shot to fame...Vidya Sinha and Amol Palekar. With the same pair he made Chhoti Si Baat for Producer B.R. Chopra. The picture proved to be a hit. Within six months he came out with another successful picture Chit Chor. Today he is probably the most prolific film maker working in Bombay, completing three to four films a year. He is highly disciplined in his approach, taking particular care over script and dialogue. He normally completes the shooting of a film in a month. He continues to make films with comparative freedom as he has proved his uncanny strength at box-office, despite his seemingly random choice of actors and themes.

Filmography
Screenplay and direction of all the following films: Basu Chatterjee.
Camerawork for all films: K.K. Mahajan
Adarshnagar, Prabhadevi, Bombay 400025
MANNU
Malayalam/Colour /134 mins
1978
Direction: K.G. George.
Script: Dr. Pavithran.
Music: T. Ummer.
Camera: Ramachandra Babu.
Editing: Ravi.
Lead players: Soman,
Sharada, P.K. Abraham,
Adoor Bhasi.
Production Company: Sumitha
Pvt. Ltd, 22 Thiruvalluvar
Street, Perambur, Madras 11.

Mannu is about the struggle between Damu, a tenant whose legal right to his land is obscure, and Krishnan Nair, a rapacious landlord. The local leader of the party, comrade Mulamkadan, supports the tenant, and the landlord’s political strategy to evict the tenant fails. When the landlord goes to a Namboodiri priest, the priest advises recourse to the Lord.

One morning a Devi Vigraha (an idol) is discovered on Damu’s land. The villagers are awed; the landlord promptly declares his intention to build a temple on the land. Damu tries to fight both landlord and superstition from within the village and fails. Krishnan Nair is killed and Damu is forced to go underground. His wife continues the fight to regain land that is rightfully hers. Krishnan Nair’s son, Rajan returns from the front and searches for Damu, eventually tracking him down.

Will he live out his role as landlord or will he imagine a justice in which Damu has a share?

K.G. GEORGE

—Born at Changanacherry
—Graduated in Economics
—Diploma in Direction: 1972
—First Feature Film: Swapnadanam
National award for best regional film
State Awards—best film, best direction

—Other films: Ona Pudava
Vyamoham
Mannu
Rapaddigalude Gatha
Ini Aval Urangatte
Mullum Malarum

(A thorn and a flower)

Rajani Kanth, Shobha and Jayalakshmi

Screenplam/dialogue/direction: Mahendran.
Editing: T.Vasu.
Music: Ilayaraja.
Producer: Mahendran.
Lyrics: Kannadasan/Panju Arunachalam/Gangai
Amaran.
Lead players: Rajanikanth,
Sharath Babu, Jaya Lakshmi,
Shobha. Production Company:
Messrs. Ananithi Films,
Arsikaru Street, Madras 600 004.
Mullum Malarum is the rare film which combines excellent story (by Umarchandran), an appropriate cast and subtle camerawork. In his very first film, Mahendran has demonstrated his maturity as a director.

The story is about a brother's resistance to any change in the relationship he has with his unmarried sister. Kali and Valli grew up orphans. Kali supported his sister and kept her from begging. Over the years his solicitude for her grew so strong that it left no room for change in her.

Kali now works as winch operator at a power station. His fellow-workers and the other villagers respect him for his competence, even when they fear his strength and roughness. The new engineer who arrives to manage the power station is a disciplinarian. He dislikes Kali's reckless style. The two egos clash. Kali is hauled up for an unaccounted absence and loses his job. The firing hurts him deeply. He gets drunk and on his way home meets with an accident. His arm has to be amputated.

Meanwhile the engineer and Kali's sister Valli have developed an acquaintance with one another. The engineer feels deep respect for Valli and is not at all troubled by thoughts of marrying "below his station." Valli responds to the engineer, but worries about her brother's acceptance of the relationship.

The film examines how pride and bitterness confuse Kali's natural unwillingness to let the only family that remains to him move away. When the engineer approaches Kali for his sister's hand in marriage, Kali mocks him. Only later, when his own wife turns against him for putting obstacles in Valli's way does Kali understand. The film closes quietly.

J. MAHENDRAN

Born in 1939. Graduated from Madras University. Mullum Malarum (A thorn and a flower) is his first film. He joined the film industry as an assistant director. He also worked as a journalist for three years as an assistant editor with the newspaper Tughlaq before taking to screenplay and scriptwriting. He wrote the play Thangapathakkam. He has directed a number of plays. One of them, Reshimoolam had an unprecedented long run in Madras in 1978.
Oru Nadigai Natakam
Parkiral

(An actress views her life)

Tamil/black-and white/132 mins/1978
Direction: (late) A. Bhimsingh
Story/script: D. Jayakanthan.
Camera: B. Kaman.
Music: M.S. Viswanathan.
Lead players: Lakshmi,
Shreekanth.
Production Company: Girnar Films, 17 Murugesan Naicker Street, Rangavapuram, Madras 600024
A man walks into a room, stretches himself out heavily upon the bed—his back to the woman—and falls asleep.

Oru Nadigai Natakam Parkiral is a witty film about the difficult subject of freedom for women. Instead of examining the social circumstances which oppress women, it offers us a woman who is already liberated. Without losing any warmth or naturalness, 33-years-old Kalyani (played superbly by the actress Lakshmi) has learned to choose her life. Oru Nadigai observes sometimes delightedly, sometimes compassionately, the world which must cope with her.

A drama critic is dazed by her naturalness and marries her, only to find that she will not turn into a regulation housewife. She insists on her career (the stage) and on the freedom of living in her own house. The two separate. In a spaciously comic scene, the two visit a lawyer friend. “We want a divorce,” they say, “because we don’t like one another.” The lawyer explains that the law is cynical; the grounds for divorce must be more solid than moods. “Are you impotent?” “No.” “Do you have a disease?” “No.” “Has one of you committed adultery?” “No”. The lawyer says in exasperation, “Are you at least willing to say that you hate one another?” The actress looks appraisingly at the journalist’s face and turns her eyes down. The lawyer tells them to go away.

The film is shot in bright, shallow light; it is not a film about backgrounds. Its most striking accomplishment is to offer us credibly, an intelligent and sympathetic woman who knows her own mind.

The woman leans against the head-rest. Her hand lies lightly on the man’s back. She doesn’t want from the man any more than he is willing to give her. And we viewers believe her.

Satti Khanna

The late Bhim Singh

A. Bhim Singh was 54 when he died in January, 1978. He has directed a number of Tamil, Hindi, Telugu and Kannada films. His most recent film Sila Nerangalil Sila Manithargal won for its heroine, Lakshmi, the National Award as the best actress. The film Aadmi, starring the famous star Dilip
Kumar, is among the many Hindi pictures to his credit.

Before joining films, Bhim Singh was a proof-reader in The Andhra Prabha, a Telugu publication. He became a film director, producer and the owner of the Newtone Film Studio. He made around sixty films, of which over half were in Tamil, fifteen in Hindi, seven in Malayalam, four in Telugu and two in Kannada.

Filmography

Some notable titles
Sheham—(Malayalam)
Nirakudam—(-do-)
Pooja Ke Phool—-(Hindi)
Meharban—(Hindi)
Bangaru Manishi—-(Telegu)
Bhagavatulu—-(Telegu)
Chiranjeevi—(Tamil)
Pathikathai—-(Tamil)
Pava Mannippu—-(Tamil)
Palum Pazhavum—-(Tamil)
Alayomani—(Tamil)
Sila Nerangali Sila Manithargal—-(Tamil)
Karunamayudu—-(Telegu)
Parasuram
(The man with an axe)

Arun Mukherjee as the man with the axe

Bengali/colour/ 99 mins/ 1978
Leading players: Arun Mukherjee, Bisvas Chakraborty, Nirmal Ghosh, Sreela Majumdar.
Production Company: Department of Information, Government of West Bengal, Writers Building, Calcutta.
Mrinal Sen’s Parasuram falls into what may be termed the third phase of his career as a film maker, realism leavened by fantasy. He failed to bring this off in Mrigaya. He triumphed in this genre in Oka Oone Katha. His latest film, Parasuram is both frustrating and provocative. He has chosen as his theme the life of the Calcutta pavement dwellers. He told me that he had prepared for this movie by consulting anthropological studies. He had found that most migrants were uprooted peasants and tended to stick to their own district or village groups in various parts of the city. Parasuram or the ‘man with the axe’ is the title given to one such peasant who makes his way to the streets of Calcutta. He absorbs wonderingly, the new sights and sounds, the barbarity, the clever strategems for survival, and the few decencies still left among the wretched of the earth.

As his protagonist, Mrinal has chosen Arun Mukherjee, a young stage actor-director who directed and acted in the now famous play Jagannath, a satire on facile assumptions of revolution. Arun Mukherjee has carried over from the stage play the style of the half-crazed, half-possessed hero.

Parasuram is presented both as Victim and Resurrecter. There is a splendid image of the village madari (magician trick-man), who oversees the rise and fall of Parsuram in the city through the eyes of a boy almost impaled on a high bamboo pole. There is a splendid fusion here of the Marxist objective view of history and of the crucifixion. But this high level of abstract imagery is not maintained in the film; the latter half of the film becomes a record of Parasuram’s fondness for an abandoned girl who leaves him all too casually for a richer lover. In a desperate fantasy, Parasuram imagines himself in up arms against the world; in fact he climbs up the scaffolding of a high-rise apartment and plunges to death on the pavement below, a touch of “The Master Builder”. The film has memorable moments, but suffers from Mrinal’s indecision about the role of the main character: Is he a worm among worms or is he a potent mystical figure who will transform worms into men?

Iqbal Masud

Mrinal Sen
Mrinal Sen's entry into cinema was an accident. In his early days he had no special love for cinema; he was not even a habitual film-goer.

Mrinal Sen made his first film in 1956. But his first writing on cinema dates further back. Since then, Sen has been writing generally and critically on cinema, on its socio-political role and on the possibilities of a New Cinema. Later, when he got deeply involved in the making of films, his writings on his own experience became particularly significant. He is not only a persuasive but a lucid writer. His latest publication, in English, is titled Views on Cinema.

Filmography

Raat Bhore (The Dawn), 1956
Nil Akasher Nichey (Under the Blue Sky), 1959
Baishey Sravana (The Wedding Day), 1960
Punascha (Over Again), 1961
Abasheshay (And at last), 1963
Pratindhi (The Representative), 1964
Akash Kusum (Up in the Cloud), 1965
Bhuvan Shome, 1969
Ichhapuran (The wishfulfilment), 1970
Interview (1970)
Ek Adhuri Kahani (An unfinished Story), 1971
Calcutta 71, 1972
Padatik (the Guerrilla Fighter), 1973
Chorus, 1974
Mrigaya (The Royal Hunt), 1976
Öka Oorie Katha (A village Story)
Parichaya

(Identity)

Anil Chatterjee and Arati Bhattacharya

Bengali/black-and-white/119 mins./1978
Direction/screenplay: Nirmal Mitter.
Producer: Parvati Ganguly
Camera: Jyoti Bose.
Editor: Prosanta Dey.
Music: Saliesh Roy
Lead players: Anil Chatterjee,
Arati Bhattacharjee, Subhendu
Chatterjee, Sumitra
Mukherjee, Dipankar De,
Mohua Roy Chowdhury.
Production Company: A.T.S.
Films Production, 60/2 Lenin
Sarani, Calcutta 13.
An experiment. What happens when three sisters undertake a journey with four male friends from Calcutta to faraway Hazaribagh? The women are young, the men also young. What currents of feeling flow out and back among these holidaying people?

Nirmal Mitter is good at homely, lazy scenes. The men and women lounge easily on the floor, around a pack of cards, or a harmonium. Their voices blend easily in talk and in song, but their glances are particular. In brief close-ups during the group strolls and music scenes, we detect the beginnings of parichaya (acquaintance).

The relationships Mitter observes are not complex: a young girl awakens to her sexuality, a woman makes acquaintance with a new man under the guise of helping a cause, a couple expresses a strong preference for nature in the early morning. The liberty young people enjoy from watchful older eyes isn’t exploited to reveal feelings shifting inside each person — the same person sometimes desiring warmth, sometimes adventure, sometimes security. Ultimately, the film is too much tableau. We make the group’s acquaintance, without connecting with them.

Mitter has a spacious feeling for trees and open air. His backgrounds of hills falling away to wide plains is excellent metaphor for the free space to which the city dwellers come. His use of Rabindra Sangeet music is also good. Once groups gather around a harmonium, it is not unnatural to have them sing a song of Rabindranath Tagore. If the film is not analytical, it is decorous, and kindly towards the longings and affections of young people.

Suchita Mazumdar

Nirmal Mitter

Born in Calcutta in 1924. After graduating from Calcutta University in 1946, Nirmal Mitter joined the script and direction department of New Theatres Ltd, a pioneering film-producing concern run by the famous B.N. Sircar. He worked as assistant director to the late Bimal Roy and to Hem Chunder, and later, was associate director for Bandhan, produced by New Theatres in 1955 (which won an All India Certificate of Merit that year).
His first independent film, Rajdhani Thakkey, made in 1959, was a Bengali adaptation of Nikolai Gogol’s Inspector General. In 1960, he made a comedy-satire on widow re-marriage called Kanchan Mulya, written by the well-known author, Shri Bibhuti Bhushan Mukhopadhyay, which was a success at the box-office. His Pratham Basantha, a socially-motivated film, 1968, was based on a novel by Smt. Pratibha Bose and also did well at the box-office.

Since 1951, he has been making documentaries independently for Films Division and for commercial firms.
Rathi Nirvedam
(Adolescent desire)

Jayabharati and Krishnachandran

Malayalam/colour/124 mlns./1978
Direction: Bharathan. Script/screenplay/dialogue:
P. Padmarajan
Lyrics: Kavalam Narayanaswami. Music: Devarajan,
Lead players: Krishnachandran, Manohar, Baby Sandhya,
V.J. Jose, Jayabharathi, Meena.
Production Company: Supriya, Dr. Natesan Road, Madras 78.
RATHI NIRVEDAM

The agony of adolescent passion is treated compassionately, but also rather partially, in this Malayalam film. The colours of the plantation slopes and vegetation of a tea estate are very rich. The acting is uniformly good.

Young Pappu, awaiting school results and then college, has plenty of time on hand. His trouble is ‘adolescence’, but neither his mother nor aunt can diagnose his affliction. Everything round him excites and stimulates his sexual curiosity. Eighteen-year old Rathik, the girl next door, has been ‘chechi’ (elder sister) to him since he was a child. Unaware of the stirrings of his desire, she dismisses his first overtures to her as boyish pranks. But soon her feelings change. A serious flaw in an otherwise realistic story is that the change is not adequately accounted for. She is sympathetic to the boy’s confusion and goes to the ‘Kavu’ (cobra-shrine) to keep a midnight assignation with Pappu. It storms and thunders while Pappu makes love to Rathik. Only then does the storm within and without subside. Aghast at what has happened, Rathik stumbles to her feet but is bitten by a cobra and dies. Next morning Pappu leaves home for college and his new life.

A phase in the young adolescent’s growth to manhood—but death for Rathik. The end is unfeelingly casual.

Esther Kurien

B.G. Bharathan

Born in 1946. Is a professional painter and sculptor. Joined the film industry as an art director and publicity designer. Wrote, produced and directed Prayanan (The Voyage) in 1975. Guruvayoor Kesavan was completed in 1977. It won the Kerala State Award for the best film shot in Kerala State that year. Aniyara, a low budget, black-and-white film was made in 1977. Rathin Nirvedam was made in 1978. Has just completed Aravam (Uproar). Is currently working on Takara, to be made in Tamil and Malayalam.
SHAATRANJI KE KHILARI
(THE CHESS PLAYERS) A Film by Satyajit Ray

(The Chess Players)

Ray with Amjad Khan on the sets

Urdu/Colour/1977/133 minutes
Direction/Script/Music: Satyajit Ray.

Lead players: Richard Attenborough, Amjad Khan, Sanjeev Kumar, Saeed Jaffrey, Shabana Azmi, Farida Jalal.
Produced by Suresh Jindal. Devaki Chitra, L3 Eden Hall, Dr. Annie Besant Road, Worli, Bombay - 400018.
The year is 1856 and the place is Lucknow, capital of Avadh. On the throne of Avadh sits Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, indifferent ruler but a fine poet and musician.

In Lucknow live two jagirdar friends, Mirza Sajjad Ali and Mir Roshan Ali, whose only occupation is playing chess. Mirza’s neglected wife, Khurshid, would like to wean her husband away from his obsession, but all her efforts to do so fail. Mir’s wife Nafeesa, on the other hand, encourages her husband to play so that she can carry on an affair with her cousin.

A bigger game of chess — a political one — is being played by the East India Company. The Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, has decided to use the Nawab’s misrule as a pretext for deposing him and bringing Avadh under British rule. Acting under instructions from Dalhousie, General Outram, the Resident of Lucknow, presents his ultimatum to Wajid.

Mir and Mirza learn that the Company’s troops are approaching Lucknow. Mortally afraid that they may be called up to fight for the Nawab, the two friends run away from home and continue to play in a secluded village away from the gathering political storm.

Wajid is faced with a situation where he must either give up his throne or fight the Company, with whom the Nawabs of Avadh have been friendly for over a century. Wajid decides on a moral victory and surrenders.

Anxious to avoid fighting for their ruler, Mir and Mirza end up fighting bitterly with each other over their game.

The troops march into Lucknow Avadh passes into the hands of the Company. As dusk falls, the two friends are reconciled and resume playing their game of bloodless combat.

SATYAJIT RAY

Interview by Iqbal Masud

Iqbal Masud: In a recent TV interview you described Shatranj as breakthrough—a breakthrough for you as a director or for the Hindi cinema?

Satyajit Ray: I think I used the term ‘departure’ and not ‘breakthrough’. Shatranj is certainly a departure from my films. But I do believe that the film claims a certain distinction in depicting historical events with objectivity and without unwarranted dramatisation. This goes to the extent that the term ‘documentary’—in a pejorative sense—has been used by some to describe the film.

I.M. You further said that it was not for the Sholay audience. Does the response so far justify the hope that there is
significant audience for well-made, intelligent but substantial budget films?

R.: I mentioned Sholay not to disregard the film—I have real admiration for Sholay's craftsmanship—but only to indicate that the film was aimed at mass audiences whereas Shatranj was 'ade for an audience that would be expected to accept a serious treatment of a historical episode that has great points of interest although lacking in the conventional attributes of drama. One can well imagine a treatment of Inexation with Wajid painted whiter and General Outram blacker, which could automatically enhance its popular appeal. My treatment avoids this simplification. It also discourages the "approved response" to feudalism and colonialism, not by condoning or underscoring their evils, but by vesting their representatives with certain human traits. These traits are not invented but backed by historical evidence. I knew this might result in a certain ambivalence of attitude, but I didn't see Shatranj as a story where one could openly take sides and take a stand. I saw it more as a contemplative, rough unsparing view of the clash of two cultures—one effete and ineffectual and the other vigorous and malignant. I also took into account the many shades of grey that lie between these two extremes of the spectrum.

I am not in a position to judge the public response to the film yet, for the simple reason that it has so far only played in Delhi and U.P. and that too mostly in different theatres and without the backing of the right kind of publicity. I am told that in most U.P. towns the version shown was not the original one, but one with the English scenes dubbed in Hindi. I still believe that with the right kind of exploitation, both at home and abroad, the film would cover its cost which is high compared with Bengali films, but low compared with, say, Sholay.

I.M.: You once said that before you start on a film you have its whole sweep in your head. How did you see this film—both as to its form and to your stance with regard to the events to be depicted?

S.R.: There wasn't a full length film in Prem Chand's story and I decided at the outset to interweave fact and fiction. I saw the story as a fairly light-hearted one which would nevertheless comment on certain aspects of Nawabi decadence as well as make a timeless comment on non-involvement. The historical event I saw as being on a serious level throughout, with considerable probing into both Wajid's and Outram's characters and motivations. I was attracted by the possibilities of turning both of them into rounded, complex characters—Wajid with all the traits of a decadent Nawab, redeemed at least partially by his gifts as a poet and musician, striving to retain his dignity in the face of annihilation and turning ultimately into a tragic figure. Outram, I saw as a dual personality, suffering moral qualms in the seclusion of his study, betraying not a trace of it in his capacity as the loyal servant of the company.
I.M.: The affinities of this film to Jalsaghar have been noticed. Any comments?
S.R.: I see the resemblance between Wajid and the noblemen in Jalsaghar in their pathetic failure to discern the nature of the forces which are hastening their demise.
I.M.: A hostile attitude to the British or rather British policy is noticeable. If I remember right there was an attitude of amused tolerance towards British influenced liberalism in Charulata. Why this sternness?
S.R.: The annexation was illegal and yet Dalhousie pursued it with calm ruthlessness. The policy itself deserved nothing but condemnation. It fact, it was roundly condemned by both British and Indian historians.
I.M.: In the animation scene you have emphasised British rapacity and duplicity with regard to Indian States. But what about the puritanical streak? The British genuinely thought they were relieving the oppressed natives of their oppressors—a piece of self-deception, no doubt, but artistically useful...
S.R.: One could perhaps have done more with the historical event but only at the risk of upsetting the delicate balance between fact and fiction. Outram does mention at one point that the decision to annex was taken partly to provide relief to the common people who were suffering under Wajid’s misrule.
I.M.: Coming to the story, you have said that in films even a classic cannot remain unchanged. How far has this happened to Prem Chand’s story?
S.R.: I can think of no film which has been wholly faithful to its literary source. Changes are often made for formal reasons, if for nothing else. Shatranj one kind of change involves the introduction of two new characters. Two of the most important are Muns Nandlala and the peasant boy Kalloo. I felt it was important to introduce a Hindu character to establish the friendly relations that existed between the two religious groups in Lucknow in Wajid’s time. In terms of plot, Nandlala serves the crucial function of teaching Mir and Mirza the rudiments of British chess which assume such significance at the end of the film. Kalloo emerged in the following way: Prem Chand has Mir and Mirza playing chess in a dilapidated mosque towards the end of the story. I tried to picture the scene and found myself thinking of all the dirt and rubble the friends would have to contend with (not to speak of bats and rats and cockroaches and scorpions) before they could settle down to a quiet game. So I decided to drop the mosque and replace it with a new locale—a placid rural setting in contrast to the claustrophobic Nawabi interiors. Some more pondering and I realised that the noblemen would feel utterly at a loss without someone to take the place of the servant, someone to run errands for them, prepare their hookahs, bring them food and so forth. Thus emerges Kalloo, who not only serves Mir and Mirza but also serves the only representative in the film of the common man and the only person who displays patriotic feeling.
M.: Prem Chand strikes a censorious note right from the beginning about the fineness of Oudh culture. Sharar strikes an opposite note—for him everything beautiful in Urdu culture came from the Lucknow of the Oudh period. I feel in the film you have veered towards the Sharar version.

R.: Although Prem Chand in his opening paragraph condemns the nawabi era, his subsequent development of the narrative is marked by many wise, witty and human touches. In other words, the tone of the narrative is more indulgent than censorious. Prem Chand even goes to the extent of investing Mir and Mirza with a certain melancholy at the end. I had no use for his trait, as in my treatment although they fight bitterly enough, they decide in the end to forgive and forget when they realise that their need for each other is too great. Sharar was one of the sources which provided the physical details.

I.M.: In the last scene Prem Chand achieves a decisive finale—the death not only of one chess player but of their culture. What were you aiming at in your open-ended last scene?

S.R.: Prem Chand’s story ends by Mir and Mirza destroying each other while the company’s troops leave Lucknow with Wajid as prisoner. This is an effective juxtaposition but it takes wide liberty with history. Wajid left Lucknow of his own accord and well after the annexation. The idea of the two friends killing each other was abandoned because I felt it might be taken to symbolise the end of decadence. In fact, Nawabi and all that goes with it did not end with the British takeover. The U.P. noblemen kept up their ways till well into the present century. Hence the decision to show Mir and Mirza continuing with their game. That they decide to play according to British rules can be seen as a symbol of the acceptance of British domination by Indians.

I.M.: Let us now take one or two individual scenes. The marvellous opening chess set scene, the Kathak dance sequence. How were they conceived and composed?

S.R.: The opening scene is a prologue. I wanted to establish the mood of the narrative in a setting not yet described. The essence of chess is two people playing, saying nothing, utterly oblivious to the environment. This is what I tried to convey. The chess set was a Burmese one nearly a hundred years old, loaned by Shri Bal Mundkur of Bombay, a collector of antique chess sets. In the Kathak scene both the details and the colour scheme conform to engravings of that period. The scene is a very close replica of the miniatures of that period. Even the cat comes from a drawing by an artist of Wajid’s court.

I.M.: There are one or two other scenes which call for comment. The underplaying of Wajid’s private agony, the emotionally powerful scene of Veena as the queen mother pleading for her son—these call for sympathy for their characters, which on historical record they do not deserve. The movie depicts foibles of the Oudh Nawabs but makes even these lovable. There is a deeper evil about which neither Prem Chand nor
the film says much—the total unawareness of the Oudh Court of the peasantry from whom it exacted the means of its leisurely way of life... S.R.: There are hints of lawlessness and of the misery of the people in the people in the film. If I had dwelt in detail on such matters I would have run the risk of justifying the annexation. The feudal class was bound to go into extinction and deservedly so. I saw no point in flogging a dead horse. Easy targets don’t interest me very much. The condemnation is there, ultimately, but the process of arriving at it is different. I was portraying two negative forces, feudalism and colonialism. You had to condemn both Wajid and Dalhousie. This was the challenge. I wanted to make this condemnation interesting by bringing plus points of both the sides. You have to read this film between the lines.

(Courtesy: Debonair magazine)

Filmography


PARAS PATHAR (The Touch Stone), 1957:— Screenplay & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Subrata Mitra; Music: Ravi Shankar; Players: Tulsi Chakravarty, B & W. For Trade Enquiries: L.B. Films International, 123, S.P. Mukherjee Road, Calcutta 700026. Phone: 467514

JALSAGHAR (The Music Room), 1958:— Screenplay & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Subrata Mitra; Music: Ustad Vilayat Khan; Players: Chabi Biswas, B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Satyajit Ray Productions, 1/1 Bishop Lefroy Road, Calcutta 700020. Phone: 448747


CHARULATA, 1964:— Music, Screenplay & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Subrata Mitra;


SEEMABADDHA (Company Limited) 1971:— Music, Screenplay & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Soumen Roy; Players: Sharmila Tagore, Barun Chanda.

B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Piyaly Pictures, 32 Ganesh Chandra Avenue, Calcutta 700013.


JANA ARANYA (The Middle Man), 1975:— Screenplay, Music & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Soumen Roy; Players: Utpal Dutt, Pradip Mukherjee, Robi Ghosh, Arati Bhattacharya, Dipankar Dey, Lily Chakravarty. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Indus, 11/1 Sooterkin Street, Calcutta 700013.


THAMPU
(The Circus Tent)

Malayalam/
black-and-white
130 mins/1978
Direction/Script: Aravinda.
Producer: Ravi.
Camera: Shaji.
Music: M.G. Radhakrishnan.
Lyrics: Kavalam. Editing: Ramesh.
Lead Players: Gopi, Venu,
Shreeraman, Jalaja and the
artistes of the Great Chitra
Circus.
Production Company: General
Pictures, Quilon, Kerala.
Besides a long glittering river some men raise a pole. A tent balloons up. Where there was wide sand and the sound of water lapping, there is now a truck, chairs, hoops, stools, ropes, goats, a lioness, a pair of fat girls, some bicycles and an old man with a philosopher’s dignity, putting on white paste.

Aravindan’s *Thampu* is a deeply observant film. Aravindan has learned to see without exertion, his camera notices the edges of gestures. The man applying white paste presses his fingers firmly across his face; with tenderness a girl touches kajal to her eyes.

Across a dirt road, the circus truck comes to a village. The tent goes up. Schoolboys run to the tent (we don’t notice how appropriately the camera blurs their movement). Village women come and watch an acrobat roll a hoop across a tightrope. A lion leaps from the edge of one stool—across darkness—on to another stool. A gap-toothed old woman gazes at a goat on a tightrope; her eyes are wide with curiosity. The camera simply rests on her face.

For three days the circus makes small ripples in the life of this village. Municipal permits are required. At a toddy shop, a soldier befriends the circus strongman; a pump attendant sits on a rock each day watching a village girl bathe and dry her hair.

The dwarf brings back to the circus a watermelon larger than his head.

In the film’s three days, we, the viewers, learn the geography of the village: the banyan tree with leaves like transparent film, the shining water, the light on the sand at sunset. When the circus leaves the village, it leaves us. Something very gentle runs through Aravindan’s film. The narrative says: The circus comes and leaves; life goes on. But the tranquil camera and the unobtrusive editing say that the life which goes on is individual and very precious.

—Satti Khanna

G. Aravindan

*Born at Kottayam, Son of Mr. Govindan Nair, a famous humourist in Malayalam literature. Graduated in Science from University College, Trivandrum. Was employed as an Inspector at the Rubber Board, Kerala and today is its Regional Officer.*
G. Aravindan is a man of many talents. He is a painter and cartoonist. He was the regular cartoonist for the reputed Malayalam weekly Mathrubhumi for thirteen years. He has held several exhibitions of his paintings. He is also trained in Indian classical music. He has helped the film society movement for the past ten years.

Aravindan produces plays for THIRUVARANG, a coterie producing plays with emphasis in the folk and classical tradition. Its production of the Malayalam play Avanavankadamba was staged at the National School of Drama festival in New Delhi.

Filmography

Uttarayanam (Throne of Capricorn)/ black-and-white/ 1974

Direction: G. Aravindan.
Players: Dr. Mohandas, Adoor Bhasi, Premji, Balan Nair, Mallika.

Kanchana Sita (Golden Sita)/ colour/1977

New Short Films
A Selected List.

Award-winning documentary

"Chitrakathi", a Films Division documentary which won the second major award at the Sydney film festival, is about a kind of shadow play whose beginnings could be traced to Bhavbhuti's Uttar Ram Charitra. But the film deals with Chitrakathi as practised by a unique Thakur community in Pinguli, an old village on the Konkan coast, 30-odd kilometres north of Goa.

Sixty families have preserved for hundreds of years three different folk forms—Chitrakathi, marionettes and leather puppets.

It is a story of a dying art. With the opening of Vengurla port in 1920 commercial navigation was opened to Bombay and many impoverished artistes migrated and became dock labourers. How will this shadow play art be preserved, and what steps can be taken to do that?

Mani Kaul captures the mood of the sleepy village convincingly. The faded paintings and figures tell their own tale. Only the shots tend to go on indefinitely. These shows have begun to tire audiences but this, like so many other problems, is one of civilisation and development. And the
younger generation does not want feudal patronage which was chiefly responsible for keeping the art alive under undemocratic conditions.

Not for the young, the experience of their fathers—travelling, begging, drinking, fishing and endless waiting.

The sound of the musical instruments provide an appropriate backdrop and mood for the introduction of the subject and then the camera pans on the lush greenery. The lethargic life of these villagers, how they catch fish with their bare hands. Their rusticity, their simplicity is graphically caputed by Mani Kaul. But just as one gets involved in the subject the ending is rather abrupt and in a way not unexpected of Mani Kaul.

Camerawork by M.S. Pendurkar and K.N.N. Iyengar is superb and M.J. Baburao's handling of sound is adept and gives the film a boost.

(Courtesy: Sunday Standard)

Prisoners Of Conscience

Director/Camera Production: Anand Patwardhan
This 16mm, black and white film is on the condition of political prisoners in India, before, during and after the Emergency and attempts to link the existence of such prisoners with continuing poverty and prevailing injustice in the social system. His earlier film Waves of Revolution on the 1974-75 Bihar Movement was shown underground both within and outside India during the Emergency. 30 mins.
Maha Kumbh
Producer/Director/Camera: S. Sukhdev
A film about three rivers and the point where they converge. Hundreds of pilgrims bathe in its holy waters to cleanse themselves of their sins.

An Encounter With Faces
Director: Vinod Chopra
Camera: S.N. Mishra
Producer: Films Division
The film has been shot in homes for destitute children and talks to the children about their background.

Sudama
Director: Manjul Sinha
Camera: Raju Mishra
Producer: Film and TV Institute of India (FTII)
Sudama is a young canteen worker whose ambitions are to become rich, famous and own a restaurant so he can turn the tables on his canteen boss.

Rhythms of The Land and Its People
Director: Prakash Jha
Camera: Suresh Patel
Producer: Government of Goa
The film looks at Goa (‘Have you heard of a dreamland that exists’), its history and saints, churches and temples, festivals, carnivals, beaches, bazaars...

Lilies of March
Director: Isaac Thomas
Camera: Bharat Nerkar
Producer: FTII
A young priest faces conflict when he meets his one-time girlfriend at Sunday mass.

Coolie Se Mazdoor
Director: Jotirmoy Roy
Camera: Satya Roy
Producer: Government of West Bengal
The deplorable lot of tea plantation workers is dramatically improved by organised trade union and Government support.
Vidhwams (Total destruction)
Director: Surendar Chowdhary
Camera: Anwar Hossain
Producer: FTII
A study of fear psychosis in a village community on the verge of extermination

Around Us
Director: Anand Mahendroo
Camera: Raju Mishra
Producer: FTII
A candid study of the underprivileged and undernourished in a metropolitan city.

On To Bhutan
Director: Girish Vaidya
Camera: B. Khosla
Producer: Films Division
India has been associated with Bhutan's progress in many ways. The film takes an overall view of the land, its people and culture.

Known Yet Unknown
Producer Director: Basu Bhattacharya
Known, yet unknown, are the people who are the source of the handicrafts of India

Patachitra
Director: Purnendu Pattrea
Camera: Pantoo Nag
Producer: Shankar Ghosh Productions
Patachitra are the fascinating stories told by way of scroll paintings in Orissa.

Mukti Chai
Director: Utpalendu Chakraborty
Camera: Sanjay Brahma, Shekhar Tarafdar
The film, in black and white, shows how the Rowlatt Act with all its repressive force persisted in India from the transfer of power to the proclamation of Emergency under different names — T.D.R., D.I.R., MISA and how democratic forces have fought back.
Hungry Autumn
Director & Camera: Goutam Ghose
Producer: Cine '74
The film, taking off from actual famine conditions in West Bengal, Autumn '74, goes on to analyse the basic Indian agronomic situation, widespread destitution and its reaction in rural and urban societies. Won an award at Oberhausen.

Transformations
Director: Zafar Hai
Camera: R.M. Rao & Govind Nihalani
Producer: Films Division
The film was commissioned by SCOPE, the Standing Committee of Public Sector enterprises, to show in foreign countries to audiences of planners, government officials and industrial managers.
'There exists an impression in the minds of many people abroad that India is just not capable of delivering the goods in an industrial sense. My film attempted to change this impression, to show off the infra-structure we have developed and display our advanced industries,' says the director.
Films Division to Cater to Rural Audience in Big Way

The Films Division will make 16 mm films with regional themes for the rural masses whom it has ignored all these years.

Its new scheme, the "rural biased film production programme", envisages shooting of films in regional languages in rural settings. At present, the Films Division takes 35 mm films in any language and dubs them into 14 other languages. A few are 'reduced' from 35 to 16 mm.

The 16 mm films, to be shot both in colour and in black-and-white, would be shown only in rural areas through mobile units. This forms a departure from the past in that the target audiences of the 35 mm films consisted mainly of urban and educated people.

There will be regional variations in thematic selection and each region would have an occasion to see familiar themes.

Freedom for Directors

In the first year, eight films in eight languages and in the second year, ten films in ten languages are expected to be made. The five-year target is fixed at 180.

The 16 mm film centres will be located mainly in the eastern and the southern regions. As there will be no restriction on the length of the films, directors and producers will have complete freedom.

Besides importing equipment for 16 mm films, the Films Division may set up its own processing laboratory.

At present the Films Division produces 150 films and 60 newsreels annually. Each film is dubbed in 15 languages and 193 prints made of each film.

The 35 mm films cater to a population of about 60 million through 9,000 theatres.

Courtesy: Times of India
Acknowledgements
Newspapers and journals:
Economic Times
Kaumadi Film Magazine
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