

# THE PEACOCK

FRIDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2021



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# Young Blood Aims High

I was in Chennai last month for my eye check-up at the Sankara Nethralaya, when I was invited by the creative producer and partner at AVM Productions for a chat. Ms. Aruna Guhan had read some of my fiction and was keen on discussing a film project for an OTT platform. A mutual friend, filmmaker Indranil Chakravarty, who teaches at Chennai's L. V. Prasad Film and Television Academy insisted that I take up the offer. I wasn't so sure about the project, but I was very curious to visit AVM, the oldest operating film production house of India.

I remember watching the Hindi film *Bhabhi* (1957) as a teenager. It was a moving family drama with Balraj Sahani, Pandari Bai, Nanda, Durga Khote, a very young Jagdeep, and the child artist Daisy Irani. Directed by R Krishnan and S Panju for AVM Productions, it turned out to be a tremendous box office success. The film had a profound impact on me, and since then I have always had great admiration for this production house.

Since its founding in 1945, AVM Studios has produced over 300 films in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi. This historic production house has introduced many actors who eventually attained super stardom, including Sivaji Ganesan, Rajkumar, Vyjayanthimala, Rajanikant and Kamal Haasan.

We strolled along a road named after A V Meiyappan. "That's the name of the founder of AVM, he is a household name in Tamil Nadu," Indranil told me, as we entered the studio at Vadapalani in Chennai.

Aruna and her twin sister Aparna are AVM's fourth generation owners, both

astute and enterprising businesswomen. Aruna was congenial and welcoming. She had clear ideas of what she wanted. She was looking for good scripts that would run into a minimum of two seasons. Most of the OTT operators in South India were closely linked

with AVM. She wanted me to adapt my novel for this purpose. She even ran a detailed Power Point presentation on the envisaged

project. Our meeting extended to almost two hours.

I was then taken around the campus. The studio provides facilities for production and post-production, with several spaces for recording and dubbing. They have more than four shooting floors besides a preview theatre. Aruna took us around explaining the studio facilities in details. She spoke fondly of her visionary great-grandfather AV Meiyappan and of how she copes with modern day challenges. Though AVM Productions continues to make films, both Aruna and Aparna want to break away from traditional movies. "The OTT space is the call of the day, which AVM will take up earnestly," declared Aruna. Sure enough, they already have two web series up their sleeves, and a crime thriller, *Tamil Stalkers*, is due for release in the coming year.

As we took the tour, we found huge spaces undergoing transformation. "We intend to set up a film museum here," Aruna explained. A little further I saw dozens of vintage cars parked in a covered area. I was surprised by the presence of a 1938 model Vauxhall among them. "Meiyappan owned that Vauxhall. He was very fond of vintage cars. We are also planning to create a car museum soon, and the work is under progress."

This confident and erudite young lady is clearly in solid control of this historic studio. Her sister Aparna is equally dynamic, I was told.

"Is it possible for women to work freely in the male dominated society of Tamil Nadu?"

She simply laughed and said, "We will make it possible."



Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro

## SHORT TAKES



As a visual communication student, *At Eternity's Gate* was particularly impactful. I wanted to see how they reflect the theme in the way they shoot and the colours they use.

Shreya Ayyar  
Student, Dubai



Goa is so comfortable; it's like one big resort. Our film *The Wheel of fortune and Fantasy* is screening here. It's about the sensitivity of people, it also allows you to relax and laugh.

Satoshi Takata  
Producer, Japan



*The First Fallen* was a good film about the HIV epidemic in Brazil and the LGBTQIA+ community. There seem to be more Eastern than Western films here.

Erica Fernandes  
Student, Goa



Goa is amazing. The people have preserved their culture and not let modernization interfere with their food, festivals, music, or art.

Surrbhee Sharma  
Model, Mumbai



## Guns N' Cams

BY SACHIN CHATTE

It was exactly ten years ago that *Golchehreh* (2011), an Iranian film, was screened at IFFI 2011, as the mid-fest film. The story of the film is relevant once again, a decade later.

*Golchehreh* was about the Taliban in their earlier avatar (1996 to 2001) when they held power over most of Afghanistan and destroyed precious art and heritage in the country, following a strict interpretation of their fundamentalist beliefs. Now we are back to square one again, as Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr said, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Just a few days back the militants banned women from performing in television dramas. Whether they will permit men to play women's roles, like in Dadasaheb Phalke's movies, remains to be seen. They have also said that foreign films promoting "foreign cultural values" should not be broadcast, which means there won't be an International Film Festival of Afghanistan anytime soon.

Even in the absence of the Taliban, the film industry wasn't exactly thriving there, but I am sure the Afghan people's love for cinema certainly was. At IFFI this year, *When Pomegranates Howl* (2021), an Afghan-Australian production was screened, which is Australia's entry at the forthcoming Oscars. Set on the streets on Kabul, it is about an 8-year-old kid who aspires to be, what else, but an actor.

The Taliban took over Afghanistan in 1995, and then the Americans took over in 2001 - *Golchehreh* was made in 2011.

It was a low budget film with a heart, a very big heart. Usually, during the course of a film festival one watches a lot of films, and while you enjoy and admire many of them momentarily, most fade from memory over time. But this was one film that has stayed with me, and it often comes up in

conversations with friends. A film about a film or cinema in general always finds a special place – like *Cinema Paradiso* (1988) for example. *Golchehreh* is a bit like Afghanistan's *Cinema Paradiso*, figuratively speaking, that is.

Set during the early days of Taliban rule when they were on a burning, breaking, and banning spree – just as they are today, *plus ça change...* – a theatre owner and a film archivist try their best to save the legacy of their cinema. In a memorable scene, they have little time to hide over 2500 odd film prints from the Taliban, including classics like Jean Renoir's *The Rules of the Game* (1939), François Truffaut's *400 Blows* (1959), and more. They come up with an ingenious plan to save them – they will hand over duplicate prints (there are multiple copies of Raj Kapoor's *Shree 420*) to the Taliban, build a fake wall overnight and hide the invaluable genuine prints behind it.

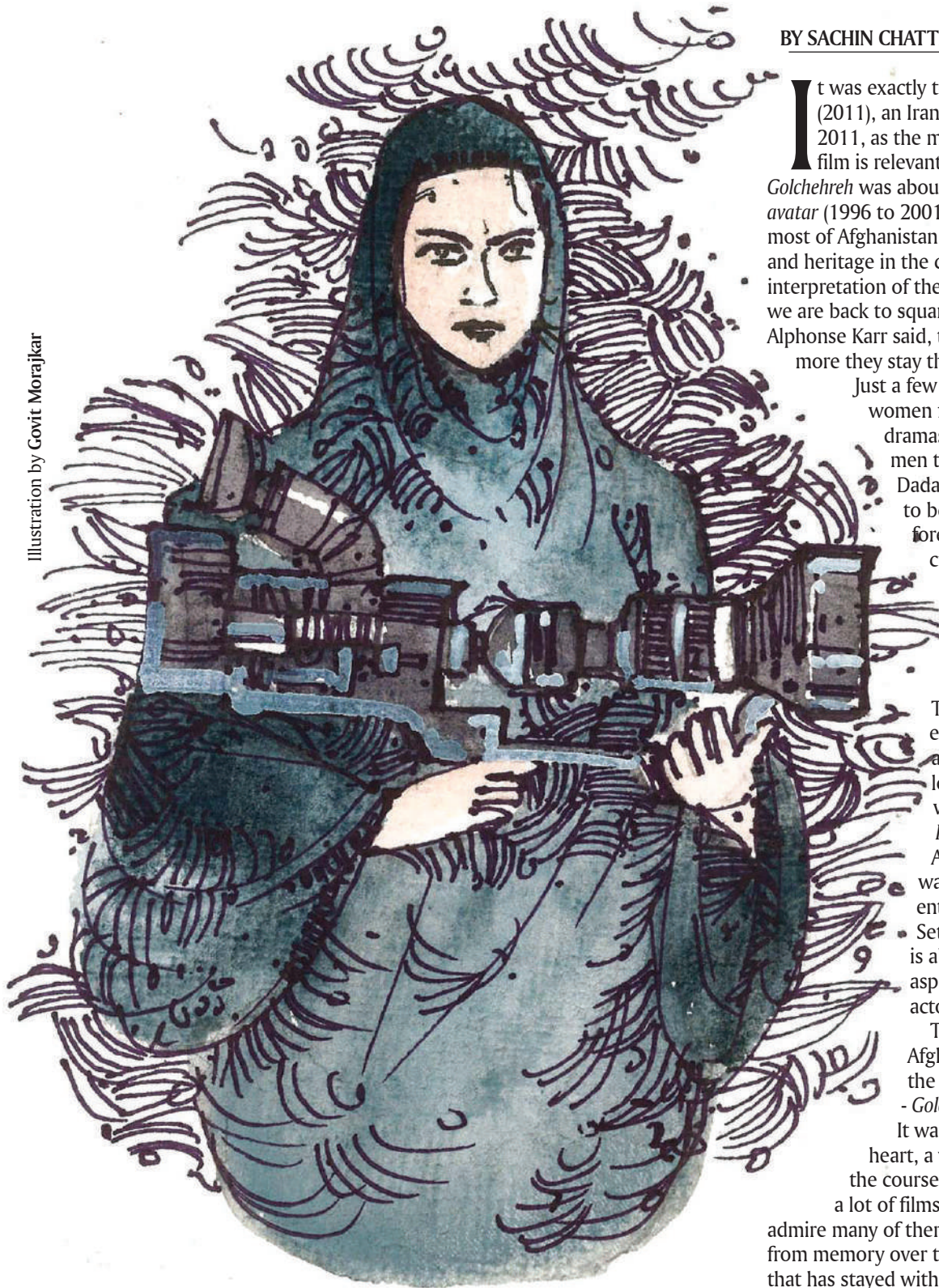
The archivist says at one point, "Don't give the Taliban this film, it is one of his favourites," referring to the theatre owner. It turns out to be Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khiladi*, a film about a violent regime change that destroys an old and courtly way of life. When a Taliban zealot (presumably from the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice) comes there to inspect the place, he removes a poster of Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) and slams it to the ground. A television set is buried in a hole in the ground, prompting references to Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) which was based on Ray Bradbury's novel in which reading and possessing books is banned by the authorities.

I remember my eyes welled up during the climax of *Golchehreh*, and again when I revisited it last night (thank you, YouTube). The Americans arrive and the Taliban is vanquished. The archivist breaks open the wall behind which the film prints had been hidden for years. There is a shot from the inside, where we see cans of film covered with cobwebs and dust. When the camera pans to the canisters, the ambient sound fades away, and we hear dialogues from those films – the reels come to life. They were never dead, they had only lain dormant.

In the last scene before the credits roll, we see the chess players – Sanjeev Kumar and Saeed Jaffery – as Ray's only Hindi film plays in the theatre.

Radicalism and religious fanaticism always targets art first – after all, what bigots fear the most are people who can think for themselves.

Illustration by Govit Morajkar



## SHORT TAKES



I enjoyed the realistic elements and the cinematography in the short film *Sunpat*. It reminded me of a few Iranian movies I've watched.

Vidya S.  
Professor, Kerala



This is my second time in India. My film *Ring Wandering* is being screened at IFFI. It has a traditional theme and explores the impact of World War II on the people of Japan.

Masakazu Kaneko  
Director, Japan



Goa is beautiful. I'm here to enjoy the ambience and watch the film *Bharat, Prakriti Ka Balak*. It's about reviving the culture and history of India.

Apoorva Chaturvedi  
Fashion Designer, Pune



My first time at IFFI was in 2000, in Mumbai. I love that it's in Goa now. The first time I came here was just after my wedding and I have a lot of memories here.

Amrita Chaturvedi  
Teacher, Jhansi



# The End of the World as We Know It

BY URVASHI BAHUGUNA

There are few places on the globe where the effects of the climate crisis are more obviously and devastatingly seen than in Bangladesh. The low-lying delta nation is regularly ravaged by floods and cyclones, the frequency and intensity of which continue to rise.

One of 15 films in the running for the Golden Peacock, Mohammad Rabby Mridha's *No Ground Beneath the Feet* (2021) chronicles a driver's harrowing journey from Dhaka back to his flood-affected village where the rioting river threatens to swallow the land whole.

Mridha's debut feature is a timely reminder that climate change most ferociously hits the most vulnerable sections of society who already carry the burdens of scarcity and marginalisation. In Goa, fisher communities are disproportionately affected by a turbulent climate that plays havoc with catch, with studies showing approximately 30% of fish species affected along the country's west coast.

Included in IFFI as part of the BRICs category, Nila Madhab Panda's *Kalira Atita* (2021) holds many parallels to *No Ground Beneath the Feet* with the two set in the same corner of the world though on different sides of an international border. The Odia title translating to "yesterday's past" refers to Satabhaya, a cluster of seven lost villages in Odisha.

In a true story that calls to mind the myth of Atlantis, these villages on the coast of Kendrapada district were consumed by the rising tide. The 2019 National Award winner for Best Odia Film, *Kalira Atita* follows a man who seeks a home that no longer exists because of the sinking impact of repeat cyclones.

Touching upon poverty and the precariousness of life on the edge of the natural and socio-economic world, this film is Panda's latest contribution to pressing issues of the day. Though the film deals with a specific place, it is also a comment on the larger state of affairs in Odisha which is periodically shattered by cyclones.

Panda's previous efforts include Hindi films

*Kadvi Hawa* (2017) that dealt with drought, climate change-driven crop failures and farmer suicides, and *Halkaa* (2018) which explored the widespread problem of open defecation in India that contributes to water and soil pollution as well as harm to human life.

On a related note, Olivier Peyon's French film *Tokyo Shaking* (2021) captures the harrowing effects of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and subsequent tsunami. The most powerful earthquake recorded in Japan and the fourth-worst in recorded memory worldwide, it led to a nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant and became the costliest natural disaster the world had seen.

The movie revolves around the moral dilemma that a natural disaster generates

by forcing people to choose between self-preservation and staying back to support their community ride out a potentially fatal crisis. It's a particularly timely subject with an increase in wildfires, cyclonic storms and floods everywhere.

There is a case to be made for cinema being the most powerful tool we have in our storytelling arsenal when it comes to the battle against climate change. There is no escaping what a film reveals to you. Details and depth of impact are not left up to the individual imagination.

There's power in the fiction that dares to rearrange the truth so we are able to better imbibe it and there's further power in the

visuals that sear that story into our minds.

End-of-the-world tropes and post-apocalyptic films have long been popular for their now-or-never stakes and nothing-to-lose vibe. As we stare down the barrel of a very real gun, we must ask ourselves what we are going to with stories that look less like thrillers and more like prophecies every day.

As REM sang in their iconic song, "It's the end of the world as we know it." Question is, do we still feel fine?

*No Ground Beneath The Feet* is playing at 12:45 PM today at INOX Screen 1 in Panjim, *Kalira Atita* is playing at 14:45 PM at INOX Screen 4 in Porvorim, and *Tokyo Shaking* is showing at 10:15 AM at INOX Screen 4 in Panjim.

Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro



## SHORT TAKES



I've been playing at the festival for around 12 years. I get to meet a lot of actors, musicians and directors. Sometimes the international stars start dancing to the music.

**Mario Ronaldo Pereira**  
Musician, Goa



*The Girl and The Spider* was a funny, absurd film. However, the toilets at IFFI are not clean, there aren't enough food stalls, and it's ridiculous that they don't allow water bottles inside the auditoriums.

**Manjula Desai**  
Photographer, Bangalore



One good thing about the festival is that the movies are starting on time. Booking tickets is a bit difficult as it opens at such an inconvenient time.

**Vivekananda K.**  
IT Professional, Bangalore



Having our film *Kalkokkho* as a part of the Indian Panorama feels very encouraging and prestigious. Things are a little different because of the pandemic but this is a fantastic festival.

**Sarmistha Maiti**  
Filmmaker, Kolkata



# Ripples Of A Pebble

BY PATRICIA ANN ALVARES

**K**oozhangal (Pebbles) India's official entry at the 94<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards, has already won accolades at several film festivals. In conversation with *The Peacock*, debutant Tamil director P.S. Vinothraj explains the genesis and journey of his award-winning film which made its Indian debut at the IFFI 2021.

Life's compelling and heart-breaking stories have often been the fodder for movies, theatres, and books. Told from the heart they rarely go unnoticed and have made for the most powerful stories told yet.

The 32-year old writer-director's first film belongs to this genre of powerful tales. As India's entry at the Oscars, this compelling story made it over 14 other films to make the cut. "I hardly expected it. I wanted to tell a simple honest story and did not expect any awards. Initially we had planned to show this in neighbouring villages and I would have been happy if my own people saw it," expresses Vinothraj who is amazed with its success.

Shaped by his own life's tragedies, when he was forced to fend for his family after his father's death and in particular by the ill-treatment meted out to his sister by her husband (she returned to her maiden home walking 13 kms with her newborn son in her arms), this young director took to films to channelize his anguish. "I was so traumatized by this incident that I could not even confront my brother-in-law. I used cinema as a tool to express my pain."

Told with a starkness and intense depth, through the power of visuals and silence, the magic of *Koozhangal* lies in the way it has been made. "I wanted to apply the rawness of theatre to portray this film," explains the director whose theatre background with the *Manal Magudi* group helped foster this method.

Although the story borrows from his sister's sufferings, Vinothraj has tweaked it to tell it from a child's point of view.

"The story is about three generations: of grandfather, father, and son. Elders often feel that children do not know or understand anything. But the contrary is true. In their innocence and despite their poverty, children are drawn to happiness and beauty," he explains of the story which is about the journey of an alcoholic abusive husband who sets out with his young son to find his long suffering wife and bring her back.

His apprehensions about the film being self-centered were allayed when he found that many women encounter the same issue. As the film moved on the global circuit, he discovered that it resonated universally with women who endured physical abuse and ill-treatment. "As I travelled around the world, especially in Rotterdam, I understood that women all over face similar problems and this changed my perspective."

The movie came into prominence with his win of the prestigious Tiger Award at the International Film festival Rotterdam in Netherlands in February this year. From there on just about every festival has been keen to showcase his film.

Though it has just two debutant actors, Vinothraj points out that the arid, sweltering landscape at Arittapatti, near Melur, Madurai, formed the third character. "The landscape and climate are imperative to the story and it was important that the audience felt it too. Hence the film was shot over 25 days in the most intense heat. The film and the landscape chose me, I was just the medium." Interestingly, he mentions that his brother-in-law travelled with him for the shoots, and a sense of repentance and change have come about.

Why 'Pebbles'? In his childhood memory, the mountain looked like a large pebble to him. In his village, travellers often keep a tiny pebble in their mouths when they embark on a long journey, to help secrete saliva and keep their mouths moist. In the film, pebbles added to a heap signify that events recur and life comes full circle.

Photo by Michael Praveen

## SHORT TAKES



I was skeptical about the film selection; I thought it would be largely Bollywood films. Thankfully it wasn't like that at all. I liked *Feathers* and *Rafaela*, they were gritty films.

**Hriday Ranjan**  
Film Analyst,  
Hyderabad



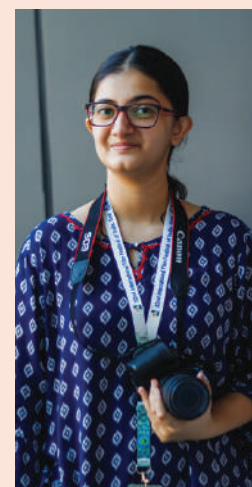
It's overwhelming to watch films that are so good. It's hard to choose movies; I just want to watch them all.

**Chaithra Achar**  
Actress, Bengaluru



This is my third time at IFFI; it's a refreshing change from my daily routine as a headmaster. I think the Goan government is very supportive of the arts.

**Sanjay Jagta**  
Headmaster,  
Kolhapur



I'm here as a photographer and the festival has been an amazing learning experience. *Bittersweet* was a great film. It was very hard-hitting and carried such a good message.

**Taarini Parashar**  
Student, Goa



# "I don't think films should be made to convey a message"



Photos by Michael Praveen

BY IMPANA KULKARNI

All the glamour and glory of a film is preceded by a desperate hunt for funds and sponsors, followed by budget cuts, cast and crew troubles, story changes, and difficulties in release. The NFDC Film Bazaar organized during IFFI grants filmmakers an opportunity to find producers and distributors, to smoothen the journey of making films. Films in the process of being made as well as completed ones are selected by the jury to be viewed by the Bazaar participants. Interactions then lead to evolution of projects and plans. This year the Film Bazaar is completely online, and *The Peacock* found a Goan film amongst one of its entries.

*Vaat* (meaning 'path' in Marathi), directed by Miransha Naik, is in the last stage of its production, and entered the Film Bazaar this year looking for distributors. It started its journey right here, three years ago at the co-production market. Shot entirely in Barcem village in South Goa over 24 days in February this year, it is Miransha's third project as a director, the first two being *Ram* (2014) and *Juze* (2017). His Konkani feature film *Juze*, also co-produced through participation



at the Film Bazaar, won three awards and was shown at over 20 film festivals. This time however, he chose to make his film in Marathi instead of Konkani. "We get subsidies for films made in Marathi as well as Konkani. But Marathi has a bigger market. Due to the smaller commercial market for Konkani films, we are completely dependent on the subsidy, which usually gets delayed by several years, and that does not help the filmmakers at all," says Miransha. "Our main aim with *Vaat* is to send it for film festivals."

This film is based on a young farmer in rural Goa. The executive producer Arvin Vaz explains, "The Panchayat and the temple committee enforce different sets of rules. The protagonist in this film, an arrogant farmer, hurts someone and is expelled from the temple committee. The movie shows the disastrous repercussions on him and his family and how he tries to set things right."

Miransha adds, "I have heard my workers at the beach shack discuss this often. These stories are very real and prevalent all across Goa. I found it interesting, and started putting a story together." Prashanti Talpalkar, who stars in the film, says, "Throughout India we have Panchayati Raj, but there is a parallel value system

of the temples. Even if your actions are constitutionally correct, this parallel panchayat decides whether falling in love or marrying somebody from another caste is right or wrong and casts you out. The film shows how people get exploited by this system. Most often, the victims are women."

Miransha believes in putting more focus on the story than the dialogues. "I don't think films should be made to convey a message. If that was the case, *Lolita* (1962) would never have been made." Miransha counts *The Prestige* (2006) and the Oscar winners, *La Strada* (1954) and *The Lives of Others* (2006) as the top three on his list of favourites.

There's a good camaraderie between the cast and crew. The actors fight and tease the director, and lovingly scowl at him for being very particular about the scenes and character portrayals. The editor Siddhesh Naik, and Arvin confided that it is hard to get him to smile in front of the camera. There is a general air of respect for one another's work and the joint hard work put into the film. They narrated incidents of the locals inviting the cast for family functions, and of children bribing Siddhesh for a role in the film by offering raw mangoes!







# The Roads to Hell

Poorly planned road projects are wrecking grave environmental damage upon communities all across the country. In Karnataka too, their destructive purview ranges from the urban neighbourhoods of Bengaluru to the remote tribal hamlets living at the forests' edge. *Taledanda* (2021) is a sensitively told story of environmental resistance offered by a special needs boy Kunna against a powerful road building industry that operates like a mafia.

*Taledanda* is refreshing in its compassionate treatment of its characters. In the absence of a father figure, Kunna is brought up lovingly by his mother Kethamma in a supportive tribal community. By the standards of mainstream cinema this is already an unusual stance taken by the director Praveen Krupakar. His compassionate treatment is evident right through the film and is mainly focussed on its female characters. It also embraces a wide section of civil society from tribal children, doctors, principals, teachers, professors, and human rights activists. What makes it beautiful is the way it depicts the real friendship and deep feelings special needs kids can develop with other kids and the complex social and environmental issues they grasp.

Telling stories about tribal societies does come with its fair share of problems. No matter how well researched the script is, *Taledanda* is also a story about a tribal way of life made for urban consumption. The film spends far too much time dazzling the audience with exotic tribal rituals, explaining tribal culture to the mainstream characters, and they in return explaining modern ways of life. There is also the appearance of a well-meaning professor who appears at crucial times in the movie, appropriates Kunna's message of environmental stewardship and interprets it to the world.

In the US, African-American commentators constantly critique this colonial way of operating. Hollywood all too frequently uses white voices to interpret its African-American characters. These benevolent voices only increase the distance between marginalized communities and mainstream society that movies like *Taledanda* seek to close.

The movie plays itself out best in the



Illustration by Govit Morajkar

urban environment. Kunna attacks a group of policemen who have come to aid a road construction crew in his village which results in him being placed in a special needs school. The movie's gaze on special needs children is not only compassionate, but rigorous too. Under the professional care of educators Kunna performs well in a diverse modern environment. The social gap between him and the others is convincingly bridged.

The seemingly free rein given to road contractors across the country is fostered by a developmental discourse dominated by TV news studios and hateful online commentators. At times it feels like Kunna — a special needs tribal boy, who loves trees, operates with fewer filters in a rural environment — is the right choice

of messenger to speak truth to power. He plays the good environmental defender consistently and his message is on point. There is even a moment in the movie where the scheming politician seems momentarily swayed by him.

The lack of social democracy, unfair land acquisition, environmental destruction, and the powerful political structures manipulating weaker sections of society to aid the road construction industry are well portrayed in the movie. However there is a tedious appeal to higher powers throughout the film which distracts from fully immersing itself in its theme of environmental resistance. There are times when deities are invoked to work upon Kunna's delinquent

behaviour and at other times Kunna himself writes to a modern-day deity, the Chief Minister. Kunna meets with a tragic end, but his letter compels a change of heart in the Chief Minister who stops the project.

Social rights and environmental progress are secured when brave figures like Kunna inspire others to rise and resist the power structures of the day. There are victories being won across the country and more such movies like *Taledanda* need to be made. Bengaluru was once 'a garden city'. Today it is a city in which trees make way for road works and its lakes catch fire. There are also voices fighting back, and such films that focus on environmental havoc go a long way in aiding their cause.

## SHORT TAKES



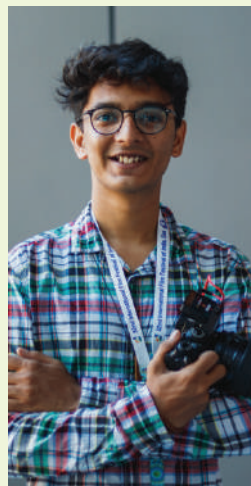
It's amazing to be in India. It's the warmest place I've been to and I'm not talking about the climate, I'm talking about the people here. I want to watch the independent Indian films.

**Riccardo Bombagi**  
Actor, Italy



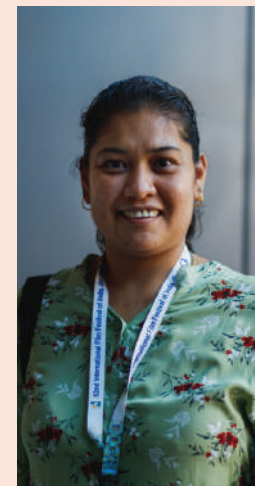
I feel proud that such a big film festival is held in my hometown. I hope the Goan government and IFFI will provide more funds, publicity, and support to Konkani filmmakers in the future.

**Kajal Chodankar**  
Theatre Artist, Goa



IFFI has been a great opportunity for me to meet the actors and directors. It gives me the chance to discuss their films with them, and ask them questions about their creative process.

**Devraj Patel**  
Cinematographer, Goa



I'm really excited to be here as a translator. The people from the press and the IFFI crew have been so wonderful. I loved *The Preacher* and am hoping to watch more films like this.

**Jacqueline Escudero**  
Housewife, Mexico



## Twisted Time

The lived-experience of the pandemic, with the attendant disorientation and anxiety, are now embedded in the human psyche at a universal level. The arts have always mirrored society, and have recorded this intense phenomenon in different ways; for some it has been a cathartic process of expression, for others – simply a means to bring meaning into an overpowering and inexplicable time. It seems to have inspired a new genre of storytelling, almost like the World Wars did in their time. While strange infections and apocalyptic events have featured prominently in several past films, the immediacy of the current situation, and a palpable, recognisable shift in continued human existence have spurred a number of direct responses.

The directors of *Kalkokkho* (2021), showing as part of the Indian Panorama section, talk about the stirring of the idea behind the film, and how it grew out of the personal and collective reactions engendered by sudden isolation after March 2020.

Sarmistha Maiti and Rajdeep Paul explain – “It seemed like time had stopped, we were living the same day repeatedly, doing the same chores, having the same food almost at exactly the same time, the only distinction being the news of exponentially growing infections on TV, and the changing images of the migrant workers braving every danger to return to their loved ones. Our own mortality was never clearer to us, nor was our longing for belonging. At one time it seemed the only way to survive this disease was if we could kidnap a doctor and keep him imprisoned in the house to look after us. This was the point from which the concept



of *Kalkokkho* generated. On a conference call we – the directors, the producer Anjan Bose, the DoP Rana Pratap Karforma and EP Prateek Bagi – met. We pitched the idea and Mr Bose quickly approved it. Within a month the story was written, in another month the script was ready, and in December 2020, while the pandemic was still on, with lesser restrictions, we shot the film in 14 days, mostly in a single house.”

Paul is an ardent reader of Indian and world mythology along with its secret



symbolism, while Maiti is an admirer of modern magic realism. As storytellers, they believe in the healing power of stories and their ability to direct the consciousness towards change.

The film uses devices of mythological allegory and spiritual subtext, to explore the texture of time and its subtle alteration during the pandemic. The story follows events surrounding the kidnapping of a doctor by a young woman in her desperate attempt to ensure her family's safety. He

finds himself trapped with three women of different ages, and realises that sinister and paranormal forces are at play. The story plays out with aspects of magic realism and existential horror to express the sense of dread and temporal stasis generated globally by the spread of Covid-19. The film magnifies dichotomies of reality and illusion, instinct and morality, feminine and masculine, and the fragmented positioning of individuals as they yearn for love and belonging. For the directors, it was also about seeing beauty and compassion, sharing and community-spirit in the midst of the darkness and death.

Asked about the challenge of making experimental films, Paul and Maiti (both alumni of the Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute) respond, “As independent filmmakers, it is indeed a very tough journey to be able to make films consistently. The dream we pursue and the kind of content we want to create seldom get backing from producers, or funding support from individuals as well as from organizations. Cinema is a medium inherently connected to commerce and thus, thinking out of the box means one of the biggest challenges, in terms of support in production and distribution.” They have however persevered, and received strong support from Aurora Film Corporation, the oldest functioning cinema production and distribution company in India since 1906.

The fact that Paul and Maiti carry a bunch of accolades for their past films, and *Kalkokkho* had its world premiere at the 26<sup>th</sup> Busan International Film Festival 2021, is very inspiring to other young filmmakers.



Illustration by Riza Noronha

### SHORT TAKES



It was great to meet the director of *Humanization* and get a chance to talk to him. I'm really looking forward to watching *Ninjababy* because it seems to be different.

**Komal Mithani**  
Event Manager,  
Mumbai



My experience at the festival has been fantastic. I hope to visit a lot of the beaches. I really like Indian food and I want to watch as many Indian films as I can.

**Fusako Urabe**  
Actor, Japan



If I like a film I tend to fall in love with the characters and I create character designs and make 3D models inspired by them. I liked the cinematography in *The Innocents*.

**Shreya Terli**  
Design Student,  
Hyderabad



I've been coming to IFFI since 1993. Sumitra Bhavne and I have presented around 15 films at the festival over the years. This year IFFI is paying homage to her and I'm here to present our film *Vaastupurush*.

**Sunil Sukthankar**  
Filmmaker, Pune





*Lord of the Sting - The Two Flowers*



# Konkani Kaleidoscope

BY JOSÉ LOURENÇO

What have Konkani films been about over the years? Like any other industry, if we can call it that in Goa, the themes of our films have gone through an evolution. The first Konkani film *Mogacho Anvddo* (1950) produced by Mapusa-native Al Jerry Braganza was based on Dioguinho Melo's novel *Mogacho Vodd*. It was a romance between a landlord's son Abel (Al Jerry Braganza) and Maria (Leena Fernandes), a girl of modest means. The hero's wealthy father disapproves of the match, and the couple has a tumultuous time. Unfortunately no print of this film exists today, barring a micro clip salvaged from a near ruined reel.

The second and third Konkani films *Amchem Noxib* (1963) and *Nirmonn* (1966) were both romance dramas directed by A. Salam and produced by Frank Fernand, who also composed the music for the films. It gave the Goan public songs like *Don Kallzam*, *Molbailo Dou*, *Dhol Mhojea Bai*, *Claudia*, and many more that are still much beloved and sung at family events and picnics even today. *Nirmonn* was based on Lord Tennyson's character, a shipwrecked sailor, from the 1864 poem *Enoch Arden*. *Bhuierantlo Munis* was the first Konkani colour film, a villain-centred film about a crime don (C Alvares) committing murky deeds from his hideout in a cave, for which the legendary Asha Bhosle sang the title song.

After a lull for many years, during which very few interesting films were made, like *O Bai* (1997), a short film about an itinerant bangle seller, full-fledged Konkani feature

films returned to the screen at the turn of the century. Rajendra Talak's *Aleesha* (2004), about the ill-effects of rampant mining, *Antarnad* (2006) of a classical singer's tribulations, and *O Maria* (2010) on the greed for coastal real estate, with music by Goa's pop icon Remo Fernandes, won several awards. *Home Sweet Home* (2014), directed by Swapnil Shetkar probed deeper into the land mafia, and also had a sequel. *Digant* (2016) directed by Dyanesh Moghe, explored the changing lifestyle of the Dhangar community in Goa.

Laxmikant Shetgaonkar emerged as a noteworthy filmmaker with *Paltadacho Munis* (2009), which won an award at the prestigious Toronto film festival. Based on a short story by Mahabaleshwar Sail, the story is about a forest guard's relationship with a mentally troubled woman. Shetgaonkar also won laurels for *Baga Beach* (2013) set on Goa's picturesque and popular beach. *Enemy?* (2015) directed by Dinesh Bhonsle explored the government takeover of 'evacuee' properties, lands owned by citizens who migrated to countries that are considered hostile to India.

The romantic musical returned with a bang with the epic Bardroy Barretto-directed *Nachom-ia Kumpasar* (2014), a love story of Goa's most famous musician-singer duo, Chris Perry and Lorna Cordeiro. Its powerful sound track catapulted it into a runaway box-office success. It reminded us that the power of a love story and beautiful songs still holds sway, as it did with the early Konkani films.

Once in a while a bold and hard-hitting Konkani film comes along, and *Juze* (2017) was just that. Directed by the talented

young Miransha Naik, the film is about the exploitation of migrant labourers by the landlord class. The film also saw a theatrical release in France as *L'Enfant de Goa*. The harsh *bhatkar* of *Mogacho Anvddo* returned in *Juze*, in a more brutal avatar.

Filmmaking has become easier with the advent of less expensive cameras and films are even being shot on cellphones. The annual three-day Yuva Mahotsav youth festival hosted by Konkani Bhasha Mandal-Goa, a highly active Konkani institution,

includes a short film contest among its competitions, drawing scores of talented entries from colleges and youth groups.

A good number of Konkani feature and short films are made every year by enterprising young producers, on themes ranging from crime thrillers to abstract concepts. Screenings of these films are limited, and many of them fade into the horizon too quickly, and most of the time they are not patronized enough. But the new breed of Goan filmmakers is alive and kicking, they can be seen at this festival, at the Film Bazaar, seeking collaboration and expertise, working to sell their ideas and pilots, and with every new IFFI edition they emerge with some surprising cinema.



Illustration by Keziah Pereira

## Poem of the Day by Urvashi Bahuguna Adaptation

Let's say you start with the bones of the story, the meat-and-potatoes characters at the heart of it. But it gets away from you, fast. Soon, there's a poltergeist overturning furniture and rewriting runes, the original house protesting at the heavy-handed renovations, a creaky barge suddenly asked to rush shipments, new shiny parts in the guts of it. Often it falls flat. Fans riot. The original creator comes out publicly against it. Now and again though, someone gets it right, mixing colors till they hit upon the right shade, turning the source material on a wheel of fortune till they strike movie gold.





**Souad**  
INOX Panjim, Audi 3, 10:45 am  
Egypt, Germany, Tunisia  
Dir: Ayten Amin  
96 min



**Spencer**  
INOX Panjim, Audi 1, 6:15 pm  
Germany, UK  
Dir: Pablo Larraín  
111 min



**Titane**  
INOX Panjim, Audi 1, 9:15 pm  
France, Belgium  
Dir: Julia Ducournau  
108 min



**Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn**  
INOX Panjim, Audi 3, 9:30 pm  
Croatia, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Romania  
Dir: Radu Jude  
106 min



52nd INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA GOA 2021  
26th November 2021

INOX Panjim (AUDI 1)	<b>F11</b> <div>10:00</div> <div>Ring Wandering (IC) Dir: Masakazu Kaneko Japan   Japanese   103 min   2021 (IP)</div>	B R E A K  F O R  S A N I T I Z I N G	<b>F12</b> <div>12:45</div> <div>No Ground Beneath The Feet (IC) Dir: Mohammad Robby Mridha Bangladesh   Bengali   90 min   2021 (AP)</div>	B R E A K  F O R  S A N I T I Z I N G	<b>F13</b> <div>15:15</div> <div>Killing The Eunuch Khan (ICFT) Dir: Abed Abest Iran   Arabic, Farsi   110 min   2021 (IP)</div>	<b>F14</b> <div>18:15</div> <div>Spencer (FK) Dir: Pablo Larraín Germany, UK   English   111 min   2021 (IP)</div>	<b>F15</b> <div>21:15</div> <div>Titane (FK) Dir: Julia Ducournau France, Belgium   108 min   2021 (IP)</div>
	<b>F21</b> <div>10:30</div> <div>WITCH (IP- NF) Dir: Jackie R. Bala Santali/27 Mins.  SIJOU (IP-F) Dir: Vishal P.chaliha Bodo, 120 Mins</div>		<b>F22</b> <div>14:00</div> <div>KALKOKKKHO (IP-F) Dir: Rajdeep Paul &amp; Sarmistha Maiti Bengali, 125 Mins.</div>		<b>F23</b> <div>17:00</div> <div>MURMURS OF THE JUNGLE (IP- NF) (IP- NF) Dir: Sohil Vaidya Marathi/20 Mins.  ABHIJAAN (IP-F) Dir: Parambrata Chattopadhyay Bengali, 161 Mins</div>	<b>F24</b> <div>21:00</div> <div>The Story of My Wife (WP) Dir: Ildikó Enyedi Hungary, Germany, Italy, France   English, Dutch, French, German, Italian   169 min   2021 (IP)</div>	
INOX Panjim (AUDI 3)	<b>F31</b> <div>10:45</div> <div>Souad (FK) Dir: Ayten Amin Egypt, Tunisia, Germany   Arabic   96 min   2020 (IP)</div>	B R E A K  F O R  S A N I T I Z I N G	<b>F32</b> <div>13:30</div> <div>Pure White (WP) Dir: Necip ÇaAYhan Ozdemir Turkey   Turkish   97 min   2021 (IP)</div>	B R E A K  F O R  S A N I T I Z I N G	<b>F33</b> <div>16:15</div> <div>Goan Section  Gagan Dir: Birjesh Kakodker India   Konkani   24 min  Kupamcho Daryeo Dir: Himanshu Singh India   Konkani   18 min  Limits Dir: Vardhan Kamat India   Marathi   36 min  Paul 10 Dir: Sunil Revankar India   Konkani   19 min</div>	<b>F34</b> <div>19:00</div> <div>Saloum (WP) Dir: Jean Luc Herbolot Senegal, France   French, Wolof   84 min   2021 (AP)</div>	<b>F35</b> <div>21:30</div> <div>Bad Luck Banging Or Loony Porn (FK) Dir: Radu Jude Romania, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Croatia   Romanian   106 min   2021</div>
	<b>F41</b> <div>10:15</div> <div>Tokyo Shaking (ICFT) Dir: Olivier Peyon France   English, French, Japanese   2021   101 min</div>		<b>F42</b> <div>13:00</div> <div>Trust With Destiny Dir: Prashant Nair India &amp; France   Hindi &amp; English   129 min   2020</div>		<b>F43</b> <div>16:00</div> <div>Aranyak team Panel Discussion Panelists: Raveena Tandon, Monika Shergill, Rohan Sippy, Vinay Waikul Moderator: Puja Talwar   45 min Followed by Screening of Aranyak Series Episode 1   90 min</div>	<b>F44</b> <div>19:15</div> <div>Paradise (RET) Dir: Andrei Konchalovsky Russia   Russian   131 min.   2016</div>	<b>F45</b> <div>22:30</div> <div>In Front Of Your Face (MoC) Dir: Hong Sangsoo South Korea   Korean   85 min   2021 (IP)</div>
MAQUINEZ PALACE 1	<b>F51</b> <div>10:30</div> <div>Guide (India@75) Dir: Vijay Anand Hindi   183 min   1955</div>	B R E A K  F O R  S A N I T I Z I N G	<b>F52</b> <div>14:30</div> <div>I am Kalam (JP) Dir: Nila Madhab Panda India   Hindi   88 min   2010</div>	B R E A K  F O R  S A N I T I Z I N G	<b>F53</b> <div>17:00</div> <div>Ninja Baby (WP) Dir: Yngvild Sve Flíkke Norway   Norwegian   103 min   2021 (IP)</div>	<b>F54</b> <div>19:45</div> <div>Intregalde (IC) Dir: Radu Muntean Romania   Romanian   104 min   2021 (IP)</div>	<b>F55</b> <div>22:30</div> <div>The Blind Man Who Did Not See The Titanic (WP) Dir: Teemu Nikki Finland   Finnish   82 min.   2021 (IP)</div>
	<b>F61</b> <div>11:00</div> <div>Asuran (BRICS) Dir: Vetrimaaran India   Tamil   141 min   2019</div>		<b>F62</b> <div>14:30</div> <div>Lingui, The Sacred Bonds (ICFT) Dir: Mahamat Saleh Haroun Chad, France, Germany   French   2021   87 min</div>		<b>F63</b> <div>17:00</div> <div>A Higher Law (WP) Dir: Octav Chelaru Romania   Romanian   125 min   2021 (IntP)</div>	<b>F64</b> <div>20:15</div> <div>Kedibone (BRICS) Dir: Thomas Gumede South Africa   Sotho, Zulu, English   100 min   2020</div>	
INOX Porvorim (AUDI 3)	<b>F71</b> <div>11:15</div> <div>Antes Que Eu Me Esqueça (Before I forget) (BRICS) Dir: Tiago Arakilian Brazil   Portuguese   95 min   2018</div>	B R E A K  F O R  S A N I T I Z I N G	<b>F72</b> <div>13:45</div> <div>Barakat (BRICS) Dir: Amy Jephtha South Africa   Afrikaans, English   105 min   2020</div>	B R E A K  F O R  S A N I T I Z I N G	<b>F73</b> <div>16:30</div> <div>My People My Homeland (BRICS) Dir: Hao Ning China   Mandarin   153 min   2020</div>		
	<b>F81</b> <div>11:30</div> <div>Anandi Gopal (BRICS) Dir: Sameer Vidwans India   Marathi   134 min   2019</div>		<b>F82</b> <div>14:45</div> <div>Kalira Atita (BRICS) Dir: Nila Madhab Panda India   Odiya   83 min   2021</div>		<b>F83</b> <div>17:15</div> <div>T-34 (BRICS) Dir: Aleksey Sidorov Russia   Russian, German   140 min   2018</div>		
INOX 4 Porvorim (AUDI 4)							



With a host of artistes walking the red carpet at IFFI, Bhisaji Gadekar’s artwork depicts the desire to bask in the glory and be in the limelight. The colours of the resplendent gown on the mannequin echo the plumage of our favourite bird.

