

THE PEACOCK

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Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro

Do writers inspire filmmakers or is it the other way round?

The only reason I visit the International Film Festival of India every year is to draw inspiration to further my writing. I attune my antennae to catch signals from where I can get ideas for my novels. If I sync on the right wavelength I get excited, and they automatically flow in, resulting in something positive and creative.

I recollect how I was approached by filmmakers to acquire rights to make a film based on my novel, *Karmelin*. The book dealt with the tribulations, including sexual exploitation, of Indian women who were lured to go the Gulf as ayahs in the early 1970s. I was a bit apprehensive, and insisted that I should be shown the screenplay first. The reason was that I wanted to make sure that the subject was not unduly sensationalized. My concern was that any wrong interpretation would tarnish the novel and the people of Goa.

I know of many movies that are based

on famous novels. *The Godfather* (1972) is a masterpiece based on the synonymous novel by Mario Puzo, which is said to have made the novel more popular. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) was based on the famous novel by Harper Lee. These are all-time great adaptations. But there is a reverse journey as well. The 1935 movie *Black Fury* by Michael Curtiz was later developed into a novel by Michael Musmanno. Similarly, *The Funhouse* (1980) is a novelization by Dean Koontz of a screenplay written by Tobe Hopper in 1981. Such crisscross journeys are not common in the world of cinema, simply because most scripts are forgotten after the film is made.

A book-to-movie journey may be exciting to writers, but it may not be so easy for filmmakers. I know of many films that never saw the light of the day. An international Indo-Brazilian film that was announced at this very festival over a decade back remains frozen, as it was caught up in

litigation. It was a story of a Goan family that had opted to leave for Portugal after liberation in 1961. Having co-scripted it, I was very excited about the prospects of the film going international. But the project stuttered over a dispute between the producers.

Many believe that good novels can be made into good films. But there is no set formula for that transformation. A novel and a film can go together. Or can fall apart. To consider a literary piece for a film, the filmmaker needs to examine the content, the pace, and its audio-visual appeal. It is also important that the cinematography, music, sound, and rhythm are taken into account. It is not the volume of a novel that calls the attention of a filmmaker.

I was once told of an interesting episode by Gulzar, the writer and filmmaker. He read a short story originally written in Bangla, and felt that it could be developed

into a movie, and literally took the first flight to Kolkata to acquire rights from the author. He told me once that short fiction, as compared to novels, grant you lot of spaces that you can use to develop the story as you desire.

I am a big fan of Haruki Murakami for the surreal and existential qualities of his writings. Many of this litterateur's works have been turned into movies, where he played the scriptwriter's role. *Café Lumière*, a Haruki Murakami inspired short film has been made so wonderfully by James Lee, I felt like I was reading a short story.

Like Shakespeare's works, books by Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand, and Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay inspired filmmakers of the stature of Satyajit Ray, Bimal Roy, Ritupurna Ghosh, Sanjay Leela Bansali, Gulzar and many others. Books will continue to beckon filmmakers, and sometimes vice-versa. They are twinned disciplines, inescapable from each other.

First Lady of IFFI 2021

Photo by Michael Praveen

BY PATRICIA ANN ALVARES

“Art has no meaning unless it is able to bring about a change,” said the great director Rakhshan Banietemad, in an exclusive conversation with *The Peacock*. The 67-year-old added, “it has to make the situation better.”

Banietemad – who chairs the jury for this year’s edition of the International Film Festival of India – is nothing short of a legend, and universally acclaimed as the “First Lady of Iranian Cinema.” She has produced an extraordinary body of work, about which the Harvard Film Archive (which chooses to spell her last name differently) says, “refusing any trace of the sentimental, Bani-Etemad’s melodramas are striking examples of popular cinema used as a forceful probe into social problems long familiar – like the place of women – and relatively new, like the ravages of drug addiction.”

More recently, says Harvard, “as political reform, reaction and unrest have rippled across Iran, Bani-Etemad has returned to documentary [film-making] to portray a country at the crossroads, taking the urgent pulse of an extremely young population confronting the discontents of the Islamic revolution, of women seizing a newfound freedom but also chafing at the lingering obstacles of religious tradition.”

Given all of her responsibilities here in Goa, Banietemad is constantly on the move. But she was kind enough to spare a few minutes to tell us that she has felt warmly received by the hosts, and “even though I have only been here a short while so far, I can see the festival has a lot of promise.”

Banietemad says there is considerable resonance between Iran and India, two ancient civilizations that developed in contact with each other over millennia: “Both of our countries have such a long history, with so many subjects – especially social and cultural – that are absolutely

alike.” Over time and different visits, as a jury member in other festivals in New Delhi and Kolkata, she has been awed by the tremendous diversity of India, but also continually struck by its similarities with her own homeland.

Back in the 1980s, when Banietemad began making documentary films for Iranian television, her work drew severe criticism. The big breakthrough came with *Nargess* (1991), which earned her the Best Director Award at the Fajr Film Festival, the first time that a woman had won the prize. Since then, there have been many other accolades: Best Screenplay at Venice, Bronze Leopard at Locarno, and the Prince Claus Prize for Culture and Development from the Netherlands.

Banietemad says she perseveres, and keeps making movies because they have the capacity to act as catalysts for change. She told us, “the purpose of art has to be to promote change, and improve our social and cultural situations. I have seen it in Iran, and many other countries. Movies have opened up topics, made people think, and driven new ways of thinking and behaving.”

Though her films focus on subjects that are very specific to Iran, they nevertheless retain a wide international appeal. One more area in which Banietemad has led the way is in portraying complex relationships between mothers and their children, which invariably refer back to her own experience as a mother. As the wife to film producer Jahangir Kosari and mother to Iranian actress Baran Kosari (who has starred in a number of her mother’s films), she has a unique facility in bringing these experiences to life.

The chairperson of the jury at IFFI 2021 told us that she is quite impressed at the diversity of films being shown in Goa, and is also excited that her own award-winning *The Blue Veiled* (1995) will have its Indian premiere here. She says, “it’s very encouraging that art is serving to unify people once again, despite the pandemic.”

SHORT TAKES



I look forward to watching all the BRICS films, I represent the Russian side of things. I’ve heard positive comments about the festival and everything is going well so far.

Anastasia Kiseleva
Representative
(for BRICS),
Russia



Goa is very green, the weather is amazing. You can take it slow and enjoy the films here. I really want to see the Béla Tarr retrospective.

Sejal
Film Student,
Jaipur



I’ve always loved this festival, but it feels great to be physically present here. I loved *The King of All the World*. Storaro is one of the finest cinematographers and this might possibly be his last film.

Shriram Iyengar
Journalist,
Mumbai



I want to watch *Spencer*. I hear Kristin Stewart puts on an Oscar-worthy performance as Princess Diana. I love the IFFI experience here, I get to watch films that are less commercial.

Lysel Vaz
Songwriter, Goa

Changing The Subject



Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro

BY URVASHI BAHUGUNA

This year's edition of the International Film Festival of India features *The Power of the Dog* (2021), *Anais in Love* (2021) and *The Girl and The Spider* (2021). All three have garnered international attention, critical acclaim, and nominations for major awards that highlight movies with LGBTQIA+ representation including the Cannes' Queer Palm and the Berlin International Film Festival's Teddy award.

But when I tried to book a ticket for *Anais in Love*, the screening was completely sold out. It left me wondering, are pockets of India changing what they choose to watch? And if a community's consumption habits veer towards the diverse, does it signal a degree of real change?

Anais in Love and *The Girl and The Spider*, as foreign-language films will likely reach few viewers in India, but Jane Campion's visually stunning *The Power of the Dog*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Kirsten Dunst, has the potential to reach regular cinema audiences the way the neo-Western *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) did. We are currently living through the age of limitless content, with multiple streaming platforms competing to make original shows and films. This has vastly broadened the scope of voices and stories we have access to. Driven by capitalism though it is, the shift is socially significant when media's potential for positive influence on society's attitudes towards minorities is taken into account.

The India I know isn't anywhere near genuine acceptance of the full spectrum of gender and sexuality amongst its citizens, for complex reasons that range from religious diktats to hypermasculinity to class anxieties to tradition. It is true there have been significant, if potentially deceptive advances, such as the likely appointment of Saurabh Kirpal, India's first openly gay judge, in the coming weeks, and the decriminalization of gay sex by the Supreme Court in 2018. But same-sex marriage and adoption

— ordinary rights heterosexual couples take for granted — remain outlawed. And that is simply the tip of the iceberg of prejudice and aggression experienced by queer minorities in a powerfully heteronormative country.

However, it is also true, there is a world of difference between the stories available to young people today, and what was accessible through cable, radio, and cinemas one or two generations ago. Empathetic, emotionally evolved films featuring queer young adult protagonists such as *Alex Strangelove* (2018), *Love, Simon* (2018), and *The Half of It* (2020) are all available to stream on OTT platforms in India — a far cry from the strictly heterosexual, often problematic teen movies that children of the 90s and 2000s grew up with. The wildly popular, multiple award-winning show *Schitt's Creek* (2015-2020) even dared to imagine a world where prejudice didn't exist and a same-sex relationship invited not so much as a comment much less censure.

The contrast is mind-boggling when one considers that it wasn't that long ago that the Karan Johar production, *Dostana* (2008), a particularly egregious example of harmful stereotyping of queer people, was considered an acceptable, even entertaining film. Soberingly, *Fire* (1998) had come out a decade before that, and radical as it was for its time, more than 20 years later, a lesbian relationship remains extremely uncommon in Indian films and television.

Improved treatment of queer characters hasn't happened in isolation either, with audiences receiving increasingly more nuanced portraits of womanhood, the shackles of masculinity, power dynamics in our most seminal relationships, what constitutes abuse, racial, class, and caste prejudice and more. The needle is moving quickly, just not quick enough.

The Power of the Dog is showing at 20:15 at INOX Screen 2 in Panjim on the 24th and *The Girl and The Spider* (2021) is showing at 5:30 PM at INOX Screen 1 in Porvorim on the same day.

SHORT TAKES



IFFI has been great so far. My students are learning so much by interacting with students and teachers from different film institutes across the country, and discussing films with them.

Rohit Sen Gupta
Film Teacher,
Haryana



I just watched *Bablu Babylon Se* by Abhijeet Sarthi. It was so great to see an academic project of this level with such interesting production, screenplay, and acting.

Deepti Khurana
Film Professor,
Haryana



The opening ceremony was good, I enjoyed it. I've only seen a Chinese movie so far and I want to now watch a more diverse range of films from other countries.

Boris Mashateler
Representative
(for BRICS),
Russia,



IFFI has been a great platform for young actors like myself to meet filmmakers from across the world. I'm thrilled to have three of my films selected for the festival this year.

Raavi Kishor
Actress, Goa

"I was not going to let anybody stand in my way"

BY IMPANA KULKARNI

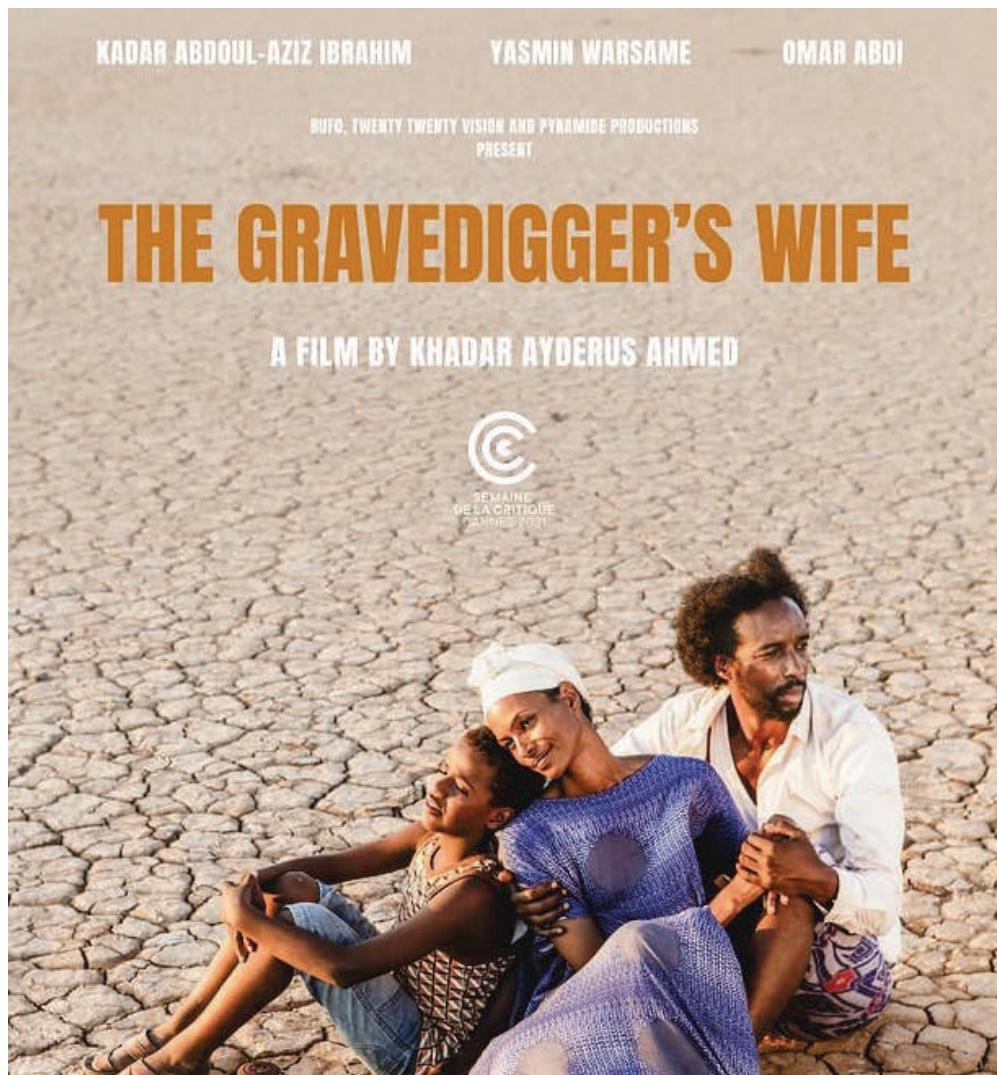
“Even though I am not a grave-digger, and don't have a wife to save, this film resonates with me too. The struggle of becoming a filmmaker from scratch has been similar – I had to do everything by myself and not give up, I was not going to let anybody stand in my way.” Even over a video call, Khadar Ayderus Ahmed's determination shone through. This is what the director of *The Gravedigger's Wife* had to say to *The Peacock*.

What inspired you to make this film?

A story that I first thought of when my nephew passed away, it took 10 years to come on screen. It had taken me a week to organize his funeral in Finland. That's when I was reminded of how easy it was back in Somalia. These gravediggers would always be ready, waiting outside the hospital, and they'd do the job in a couple of hours. I was struck by the character of the gravedigger. I used to cross them every day while walking to school and never really notice them. Having moved to Finland at the age of 16, I needed no research to understand them. They were like my neighbours and family. It was natural for me to write about them.

What is the movie about?

Unlike Western countries where there is a wealthy system to care for the citizens, in the third world countries most people cannot afford it. This is what I wanted to highlight – a weak health-care system. I understood early on that white directors could never understand the core of my story, because you have to be from that culture to understand it. But my story was also about love, devotion, friendship, and community – all the things we humans experience regardless of our origin and cultural background. It's something everyone can relate to.



What got you interested in films?

I grew up watching Bollywood films. I really wanted to come to IFFI to see Hema Malini! I have seen Akshay Kumar falling in love, films of Dharmendra and Mithun, without understanding the dialogues. But I always understood the core of what happened.

Why did it take you 10 years to make your first feature film?

I never went to film school. I wanted to get directorial experience. So I put my story aside, started working on short films. I got a camera, wrote short scripts, asked my family and friends to act in them, directed and shot them myself. Once I was confident

enough to direct, I got back to this story. One of the six lucky directors to get selected for a residency in Paris, I spent five months developing the script. The residency helped me get government funding from Finland, France, and Germany; the Doha Film Institute, and few more. It was nice and also a little stressful to be trusted by them, not being sure of how the film would turn out. Since the film is set in Djibouti, getting financiers on board took a long time. We started production only in 2019. I am glad it took this long to come out. In these ten years, I have been through lots of ups and downs, got married, divorced, moved to a new country, lost many friends and family members – the film was meant to come out now because now it is much stronger.

How did you select your cast?

Except for the two lead actors, the rest were all non-professional but very talented people from Djibouti. Due to the limited budget and expensive location, we had a tight schedule of just 21 days! I went after the people on the streets, stopped them, and invited them for auditions. They didn't have the tools to act, so I had to get the story out of them by giving them very specific details of where to look, for how long, which direction to move; I'd choreograph the whole scene sometimes. I had to be really confident and calm to guide them through it without letting them get stressed. Every time it got tough on the set, I would just recollect all the sleepless nights I had to make this film. That pushed me to keep going. But the one person who has been constant since my first short film is my cinematographer Arttu Peltomaa. Every time I had a script he'd be the first one I'd send it to. We met through a producer and he's been with me ever since.

The Gravedigger's Wife screens on 23rd Nov, 1800 hrs, at INOX Porvorim, Auditorium 1.

SHORT TAKES



The second you step into Goa you feel a sense of relief. I want to watch *Innocents* and *The Odd Job Men*. I am disappointed that there are no rush lines because it means I can watch less films.

Sindhur Reddy
Photographer,
Bangalore



I've been attending IFFI every year since 2011. This year I'm looking forward to watching patriotic films and female-led films from India and abroad.

Payal Agrawal
Businesswoman,
Gujarat



It's my first time as a film producer at IFFI and I'm very excited to see the reaction from the audience on our new film *Teen Adhyay* directed by Subash Sahoo.

Suvir Nath
Producer,
Mumbai



I wish we had more female commando units like the *Veerangana* unit, shown in the Assamese documentary here at IFFI, across the country to tackle crimes against women.

Snehal Ekbote
Artist, Nasik

My Friend Rashid Irani

BY SACHIN CHATTE

I have no doubt that wherever he is, Rashid Irani is missing IFFI as much as we are missing him. The noted film critic, who passed away in August this year at just 74, was a constant presence over the decades. It was truly heartwarming to see that he never lost the same degree of enthusiasm for the movies that he started off with as a teenager.

Rashid's passing away has been a great loss to me personally. I deeply treasure the memorable conversations we had. Besides his own personal warmth, the fact that he was on the selection committee for MAMI's Mumbai Film Festival meant that he was familiar with the bulk of world cinema, which made him the best person for recommendations.

My friend's love for cinema was of the highest order. Dealing with bureaucracy and standing in queues can be exasperating experiences. But while those with a fraction of his stature would saunter into halls by throwing their weight around, Rashid would simply stand in the queue, like a true cinephile.

My first encounter with Rashid was when IFFI moved to Goa in 2004. I had grown up admiring his film reviews in *The Times of India* and my respect for him quadrupled when he turned out to be a humble and down-to-earth person, for whom cinema meant everything. If you loved movies, you could become his best buddy, period.

When Rashid was not watching movies, he used to man the counter of Brabourne, the popular Irani restaurant in Dhobi Talao, Mumbai, which he eventually sold. "I am tired of sitting at the *galla*, it's just not worth it anymore," he told me back in 2008.

Not too long ago in November 2020, in the middle of IFFI, Rashid had a fall that

resulted in a rather serious head injury and was admitted to Goa Medical College. I was amazed, although I shouldn't have been, by the stream of calls from friends and well-wishers and even "celebrities" asking for updates on his health.

There are many who come to IFFI to enjoy films and also to enjoy Goa, but Rashid's sole focus was on cinema, as it was during his younger days when he travelled from Bombay – as it was known then – to the Film Archives in Pune, only to watch Roberto Rossellini's *The Flowers of St. Francis* (1950) and spent the night in an infirmary, because there was no other place to stay.

Back in 2016, well past midnight on a festival night, I saw an elderly gentleman

walking alone, rather tiredly, near the Kala Academy. It turned out to be Rashid who was heading back to his hotel after watching Lav Diaz's *Norte, the End of History* (2013). The running time of the Filipino auteur's epic is a good eight hours and five minutes. "I missed the last hour because I wasn't sure if I could find my way back to the hotel. Anyway, I have already seen it once," he told me nonchalantly.

He had a particular fondness for the Cinephile Film Club, Goa, which I revived in 2017. Rashid would want to know about the films we were screening and was delighted when I told him about rarities like *Riffifi* (1955). "The Jules Dassin one? It must have been a treat to watch it on the big screen. I

wish I could have seen that!" he exclaimed.

While a certain Marilyn Monroe film was the trigger to Rashid's love affair with cinema, he loved all kinds of movies, and had admiration and respect towards filmmakers, the ones who created magic on the screen, be it a Rossellini or an Ozu. In fact, when I told him about my encounter with Lav Diaz in the Kala Academy canteen (Diaz served on the IFFI jury in 2008, and we had a fascinating chat about cinema over *bhajiya*s and tea served in a paper cup), there was genuine disbelief and disappointment on his face because he hadn't known about it.

Wherever he is, I hope he is at peace. I know that if films are being screened in heaven, Rashid will be a very happy man.



Illustration by Chloé Cordeiro

SHORT TAKES



I am so impressed with *Ahed's Knee* and the festival directors that were responsible for getting this film to India. It's something all Indians need to watch.

Meenakshi Passi
Retired
Government
Official, Goa



Other festivals have a lot of events that allow filmmakers and professionals to interact. The system here is quite different, it is difficult for us to socialize and find the right people.

Grzegorz Hartfiel
Director of
photography,
Poland



I look forward to the masterclass by Shoojit Sircar and Ronnie Lahiri. The other festivals I've been to are quite private and intimate. Compared to them IFFI is so open and energetic.

Sruthi Mohan
Filmmaker,
Hyderabad



I'm here with 51 of my students. I've been eating fish every day since I got here. I like watching films like *Rain* that are from smaller countries.

Ajay Kumar Singh
Film Professor,
Uttarakhand

The Youngest At Heart

BY PATRICIA ANN ALVARES

India's turbocharged millennial generation is famously the largest in the world. There are at least 440 million of them, whose impact is felt everywhere including the International Film Festival of India, where the 30-and-under demographic of delegates constitutes by far the largest group.

But in this sea of young and even younger cinephiles, there are some whose life experience dates all the way back to the 1930s. After checking the festival database, *The Peacock* reached out to the senior-most delegates in our midst. According to the amusingly hyperprecise statisticians, these are Kunjukunju from Trivandrum (aged 84.34794521 years) and Philomena Menezes Dias from Altinho, right here in Panjim, who is 83.86027397.

Separately, Kunjukunju and Dias visited us in our little office in the Maquinez Palace, and we found them effusive, lively, and ebullient. They are both rather fit yoga practitioners, whose zest for life as well as the movies continues to radiate from their personas and personalities.

"I remember watching a movie about ghosts at the tender age of ten way back in the 1940s, at Bandra New Talkies in Bombay," recalls Dias, who spent

many years as a teacher at the Sharada Mandir School in Panjim after moving to Goa. "This spurred my love for cinema. I realised how quickly you can learn from them. Once you watch a movie, it invariably plays back in your mind and your consciousness transforms. Whatever I watch, it mentally stimulates me and changes my perspective."

Kunjukunju – who is a retired employee of the Indian railways – told us that his tryst with movies also began in childhood as well, and it was a legacy he was keen to pass on to his two beloved daughters, Geeta and Latha (both of whom accompanied him to our offices).

He said, "we had a ritual of a bi-monthly movie outing. I wanted to instil my love of movies in them. While cinema is certainly entertaining, there is much to learn as well. I think movies refresh the spirit."

Dias has been an annual regular at IFFI in Goa, but this is the first time in India's smallest state for Kunjukunju. He says, "I am a regular at the International Film Festival Kerala. This year, when my daughters decided to attend, I decided to come along."

For her part, Dias says, "once I started coming to IFFI, I never stopped," Her love for movies was fuelled by her husband, Dr. Eufemiano

Constance Dias, a love they also passed on to their children Lois and Luisian: "In the 1960s we saw some of the best movies, particularly French and European, at Cine Nacional. Once a week all of our friends would meet up on a Thursday for the 9 pm show. I recall watching *Last Tango in Paris* in Europe. It left such a lasting impact on me," she says. She counts Marlon Brando, Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor, and Olivia de Havilland as some of her favourite actors of the day.

When it comes to genres, it is action thrillers and family-oriented films that are Kunjukunju's favourite choices. "The more fast-paced the better," he explains. However, the award-winning 1965 Malayalam film *Chemmeen*, a story related to the sea and traditional fishermen, where art reflects life, stole his heart all those years ago.

Kunjukunju says that our contemporary era affords filmmaking many more opportunities in terms of technology, music scores, special effects, computer graphics, and other advancements. "It makes movies so much more interesting to watch," he says, "I was totally mesmerized

how technology put together the character of the tiger in *Life of Pi*" he says, referring to Ang Lee's 2012 film.

The return of IFFI to Goa in the Covid-19 era is welcomed by both of our intrepid seniors.

Dias says, "it had become such a 'happening' event, and I am glad it has moved ahead despite the pandemic. I have met so many lovely, friendly people through the years. And if one does not attend, then one misses out. I recall meeting an elderly Swedish gentleman who has been visiting the festival for several years. However, I have not seen him recently. We were some of the regular old timers."

Both these senior delegates have seen innumerable movies over the years, and have very varying tastes, but they were bowled over in unison by the opening film of IFFI this year, *The King of All The World* (2021) and both voted it their all-time favourite. "The dance is truly moving," explained Kunjukunju, while Philomena said, "it teaches young people to live through their heart, because when you do so you are true to yourself."



HERITAGE MAP OF PANJIM

1

In Panjim's Post Office Square stands Casa da Moeda. Literally meaning 'House of Coins', the building functioned as the Mint of Goa from 1834-1841.

2

What is now the General Post Office was originally a depot for trading tobacco, which eventually became the centre of operations of the city's postal services.

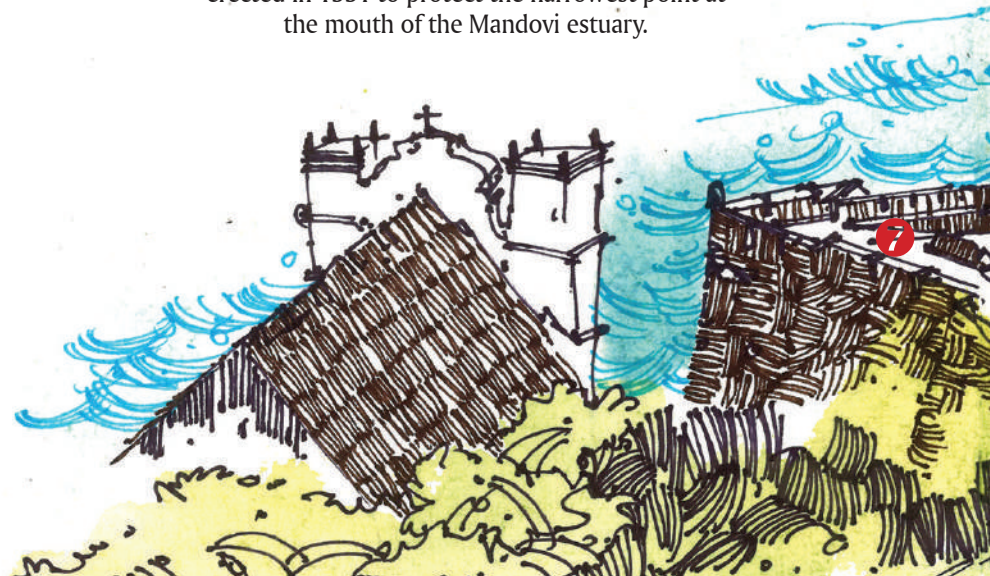
3

The Adil Shah Palace is Panjim's oldest surviving building, with sloping tiled roofs, carved stone coats of arms and wooden verandahs. It was originally the Summer Palace of Goa's 16th century ruler, Yusuf Adil Shah.



7

Fort Reis Magos faces the capital city Panjim across the Mandovi river. Surrounded by sturdy laterite walls studded with Portuguese turrets, it was erected in 1551 to protect the narrowest point at the mouth of the Mandovi estuary.



4

Azad Maidan - Originally built as a square, it was known as the Praça de Sete Janelas (Square of the Seven Windows), derived from the iconic Goa Police headquarters building, which has seven windows each to its either ends and the entrance.

6

Kala Academy, in its beautifully conceived headquarters designed by the great Charles Correa, was established by the Government of Goa on 28th February 1970 as the apex cultural body in the State, to develop music, dance, drama, fine art, folk art, literature etc.

5

The **Old GMC building** got its definitive start on 5 November 1842 as the Medical-Surgical School of Goa. During the colonial period, it produced at least 1,327 doctors and 469 pharmacists.

8

Fort Aguada: The fort was originally constructed in 1612 to guard against the Dutch.

8







A Sad Song

From its earliest days, national cinema has intensely focussed on the decline of old wealth. Ironically, the aristocracy of yesteryear keeps finding refuge in this most contemporary of industries. When this class turns the lens on themselves and honestly addresses their loss of power and social privileges, we get masterpieces like *Jalsaghar – The Music Room* (1958).

Jalsaghar is Satyajit Ray telling us the story of feudal decline and a shuffling of social classes taking place in feudal West Bengal. The central character is the landlord Biswambhar Roy who is desperately holding on to the last remnants of his social status while the world around him crumbles. The signs of decline are everywhere but this proud middle-aged feudal will not go down without a fight. He withdraws into his decaying grand mansion along the banks of the Padma River. His fields may be underwater and he is living in genteel poverty, but the zamindar still has social capital among the masses and he is going to resist the outside world with his trump card – *The Music Room* (*Jalsaghar*).

The nouveau riche have arrived at the door of his mansion in the form of the coarse money lender Mahim Ganguly. The stage is now set for a genteel clash of these two worlds. But in the world of high culture, this decaying feudal can still hold his own against the moneyed upstarts despite the odds he faces.

Ganguly is well aware of the decline of Roy but despite this is deeply reverential to him. Roy in turn is lost in the world of music and clearly despises Ganguly and the trappings of modernity and wealth he has acquired.

The movies play out this class struggle in the form of three musical concerts.

The first concert, held for Roy's son Khoka's thread ceremony, is a grand affair in which the landlord clearly comes out on top of the money lender. Dressed in full regalia seated amongst his own, we



are given a glimpse into the world of Biswambhar Roy and his ancestors. The movie frequently shifts between the rarefied worlds of an exquisite musical high culture and the ground reality of sustaining it. Their world is collapsing around them and Roy's wife Mahamaya plays the role of a truth teller belittling his delusions of aristocratic grandeur.

With Roy's family away, Ganguly visits the mansion and invites him to a concert in his house. Roy will have none of this and on the spur of the moment says he has organized a concert of his own on the same day despite being broke.

The both meet again in the music room in this genteel face off over a sombre recital of classical music which sets the tone for the tragedy to come – the death of Mahamaya and Khoka.

After a period of long withdrawal and even further decline, the waning feudal opens the music room for one final time. Ganguly accepts the invitation but makes it a point to remind the staff of the decline of their master. He arrives in a car and proudly declares himself to be a self-made man. The concert is a much diminished affair and Roy is clearly on his way out but when Ganguly reaches forward to tip the artist Roy sternly prevents him from doing so. In his house and in the arena of high culture he is still king.

Eventually all is lost for Biswambhar Roy and he is left only recounting the names of his noble ancestors. He meets his destiny in style and leaves the mansion for the first time dressed in full regalia on his son's horse. He still has his agency and pride intact.

Jalsaghar is Satyajit Ray telling his story from the vantage point of those who lost out, the landed aristocracy, a class his family once belonged to. Within this tale of decline we are constantly reminded by Ray that this feudal class once had a high culture in its day that few in the modern world could match. It is part sympathetic dissection and part self-portrait.

SHORT TAKES



It's my first time in India. I'm looking forward to seeing how people who are not Polish perceive our film *Leader*. It's more conceptual than realistic.

Korek Bojanowski
Producer, Poland



It's my first time at IFFI. I've only been to Goan beaches before this and Panjim is quite a different experience. It has the kind of heritage feel you just don't get in big cities.

Shramana Sen
Film Student, Kolkata



They should allow couples and families to book seats together. People spend a lot of money to come here and it is quite disappointing when they don't get to watch a single movie.

Ramachandran Pothera
Doctor, Kerala



Registration was a bit of a hassle, but other than that it's going well. I'll watch any movie so long as the premise is good.

Vinita Vish
Student, Goa

Recently, the untimely demise of Puneeth Raj Kumar, film-star son of the famous Karnataka superstar, (late) Raj Kumar, put Bangalore city under temporary lockdown. Raj Kumar and anything to do with him is sacred in Karnataka – busts of him grace many a street and town square, perhaps surpassing even Gandhi or Ambedkar. Such is the power of cinema in social consciousness.

Films in India have always claimed a special space in the making of popular visual culture, and the industry continues to influence multi-layered aspects of everyday living aesthetics.

Look around at the backs of autos and trucks, the interiors of buses and taxis – catch veteran star (late) Dilip Kumar smiling from a framed window piece, or Madhuri Dixit winking at the edge of a mirror. Notice finely hand-painted shop signs, billboards, and title signs featuring imagery of popular characters – count the references to stars or film names, past and present. Star power is used in advertising, to make us buy commodities, or even follow government guidelines. It filters into the world we interact with at a subliminal level, with the mass access to web-space adding another layer of visibility.

The 1970s and 80s saw film critics and columnists in Bombay begin to use the term “Bollywood” for Hindi cinema - at first with disdain at the ‘masala’ or heightened mix of melodrama, action, romance, song and dance, but later as regular practice.

The vast successes of films like *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (1995) and those following it set the stage for a typical kind of family film to take over an entire public mindset, and a newer language was required to address it. The film caused every Indian middle-class heart to dream of a Switzerland Eurail trip.

This was not the first movie that made a huge impact on the social psyche. Across the span of Indian popular culture, fashion and styling, home décor, and product-packaging design are three broad areas in which the impact of cinema is apparent.

Walk through public shopping markets in any Indian city, and you will



Illustration by Riza Noronha

find rows of male and female attire along with accessories; close copies of outfits worn by ‘hit’ heroes and heroines in blockbuster films. The hoodies of *Gully Boy* (2018) became a pan-Indian fashion statement, as did the T-shirt with the golden words ‘Apna Time Aayega’ (my time will come). ‘Padmavath’ necklaces (both gold and faux-gold) and the grand costumes became the most wanted go-tos in weddings; earlier, *Jodha Akbar* (2008) influenced the design of a large number of wedding and performance sets. There is an entire industry devoted to the rapid production of these items that quickly leach down into the everyday aesthetics of the masses. With a swift turnover, this industry is deeply aware of the trends and turns of the film industry, that feeds its survival.

Historians such as Christopher Pinney, Jyotindra Jain, Tapati Guha Thakurta and Kajri Jain have delved deeply into different aspects of Indian popular visual culture and the intersecting lives of religion, politics, cinema, and sport in everyday iconography. Street or *Bazaar* art as it has been termed, is a space of profound interest as well as contention – while deemed inferior in comparison to ‘fine art’, kitsch – for all its garishness – holds within it the strings of socio-cultural discourse, the reality of a throbbing sense of belonging that pervades every crevice of existence.

India is a place of paradox, with tradition and modernity, past and present, folk and fine, popular and classical, private and public overlapping and merging in constant rhythm. This is the colourful, heterogenous experience that visitors fall in love with and that western filmmakers have often celebrated. A vast majority of the Indian population will watch films every month and buy memorabilia that reminds them of it – this same population finds it difficult to relate to the clinically sophisticated and intellectualised art placed in white cube galleries.

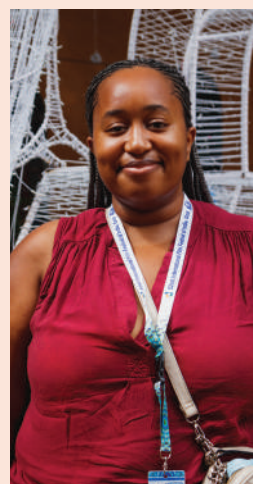
Looking back at this exchange between cinema and popular visual culture, we cannot forget that Raja Ravi Varma’s mass ‘calendar art’ reproductions of Gods and Goddesses are said to have influenced the very first moving picture produced by Dadasaheb Phalke, *Raja Harishchandra* (1913).

SHORT TAKES



I attended a masterclass with Prasoon Joshi, about how his experiences inspired his lyrics. I also hope to attend Shoojit Sircar’s class on Creating Cinematic Success.

Saiyaiyappan M
Film Student,
Chennai



I watched *Ahed’s Knee* and it was interesting. At first I wasn’t sure about the protagonist, but towards the end he redeems himself so it worked out quite well.

Jariombangoje Marenga - Film Student, Namibia



I attended a masterclass by Madhur Bhandarkar where I learned about the changing trends of Indian cinema. I’m excited to see *Maargam*, it has an amazing storyline.

Dinesh Kumar R
Film Student,
Chennai



We had trouble with registration but the volunteers were really helpful and we managed to figure it out. *Hi, Mom* seems like an interesting film.

Arya Girish
Student, Goa



Libertação!

BY VIVEK MENEZES

The International Film Festival of India 2021 is being explicitly hosted alongside the celebration of two hugely significant anniversaries of decolonization: 75 years of Indian independence from the British, and 60 years since the mercifully swift decapitation of Portugal's 451-year-old Estado da Índia.

No one has ever put the stakes with as much potent poetry as Jawaharlal Nehru: "Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny; and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance."

Incredibly stirring words for an undeniably epochal moment, but Nehru went on to caution his fellow Indians that their "future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we might fulfill the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity."

Looking back through the generations – and especially from the perspective of our collective pandemic predicament – we can see with utmost clarity that our first prime minister was oracular in his wisdom: "We have to labour and to work to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine

that it can live apart. Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom; so is prosperity now; and so also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments."

How have we done, as free citizens of our own state and country, as ostensibly liberated partners in the post-colonial global order? On that, the jury is still very far from conclusion, and – as the great Faiz Ahmed Faiz wrote, *Hum Dekhenge* (we shall see).

Hum Dekhenge by Faiz Ahmed Faiz
(translated by Mustansir Dalvi)

Inevitably, we shall also see the day
that was promised to us, decreed
on the tablet of eternity.

When dark peaks of torment and tyranny
will be blown away like cotton fluff;

When the earth's beating, beating heart
will pulsate beneath our broken feet;

When crackling, crashing lightning
will smite the heads of our tormentors;

When, from the seat of the Almighty
every pedestal will lie displaced;

Then, the dispossessed we; we,
who kept the faith will be installed
to our inalienable legacy.
Every crown will be flung.
Each throne brought down.

Only His name will remain; He,
who is both unseen, and ubiquitous; He,
who is both the vision and the beholder.

When the clarion call of 'I am Truth'
(the truth that is me and the truth that is you)
will ring out, all God's creatures will rule,
those like me and those like you.

Poem of the Day by Urvashi Bahuguna A Star Is Born

I love that they make the same movie over and over, like how every ice cream franchise will try their hand at chocolate and blackcurrant blue – they know they are going to sell every cup. *Sorry, we ran out of cones.* I love that we're so obsessed with a rising star colliding with a fading one that we have made the movie four times, the stars rising and falling as preordained. In each version, it's the villain that gets me. No feat of time will stop him from his task. I imagine he will change his mind, keep his temper, but he steps into it like a great actor playing a life changing role, like everything & everyone he cares about is on the line.



Illustration by Govit Morajkar



Bebia, à mon seul désir
INOX Panjim Audi 1, 11.00 am
Dir: Juja Dobrachkous
Georgia, UK
113 min



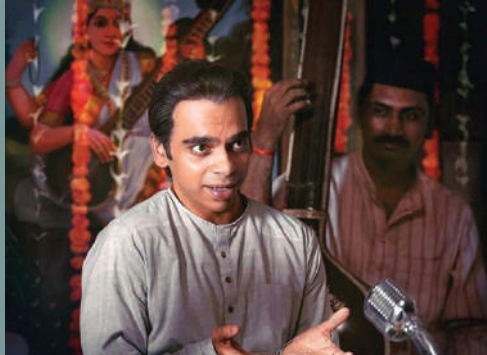
I'm Your Man
INOX Panjim Audi 3, 2.00pm
Dir: Maria Schrader
Germany
105 min



Rhino
INOX Panjim Audi 4, 1.45 pm
Dir: Oleh Sentsov
Germany, Poland, Ukraine
101 min



Me Vasant Rao
INOX Panjim Audi 2, 8.00 pm
Dir: Nipun Avinash Dharmadhikari
India
180 min



"52nd INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA 2021 Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India (November 20th - November 28th 2021)"											
52nd INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA GOA 2021 23rd November 2021											
INOX Panjim (AUDI 1)	C11	11:00	Bebia, à mon seul désir (WP) Dir: Juja Dobrachkous Georgia, UK Georgian, Russian 113 min. 2020 (AP)	B R E A K F O R S A N I T I Z I N G	C12	13:30	Rain (DD) Dir: Janno Jurgens Ukraine Estonian, Russian 94 min 2020 (AP)	B R E A K F O R S A N I T I Z I N G	C13	16:15	Once We Were Good For You (IC) Dir: Branko Schmidt Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina Croatian 72 min 2021 (AP)
	C21	10:00	BADAL SIRCAR & THE ALTERNATIVE THEATRE (IP- NF) Dir: Ashoke Viswanathan English 54 min MANIKBABUR MEGH (IP-F) Dir: Abhinandan Banerjee Bengali 95 min		C22	14:00	TEEN ADHYAY (IP- NF) Dir: Subash Sahoo Hindi 22 min ACT-1978 (IP-F) Dir: Manjunatha S. (Mansore) Kannada 127 min		C23	17:30	THE KNOCKER (IP- NF) Dir: Ananth Narayan Mahadevan Hindi 17 min BITTERSWEET (IP-F) Dir: Ananth Narayan Mahadevan Marathi 100 min
INOX Panjim (AUDI 2)	C31	10:00	The Wolf Of Wall Street (LTA) Dir: Martin Scorsese United States English 180 min 2013	B R E A K F O R S A N I T I Z I N G	C32	14:00	I'm Your Man (FK) Dir: Maria Schrader Germany German 105 min 2021 (IP)	B R E A K F O R S A N I T I Z I N G	C33	16:45	Promises (WP) Dir: Thomas Kruithof France French 98 min 2021 (IP)
INOX Panjim (AUDI 3)	C41	10:15	Goldfinger (Spl Trbt) Dir: Guy Hamilton United Kingdom, United States 1964 English 110 min		C42	13:45	Rhino (Nosorih) (WP) Dir: Oleh Sentsov Ukraine, Germany, Poland Ukrainian, Russian 101 min 2021 (AP)		C43	16:30	Sweet Disaster (DD) Dir: Laura Lehmus Germany German 93 min 2021 (AP)
INOX Panjim (AUDI 4)	C51	13:00	Masterclass: Mr. Shoojit Sircar, Ronnie Lahiri Topic: "Creating Cinematic Success and Storytelling of Sardar Udham" Moderator: Ms. Smriti Kiran 60 mins	B R E A K F O R S A N I T I Z I N G	C52	15:00	Kaalpurush (HM) Dir: Buddhadeb Das Gupta Bengali 120 min 2005 (Homage to Buddhadeb Das Gupta)	B R E A K F O R S A N I T I Z I N G	C53	18:30	Avargal (RR) Dir: K Balachander Tamil 1977 167 min
INOX Porvorim (AUDI 1)	C61	11:00	The Exam (WP) Dir: Shawkat Amin Korki Iraq Kurdish 89 min 2021 (IP)		C62	14:00	Family Nest (Családi tűzfészek) (RET) Dir: Béla Tarr Hungary 1977 Hungarian 108 min		C63	18:00	The Gravediggers Wife (WP) Dir: Khadar Ayderus Ahmed France, Somalia, Germany, Finland Somali 83 min. 2021 (IP)
INOX 2 Porvorim (AUDI 2)	C71	11:15	All the Money in the World (HM) Dir: Ridley Scott United States, United Kingdom English 132 min 2017	B R E A K F O R S A N I T I Z I N G	C72	14:30	The Dorm (IC) Dir: Roman Vasyanov Russia Russian 123 min 2021 (IC)	B R E A K F O R S A N I T I Z I N G	C73	17:45	The Postman's White Nights (Belye nochi pochталона Aleksey Tryapitsyna) (RET) Dir: Andrei Konchalovsky Russia Russian 90 min. 2014
INOX 3 Porvorim (AUDI 3)	C81	12:00	Jalsaghar (The Music Room) Dir: Satyajit Ray Bengali 95 min 1958		C82	14:45	Badhai Ho (HM) Dir: Amit Ravindernath Sharma Hindi 124 min 2018 (Homage to Surekha Sikri)		C83	18:00	Sagara Sangamam (Ind75) Dir: K. Viswanath Telugu 160 min 1983



For today's subtle, striking cover image, Bhisaji Gadekar has memorialized our favourite bird in the style of Azulejos, the iconic Islamic-

Iberian ceramic tradition that radiated outwards from Andalusia in what is now Spain to Portugal, then throughout Southern Europe and North Africa across the oceans to South America, and eventually to Goa, where wonderful examples exist from the 16th-20th centuries. Viva!



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