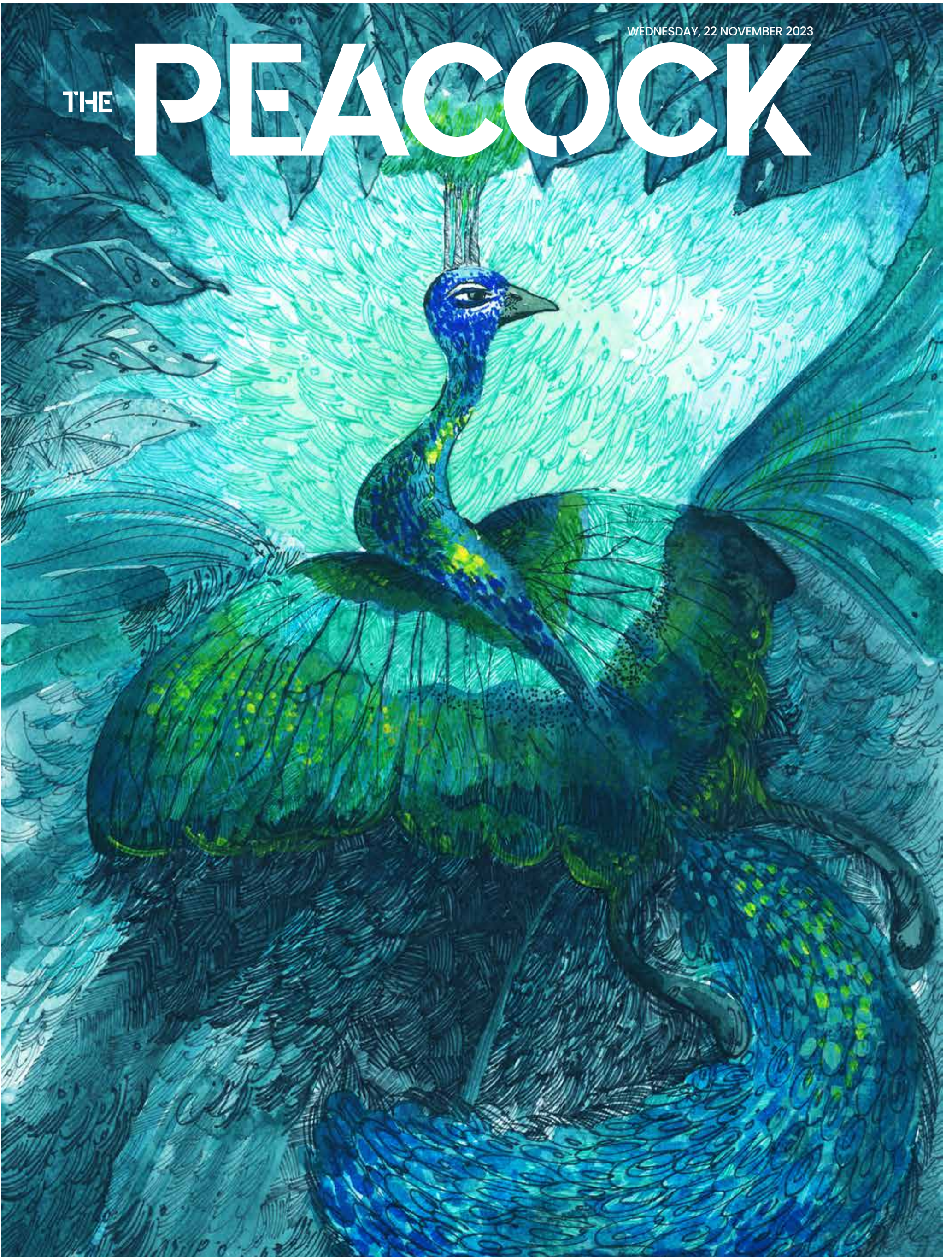


WEDNESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2023

THE PEACOCK



Killing the Narakasur

BY DAMODAR MAUZO

Diwali or Deepavali is celebrated nationally, but in various ways in different regions, which itself is a testimony to India's awesome unity in diversity. You should know that our state of Goa – the permanent host of IFFI – follows an altogether different tradition, with a few familiar aspects, while most others are dissimilar to the ones prevailing in other states. In a nostalgic vein, I am tempted to share my childhood Diwali experience in my village in South Goa.

For us children, the preparations would start a week before the Narakachaturdashi, that is, the main Diwali day. As most of you will be aware, it celebrates the day when the mighty evil king Narakasur was slain by Lord Krishna, which also symbolises the victory of good over evil. We would manage to gather together all the materials to make an effigy of the demon, which included gunny bags of different sizes, heaps of grass, bamboo sticks, waste paper, twine, sack-

stitching needles, coloured tissue papers, and home-made glue, not forgetting some fire crackers to stuff the insides. Though we worked in secrecy, away from where others could see, we were never discouraged by the elders who would even provide us the raw materials that cost a few annas.

Our Diwali would start after nightfall at around ten, when six of us who were involved in making the effigy, would set out with the figure. Some of us would bring along a small drum or an empty tin and beat it with a stick as we proceeded in a procession. Yet another, often the one who was our leader, would carry a small cardboard box that served as a donation box. We moved from one house to the other, never

bothered over who lived in the house. Mostly they were Catholics who would open the door to have a look at the effigy, and joyfully put a one or two-paisa coin in that box. More boys would join us as we proceeded, mostly Catholic, for whom the killing of the demon was as important as to the Hindu boys.

The effigy that we would make was about six to seven feet tall, but light in weight. It was hollow, with enough space left for one person to enter from under its huge skirt. Every one of us was eager to enter the effigy and dance with it. As I was comparatively younger my turn would come late in the night after most of the older boys

were tired. In the wee hours, at around 4 o'clock, when we were done with the entire village, we stopped on some open ground where one of us would act as Krishna and a mock battle was played. Finally, the demon was presumed killed and the effigy was set on fire amidst the anti-demon slogan chanting. We would then chase off onlookers and open the donation box.

The booty would generally not be more than three to four rupees. This was equitably distributed among us. I would get about six to eight annas, meaning half a rupee. Each of us then hired a bicycle and in a group pedalled to Margao, the nearest town, where we would witness other effigies of Narakasur either still dancing or about to be burnt. Frankly, though Abhyangsnan, the oil bath, and feasting on a variety of home prepared pohas awaited us, the Narakasur episode was the most enjoyable part of Diwali.

Damodar Mauzo won the Jnanpith Award in 2022



Illustration by Nishant Saldanha

SHORT TAKES



It's beautiful here and everyone's been so nice. I think it's lovely that the city is so invested in the festival.

Faridah Gbadamosi
Programmer
New York



It's very rare that transgender people get access to such avenues, so I'm really excited. Getting a conversation started is so easy here.

Samyuktha Vijayan
Film-maker
San Francisco



I want to discover some meaningful films. When I see a film, within ten minutes I decide whether I want to watch the entire film or not.

Girish Wankhede
Columnist
Mumbai



The atmosphere is buzzing with people and conversations. The buildings here remind me of Macau which was also a Portuguese colony.

Emily Wong
Project Officer
Hong Kong

Making Connections

BY MAAZ BIN BILAL

Prithul Kumar, the IFFI Managing Director, made time for *The Peacock* between his busy calendar of commitments at the festival. We met at his office in the sprawling Old Goa Medical College building, where a huge poster of Satyajit Ray hangs with the legendary director's words quoted below: "If the quality of films were the sole criterion, surely one of the best festivals held anywhere was the first International Film Festival of India in 1952... Few festivals before or after have provided such a feast of outstanding films."

Kumar is a busy man with whom the buck stops for many important government institutions. As Joint Secretary (Films) at the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting he serves as an overseer for various Government of India film organisations such as the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), and the National Films Division of India (NFDC) that also absorbed the National Films Archive of India (NFAI) in March 2022 and the Films Division in January 2023. All the programming at IFFI is the responsibility of NFDC, while the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG) formed by the Goa government provides the local infrastructural support for the festival.

Kumar explained the process of the selection of the International Jury by the NFDC: "The Ministry of Information and Broadcast selects the jury. We visit various international festivals and select persons of suitable stature. And then the government also works in the background to find out every information available on them. So, this time we have put together a jury that is incredibly eminent. Mr Shekhar Kapur is an international filmmaker but an Indian who is head of the jury. Then there is Mr. José Luis Alcaine, who is an Oscar-winning cinematographer. There is Mr. Jerome Paillard, who is the market director of Cannes and held the position till last year. Ms. Helen Leake is a very well-



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

respected Australian producer who has worked with Russell Crowe, among others. And finally, there is the famous producer, Catherine Dussart. So, this is how we work out the jury. The process begins right after the previous festival ends and ultimately the government of India approves it after running background checks."

The director's own professional trajectory began with the Indian Railway Traffic Services (IRTS) in 2000, and he was deputed to helm the first Indian Railways project in Kashmir, the first rail connection between Anantnag and Baramulla. This reduced the commute for local Kashmiris from six hours to one and a half hours, he says, and led to people embracing the work of the Government of India. Kumar then had a stint in the mining ministry, and first connected to Goa through it. He feels that coming to IFFI

is like a second homecoming, but with a different purpose.

Watching films has always been his hobby. However, he finds it more interesting, but also intense, to see "the background of how filmmaking is done." Aware of his responsibilities, he reflects on "how the policies we make at the central level will impact the whole ecosystem of filmmaking in the whole country."

Although it is his first year heading IFFI, "institutionally," Kumar feels "the ministry has always treated it as the most important cultural extravaganza in all of India, and India's portrayal to the world. It is one of the 14 largest film festivals across the world alongside Cannes and Berlin, attended by FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives) officials, inspecting the facilities and content. It is the largest festival in India, and you must

ensure that its stature is continuously uplifted. It is Satyajit Ray's legacy that we carry forward to exhibit the best of films."

"This year particularly," he adds on being questioned on his recently-begun tenure as director, "we have been most successful as have got three times the number of submissions as compared to the last year. The world's outlook has changed towards India and it is reflective of the trust India has gained internationally. We make sure that all stakeholders feel welcomed. This is ensured through the integrated IFFI and Film Bazar application and simplified bookings, new venues for masterclasses which run fully booked, and increased number of screens (from 8 to 11) and seats (from 2500 to 3600), for which the Government of Goa must be thanked for providing us with the Kala Academy and other venues."

SHORT TAKES



The atmosphere here is amazing and I would recommend this to all my colleagues. It's quite similar to the European film market and Cannes.

Mathew Kesting
Festival Director
Adelaide



It's gorgeous here. I love connecting with film-makers, and seeing new stories. I'll be doing the pitch mentorship; I'm really looking forward to that.

Lisa Hasko
Consultant
Los Angeles



I see a lot of plant varieties around here. The weather keeps getting hotter so I hope Goa continues to have fewer buildings than trees.

Melina Kallychurn
Student
Mauritius



This is my first time, and I missed my first film. The place is amazing and the people here are very helpful.

Saisimran Ghadi
Student
Kolhapur

Cinema for Generation Z

BY AJAY KAMALAKARAN

“Whenever we use the term Gen Z, there’s almost always something derogatory in the tone,” Karan Johar said, when asked about how the youth of 2023 would react to the upcoming *Ae Watan Mere Watan*, a film starring Sara Ali Khan that was set in the backdrop of the 1942 Quit India Movement. “Have you met those kids? They’re bright, they do more research than we do, they’re more intense than we are, they know more about their country than we do, they read much more, they’re more alert, they know more about the politics of our nation and the history of our nation.”

At a panel discussion on drawing inspiration from history, that also featured director Kannan Iyer and 28-year old Sara Ali Khan, Johar added that *Ae Watan Mere Watan* was a Generation Z film. “If this generation knows one thing, they know how to stand for their rights, they know how to fight and go out there and become the face of a mission and a relevant issue.”

Khan’s character in *Ae Watan Mere Watan* is inspired by freedom fighter Usha Mehta, who organized an underground radio station which functioned during the Quit India Movement. “When I say inspired by, what I mean is we have remained true to the essence of actual events that took place around 1942,” the film’s director Iyer said. “A clandestine radio station which was started by young brave freedom fighters, the main one being Usha Mehta... Having said that we have taken a lot of creative liberties in order to make the story more engaging for the audience.”

In the discussion, Johar repeatedly praised Khan for adapting well to the role of Mehta, adding that she had a lot of untapped potential. “She is an unsung hero herself, working relentlessly from the time she’s been in the industry from her first year, coming right out of Columbia and getting into the thick of the industry, which resonated with this girl who



Photo by Aman Bagali

was fresh out of college and went on to become a freedom fighter,” he said. “As an actor or a freedom fighter, eventually we are fighting circumstances, obstacles and so much more.”

When asked about his decision to produce the film, Johar said, “It was very simple. It’s always instinct-based, whenever a piece of story, a synopsis, content or a screenplay comes my way and matches the passion of the filmmaker and writer. The story of *Ae Watan Mere Watan* is just so inspiring and I could see the passion in Kannan’s eyes and Darab’s (screenwriter Darab Farooqui) eyes, it was an absolute no-brainer for all of us.”

Khan spoke of all the adjustments she had to make as an actor. “I think what this film endeavours to do is to tell a story of bravery that should, God-willing, be a beacon of inspiration for coming generations in all ramps of life,” she said. “Therefore, the pressure was to be able to portray a character that will connect and will hopefully inspire.”

One of the challenges for the crew was to recreate 1940s Bombay on screen, showcasing the look of the streets, signboards, the way people dressed and other features of the city like its tram network. Johar said that “sometimes the scale of a story is so strong, the emotional scale of the story is so strong that you just have to get your core researchers to get things right, but the emotional energy of the film will take care of the scale. It is not just putting up a massive set, scale is not just showing a crowd of 10,000 people. If your essence of emotion is missing in that moment then no matter what you do, you will be overcompensating.”

Johar, of course did not forget to express his love for the annual film festival in Goa. “IFFI in its 54th year is an absolutely majestic and magnificent festival that has truly grown from strength to strength. Each and every time I have been here, I have felt the infectious energy of just pure love for cinema.”

SHORT TAKES



Ever since I got off the train, it seems like all of Goa is celebrating IFFI. I like seeing so many trees here.

Gomathy S.
Media Student
Chennai



I’ve been working here as a sweeper for 20 years. Everyone who comes here talks about how nice Goa is. I like old Tamil films and Rajinikanth.

Mariama G.
Sweeper
Goa



Goa is a great combination of nature and modern stuff. You can wake up in a village and fall asleep in the city.

Manish Pingle
Sound Engineer
Mumbai



IFFI is where cultures and languages come together. It feels like all of the bees have come together, bringing nectar to the hive.

Madhesh Suriyakumar
Student
Chennai

“Directing is channeling for me”

Photo by Michael Praveen



BY NILANKUR DAS

Mau: the Spirit Dreams of Cheraw (2023) is a performance documentary film in the Mizo language, which uses Cheraw - the traditional Bamboo dance of Mizoram – along with traditional stories to share the forgotten tale of a mother who passed away during childbirth. It features a dance imagining the spirit of the mother. The film also explores the role of bamboo in the history of Mizoram and other North-eastern states, which has a close resemblance to the vigorous Goan folk dance called Dhalo.

Shilpika Bordoloi, the film’s director says that her work “lies at the intersection of Ecology, Somatic Movement and Ancestral Wisdom. *Mau* is part of a series of films on human and non-human relationships, which are coming from North-East India.”

In Mizoram, at the very easternmost boundaries of India next to Myanmar, the Bamboo Dance is traditionally performed as a way to pacify the soul of the mother who died in childbirth. This film, through dance and ritual folklore, attempts to address the role of the maternal using the motifs of birthing, frantic separation and pacification, and re-enacts the crucial moment of transition of the spirit of the Mother from death to afterlife. Bordoloi says her film “deals with stories of indigenous knowledge systems and questions the experience of time. The stories exist in a cycle of remembrance, and amnesia and inevitably that creates a continuity of a past, present, future.”

Through this film, Bordoloi wishes to witness, experience and bring alive the lived experience(s) of this Bamboo dance. It also addresses the complexities of trauma, attachment and memory. “Our intention is for the audience to see humans not as individuals but as species travelling through the birth to death cycle.

Similar to Goan folk dance Dhalo, the songs and stories of indigenous

knowledge systems question the experience of time. They create a continuity. Bordoloi muses that “there is death in the stories, and stories themselves are dying. The research also goes into the afterlife and explores the stories of co-existence with the spirit. However, the stories also have been shaped by history. And in that the body is not only the physical manifestation of the living culture but also a site of cultural networks linking the practice and history and structures of power.”

Bordoloi told *The Peacock* that “my process is intuitive, open to receive messages and information. Direction is channelling for me. I am not directing as much as I am co-directing with everything that surrounds me energetically.” Filmmaking is like somatic movement for her, an observation. This is her debut project and she is enthused to explore how somatic film-making can reveal new ways of archiving and story-telling and conversely how stories of forgotten histories can inspire or deepen the form itself of performance documentary film.

There’s this uncanny similarity with Dhalo, the vibrant folk dance indigenous to Goa, which is predominantly performed by women on the moonlit night-time of ‘Pausha’, celebrating the community spirit. The dance is performed by Kunbis, Bhandari, Naik, Gabit and Gaudi communities. They dress in colourful attire adorned with intricate jewellery and engage in rhythmic footwork and graceful hand movements. Accompanied by music, the dance narrates stories of rural life, love, and nature. Similar to the Cheraw dance of Mizoram, Dhalo, here in Goa embodies the collective identity and traditions of tribal communities of Goa, fostering a sense of timelessness and preserving the cultural heritage through dance form.

Mau: the Spirit Dreams of Cheraw screens today at 4.30 pm Inox Screen II, Old GMC Building.

SHORT TAKES



I can’t wait to see *Close Your Eyes*; it’s Víctor Erice’s first full-length film in 30 years!

Manoj Murali
Designer
Kerala



IFFI is the biggest platform, and my project *Lachit (The Warrior)* got selected in the Indian Panorama section! It’s important for every community to recognise their heroes.

Parthasarathi Mahanta
Police Officer
Guwahati



The free spirit in Goa and the film festival are a great mix. It’s my first time here and I’ve come with 32 classmates who are spread all around the festival!

Seetha Lakshmi
Film Student
Kerala



I’m part of the *Aattam* team, and it’s humbling for us to represent the Malayalam film industry.

Sangeetha J.
Consultant
Cochin

“Writing is both my addiction and therapy”

BY JESSICA FALEIRO

Poet. Author. Screenwriter. That’s what it says on the business cards Rochelle Potkar is handing out to OTT platform producers as they mill around the Books to Box Office pavilion at the Film Bazaar this year.

Her first foray into the industry was a small part in a Tamil movie in 2016, where she learned how directors think. It wasn’t until 2018 that she started to seriously consider screenwriting when her feature-length screenplay *A Brown Coat* was selected for the Screenwriters Lab. Two of her screenplays were then mentored by Ashwini Malik at a screenwriting course. Another was selected in the Writers Ink Screenwriting Lab 2022-23 which involved an intensive online fellowship with an international faculty. And yet another was selected for the Rewrite 2.0 Screenwriting retreat in Jaipur. Two of Rochelle’s script series *Bombay Heights* (2022) and *The D’Costa Family* (2022) are in Book to Box Office this year, which is why Rochelle is in Goa chatting with me about her addiction to writing.

“Writing is both my addiction and therapy. If you ask a chain smoker why they keep smoking, they won’t have an exact reason why. Writing keeps me sane. My mind does this magnificent thing where it allows me to think of large story-worlds and interesting characters that are making noise in my head. I love designs of how you shape narrative. With screenwriting, there’s story design and character design, especially in relation to various archetypes. Then there’s scene design, which is how you visually see a story. It’s beautiful. Scene design is what drew me to screenwriting in the first place.”

Her eyes light up when she adds that “one of the other things I love about screenwriting is that you can write very fast. The characters start talking on the first page, unlike in a novel, which means you, as the author, have already got a well-developed sense of your characters from the start. As a novelist you have to check

each line multiple times for things like flow because your book is your finished product. But, with screenwriting, you can jump between scenes, using a different kind of rhythm. In books, you cover a deeper storytelling. In a screenplay, you can cover vast histories in one hundred and twenty pages. You become a different kind of storyteller because of that.”

Potkar is an alumna of the prestigious Iowa International Writing Program (2015), the University of East Anglia’s 10-day Creative Writing India Workshop (2017), a Charles Wallace writing fellow (2017) and, most recently, an alumna of the NFDC and Netflix Screenwriting online programme 2022-23. She says that “screenwriting is a risk and a big gambling game. I realise it’s a tough industry. So, I can’t focus only on screenwriting. I still need to focus on fiction, my novels, short stories. The hustle and the struggle is there even with well-established scriptwriters. and I’m only at the start.”

“Imagination is free,” says Potkar. “If you channel life, whatever is happening and whatever you’re reading, you’ll find that it reaches a place where it converges and stories form. I have never gotten so intimidated by the scale of a story that I was afraid to write it down.”

She tells me that poetry has prepared her for the screenwriting world. “I don’t write for external validation. As a poet, I’ve never written for any reason other than the love of it and I gained a lot of strength from writing poetry at a time when everyone told me that it was dead, and there was nothing in it other than writing for the love of it. I managed to publish my poetry books, recite my poems in public and even teach verse and form. I drew courage from that experience and brought it into scriptwriting, determined not to be fearful of failure. I’m ready to keep writing these stories and pitching them whenever I can. My advice to aspiring screenwriters is to not worry about failure, to get into it seeing the journey as their destination.”



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

SHORT TAKES



IFFI is great because I get to see films that aren’t normally accessible. I’m very excited for *Room 999!*

Nidhi Saxena
Film-maker
Jaipur



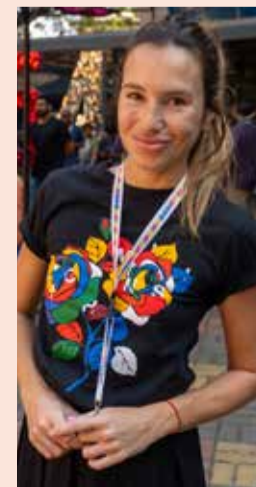
I’m interested in docu-montage films. I’m studying montage theory and was able to see what we discuss in practice here.

Shivam Joshi
Film Student
Mumbai



This is my first time at IFFI and I’m excited to meet people from around the world.

Adul Kamal
Film Student
Kerala



It’s my first experience with a film festival in India. The first film I watched was about advertisement and Instagram. It was really interesting to get an inside look.

Lene G.
Salesperson
Russia

Growing up with *The Archies*

BY PRAGYA BHAGAT

As a third-culture kid, I spent my teens struggling to belong, not just to a place but to people I could call my own. The idea of an enduring friendship—a tribe that held me through love, heartbreak, conflict, and everything in between—seemed like an idea almost as foreign as the countries I shuttled between every three years. During these hormone-riddled teens, reading the Archie comics offered comfort.

The Archie series was first published in 1942 by M.L.J. Magazines, a company that originally focused on superhero stories. The comics attempted to chronicle the lives of ordinary characters. More than eighty years later, Archie comics continue to be adapted for television, video games, the theatre, and the big screen, as the teens of Riverdale have become staples in a global culture.

For millennials like myself, Archie comics were an introduction to a world where friendship was home. Depending on my mood, I channeled the sass of Veronica, the generosity of Betty, the humour of Jughead, or the witchiness of Sabrina. These characters were imperfect, which made them all the more endearing. Still, a vein of unrelatability remained; the characters looked nothing like me.

Filmmakers and writers Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti have adapted the popular comics for Indian audiences. They call their musical comedy *The Archies*, and the film is slated for a Netflix release on December 7, 2023. It is the first feature film in Archie comics' history.

With its global representation and diverse delegates, IFFI was the perfect place for the two women to talk about their journey of bringing Archie comics to the subcontinent. Accompanied by Jon Goldwater, CEO and Publisher of Archie Comics, Sharad Devarajan, Founder and CEO of Graphic India and Liquid Comics, and Ruchikaa Kapoor Sheikh, Director of Hindi Original Films for Netflix, Akhtar and Kagti were in conversation with film



critic Rajeev Masand about their latest venture.

Akhtar remembered reading the comic book series during her early teens. "Archie was our portal to the West. They were also the only stories I read about teenagers like myself. Archie meant the world to me."

"Whenever we got a new comic," Kagti said, "My sister and I would fight about who would read it first. And then my dad would come and pull rank and read it first." Of all the characters, Jughead was Kagti's favourite. "We share a mutual love of food. Unfortunately, we don't share the same metabolism."

"How many of you grew up reading the comics?" Masand asked the audience. Amongst the packed Kala Academy hall, less than a third of the hands went up.

This served as an indicator of the generational challenge faced by Kagti

and Akhtar along with their third co-writer, Ayesha Devitre Dhillon, in her conversation with *The Peacock*. "Archie was very popular in India in the seventies and eighties, even the nineties. But kids today don't know Archie."

In such a scenario, Akhtar deferred to the power of storytelling. When talks of a film were on with Goldwater's team, "it was an easy yes. And then panic. But that feeling you got when you read that comic as a twelve-year-old? I wanted to transmit that feeling to everyone that watches our film. There is an innocence in that story, it's wholesome. The romances, the family dynamics. We'd like to bring that back."

"I don't remember the plot of every Archie comic," Masand added, "but I remember how the comics made me feel. And the film does that so beautifully."

OTT platforms bring universality

to localised content. That reach "is so exciting," Kagti said, "in partnership with Netflix, it's going to 190 countries." Sheik furthered the discussion on the global appeal of the Archie comics. "At Netflix, we are fans of entertainment, so when you hear of Jon and Sharad and Archie, and then you hear Zoya and Reema, you're like, game on. This isn't just a big moment for Netflix, it's a big moment for India."

The Peacock asked Goldwater about the legacy of Archie comics. His father, the J in M.L.J. Magazines, was one of the co-founders of the company. "The characters are like my brothers and sisters. I grew up with them," he said. These characters, in Kagti and Akhtar's *The Archies*, are brought to life through the eyes of Indian storytellers with an authenticity that, Goldwater says, has "exceeded every dream and expectation I could ever hope for. It's been a wonderful partnership."

SHORT TAKES



I'm looking forward to *Anatomy of a Fall*. I wasn't able to book it the first time around so I'm excited to finally see it. I wish I could see more than 4 films a day.

Sachin Pilaniya
Film Student
Rohtak



I've come to IFFI for the past 12 years and made a lot of memories. This year is the most important because of such a great gathering of people.

Satish Kumar
Editor
Chennai



It's my first time at IFFI! I'm excited for the open-air screenings and the one-on-one interviews to get insight into how those movies are created.

Muskaan
Agarwal
Actor
Mumbai



The Entertainment Society of Goa complex is really beautiful, and is a very appropriate place to have the film festival.

Madhurima
Maiti
Film Student
Pune

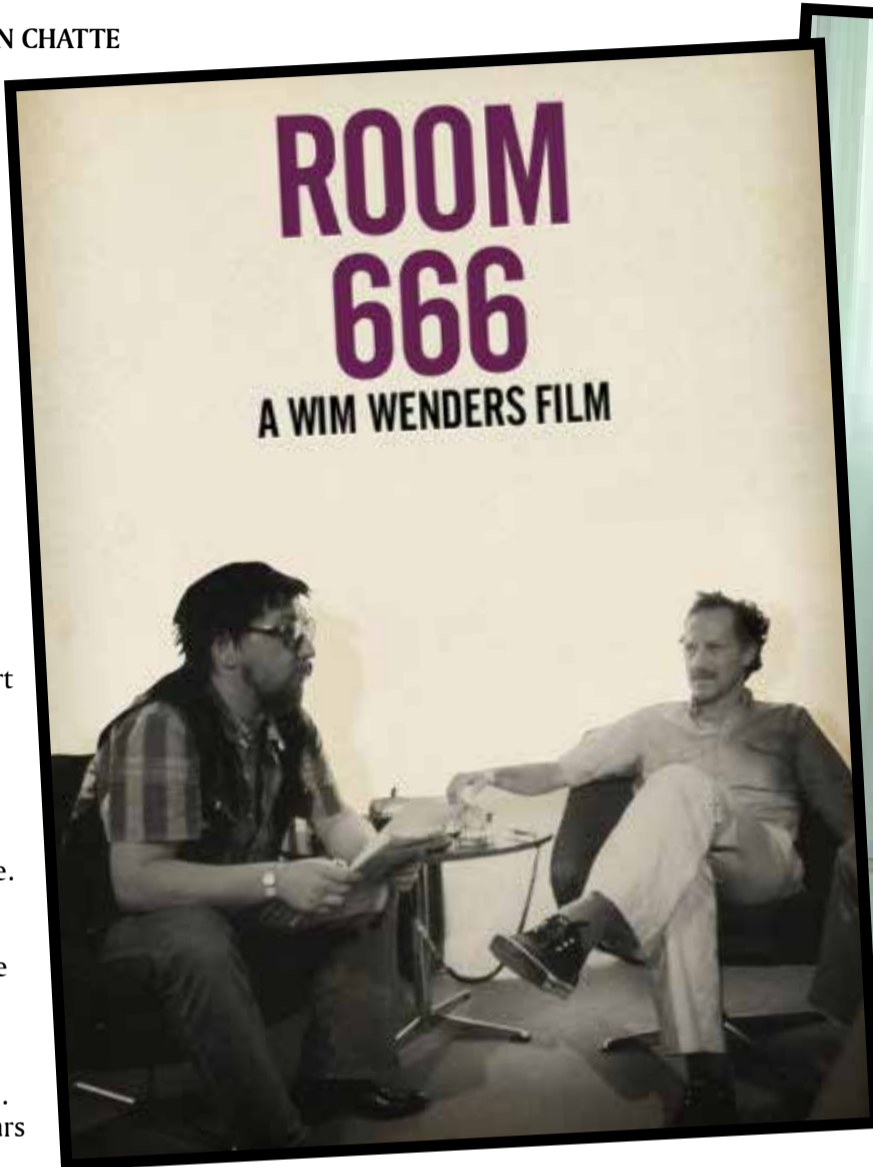
Long Live Cinema

BY SACHIN CHATTE

“Cinema is dead, long live cinema”, said Peter Greenaway, the famed British filmmaker whose work was influenced by Renaissance, Baroque and Flemish paintings.

Even though the genre was born around 1896, cinema is still alive and kicking. It has undoubtedly been the most popular art and entertainment form for more than a century but doubts about its future have been lingering for a while. With that burning question in mind, Wim Wenders made the documentary *Room 666* (Chambre 666) at the Cannes film festival in 1982. He was all of 37 years old back then, and had already made a mark on the international circuit with films like *Alice in the Cities* (1974), *Kings of the Road* (1976), and *The American Friend* (1977). He set up a 16mm camera in a hotel room, and asked renowned filmmakers like Jean-Luc Godard, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Steven Spielberg and Michelangelo Antonioni to speak about the future of cinema.

Fast forward 40 years later, debutant filmmaker Lubna Playoust made *Room 999*, at the same place, same festival, under the same circumstances and posed the same question – about the future of cinema and whether it is dying as an art form. The directors are left alone in a room with a chair and the camera running. Wenders, who



is the first to speak, sits briefly and prefers to stand and talk – he ends in a very cinematic style by coming close to the camera and switching it off.

A series of filmmakers, from James Gray of *Ad Astra* fame to two-time Palm d'Or winner Ruben Östlund, voice their diverse opinions on the subject. Their musings range from semi-optimism to cynical pessimism, but there is a common thread in their thinking – they all feel the digital era is the biggest threat to the art form. Whether it is the distraction of the mobile phone or the algorithm-driven content on OTT, as Wenders says, “the digital revolution is lethal”.

I found a lot of resonance with what Asgar Farhadi had to say when

it comes to ‘experiencing’ cinema. As he elaborates, right from the act of leaving home to catching a cab, buying tickets, getting popcorn and building the excitement to watch a film, to sitting in the dark with hundreds of strangers, and laughing and crying at what we see on the screen – that experience is unparalleled and cannot be replaced.

I remember the midnight screening of Christopher Nolan’s *Oppenheimer* earlier this year. It was scheduled for 12.05 at midnight, across the country and mid you, it’s a 3-hour film. But the multiplex lobby was packed with film lovers, and they patiently waited while there was a considerable delay due to technical reasons. By the time the film

was over, it was almost dawn but it was a cinematic experience to savor.

French director Audrey Diwan makes a valid point about attention span in the day and age of reels. With reference to her kids, she feels her films don’t match their pace as they are “slow”. As a director, David Cronenberg doesn’t feel there is any difference in film making keeping the screen size in mind.

As someone who prefers the theatre screen to the TV screen, no matter how big it is, one feels that the surroundings play an equal role, along with the screen size. For instance, a Bergman film like *Through a Glass Darkly* or Luis Buñuel’s surrealist films will be tough to watch alone

at home, without getting distracted. There is a certain form of cinema that needs collective viewing and deserves undivided attention, which no home theatre can offer.

While OTT content has become popular, Östlund rightfully scoffs at getting conditioned to accept mediocrity, and warns us to be careful of our choices. While the debate about the future of cinema will go on, as it did back when Wenders set the ball rolling, the Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov, had an interesting response. He took his shirt off, put on another one, and started dancing, showing off his smooth moves. Maybe he was just celebrating the fact that this art form is still rocking - *Le cinéma n’est pas mort, vive le cinéma*.

SHORT TAKES



IFFI was recommended to me by a friend. I’m really excited to watch different films, but the decor and the aesthetic feel incomplete.

Sharon Hill
Yoga Teacher
England



This year there are a lot more films around urban insecurities, migration, refugees, etc, and I’m looking forward to watching those.

Reshma Bharadwaj
Teacher
Kerala



We have our own film festival in Kerala, but IFFI’s lineup offers a wider range and is inseparable from its host state. If IFFI happened elsewhere, I don’t think I would go.

Dilip Kumar
Artist
Kerala



I’ve been coming for IFFI ever since I moved to Goa in 2012, and it’s always wonderful. The nature, ecosystem, and ambiance of Goa are reflected in the aesthetics of IFFI.

Rekha Rege
Retired
Goa

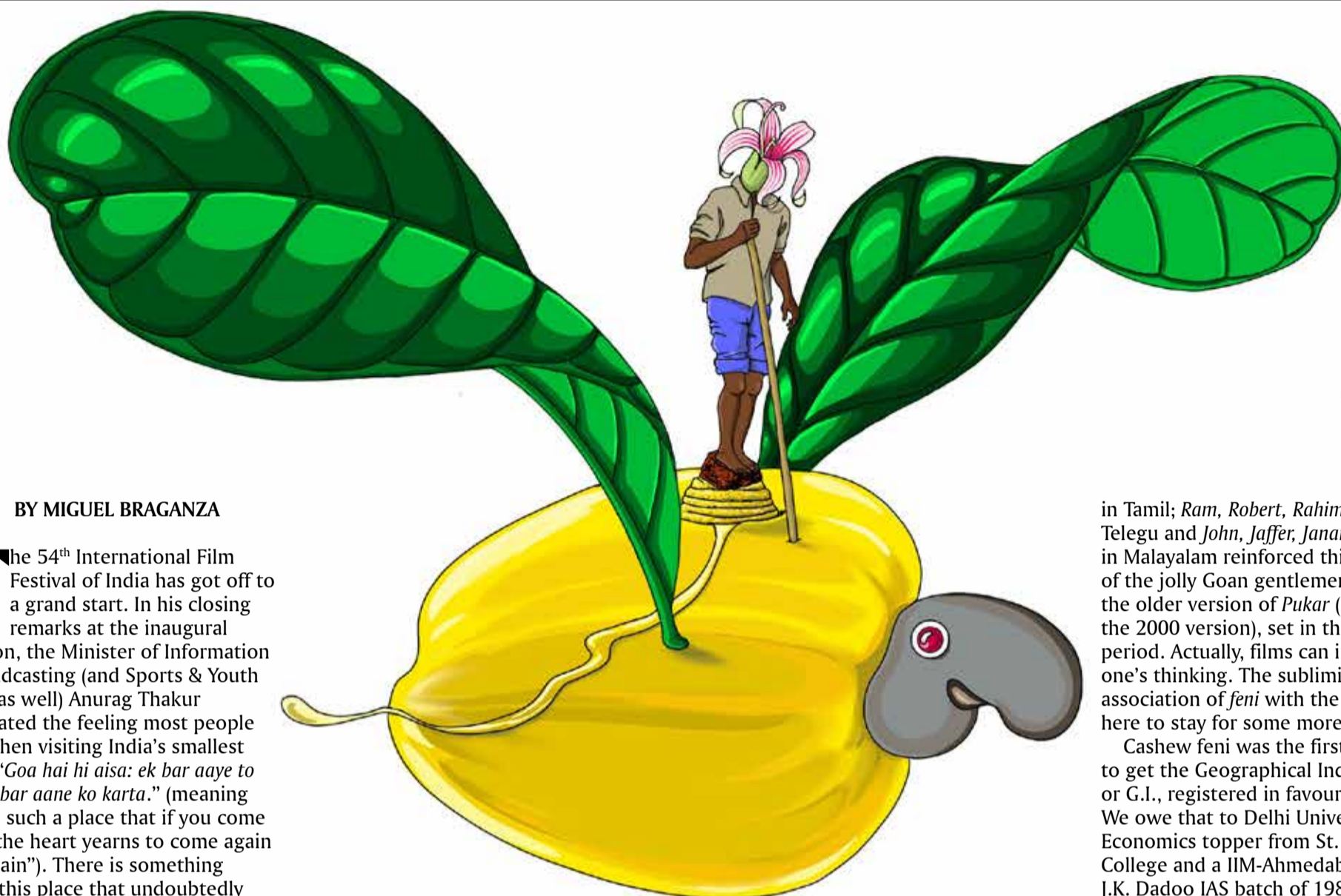


Illustration by Trisha Dias Sabir

BY MIGUEL BRAGANZA

The 54th International Film Festival of India has got off to a grand start. In his closing remarks at the inaugural function, the Minister of Information & Broadcasting (and Sports & Youth Affairs as well) Anurag Thakur articulated the feeling most people gets when visiting India's smallest state: "Goa hai hi aisa: ek bar aaye to dil bar-bar aane ko karta." (meaning 'Goa is such a place that if you come once, the heart yearns to come again and again'). There is something about this place that undoubtedly draws visitors to keep returning. Those who have lived here for a few years generally want to buy a plot of land, build a house and retire in Goa. Similar is the story of exotic trees that were introduced into Goa, and later naturalized here. One of them is the cashew tree *Anacardium occidentale*, a native of Brazil that was imported sometime after the 16th century and has now become our own.

Protected by a corrosive cashew nut shell liquid (or CNSL), the nut was not known to be edible. Hence, nobody willingly plucked, roasted or ate cashew nuts in any stage, from immature nuts to germinating seeds, known variously as *fokam*, *bibbe*, *biyo* and *goddhavlum* in Konkani. Commercial nut processing in India and their export to England began only in 1929. This may appear as difficult to imagine as the fact that Calangute beach neither had electricity till 1972, nor any tourists till 1968!

Cashew was introduced into Goa during the Portuguese colonial era as a soil-binder to prevent erosion from the hill slopes into the rivers, as the siltation made river navigation difficult. It was an era when most of the transportation was by boats rather than by bus and cars. The natives soon discovered that the pigs and wild boar which consumed the fallen cashew apples got intoxicated. It was just a matter of time before cashew apple juice began to replace coconut toddy as the base to make the fenny or *feni*, the unique heritage artisan alcohol. It soon became the spirit of Goa and now even has 'Geographical Indications' for this tiny territory.

The Bollywood feature film *Bobby*

(1973) with Prem Nath acting as Jack Braganza was a movie concept that caught the fascination of the youth as a love story of a couple, one of whom was rich and the other was poor. The brown liquid that Jack, the father of the bride, was drinking was obviously not *feni* but it was perhaps the choice of name that created the association of Goa with it. Bobby inspired a whole genre of films across India. Remakes may become difficult when the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2023, recently passed by both houses of the Parliament, becomes an Act. The film *Amar, Akbar, Anthony* (1977), with Anthony Gonsalves being named after a Goan musician in Bollywood; and its remakes *Shankar*, *Salim*, *Simon* (1978)

in Tamil; *Ram*, *Robert*, *Rahim* (1980) in Telegu and *John*, *Jaffer*, *Janardhan* (1982) in Malayalam reinforced this image of the jolly Goan gentlemen, as did the older version of *Pukar* (1983, not the 2000 version), set in the colonial period. Actually, films can influence one's thinking. The subliminal association of *feni* with the Goans is here to stay for some more time.

Cashew *feni* was the first product to get the Geographical Indications, or G.I., registered in favour of Goa. We owe that to Delhi University Economics topper from St. Stephens College and a IIM-Ahmedabad alumnus, J.K. Dadoo IAS batch of 1983, the Development Commissioner of Goa then, and a team he created under the Department of Science, Technology & Environment with a range of connoisseurs to producers and bottlers of *feni*. Meanwhile, a newcomer in the business, Vietnam, has replaced India as the world's largest exporter of processed cashew nuts.

Finding good *feni* is as difficult as it was finding *Finding Fanny* (2014), shot at the picturesque island of Sao Jacinto in the river Zuari. Urrak and *feni* can only be made of ripe cashew apples and, hence, the cashews are allowed to ripen on the tree and fall. This ensures that the cashew nut is fully mature and crisp when roasted. More than a quarter century after the G.I. for *feni*, we have a G.I. tag for 'Goa Cashew nut' as well!

Miguel Braganza is the leading "go-to person" for plants in Goa, and an acclaimed mentor to GenNext in agriculture.

Finding Feni

SHORT TAKES



We've come searching for projects that can be made in collaboration with India. Goa feels like the best place to have such a festival.

Gleb Sugak
CEO
Russia



As a state, Goa is so rooted in folklore, art, and even relationships with other countries, IFFI feels like the perfect congruence of it all.

Dr Rekha Raju
Classical Dancer
Bangalore



With IFFI I've always found a wider range of international cinema. With so many streaming platforms, it's nice to have a trusted, curated selection.

Janhavi Acharekar
Author
Mumbai



I was looking forward to meeting the directors of the films but many of them are not here.

Sohaib Ahmer
Film Student
Hyderabad



“

I met Jyoti Nisha at IFFI today, and it was a very joyful and thoughtful experience. She is a multi disciplinary professional: an academic, writer, screen-writer, filmmaker and producer who explores the history of caste inequality in India, re-frames questions of representation, social justice and upper caste ways of looking at the marginalized of India through an Ambedkarite Bahujan feminist lens.

Jyoti recently created/directed *Dr. B. R Ambedkar: Now & Then*, a feature length documentary that explores deep questions of the human condition. It aspires to translate the praxis of Ambedkarite politics to image making, and the representation of marginalized subjects' culture, history, and politics in popular cinema and media. Driven by Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy, the film symbolically and politically documents the representation and assertion of Bahujan people in the contemporary era. Questioning the institution of caste in India, this film is a commentary on religion, revolution, politics, and the freedom of speech.

Stories of marginalized Bahujans (the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Class and converted minorities) who represent 85% of the Indian population have not been told from the perspective of a hero. This is where *Dr. B R Ambedkar: Now & Then* stands different, because it not only documents the lived experiences of Bahujan communities but also tells their story from an oppositional Bahujan feminist gaze, resisting the type-casting and branding of popular culture's imagination of marginalized narratives.

Jyoti shared some heartwarming experiences here at the festival. She believes 'it's a great place to network, especially for new filmmakers who are interested in pitching their ideas. I hope this festival serves her and her art well. Kudos to many filmmakers, artists, musicians, designers and other creative professionals who come here to share their stories with all of us.

We Are Our World

BY VIVEK MENEZES

There can be no sustainable development without recognizing the myriad complex and profound linkages between cultural and biological diversity. Here is what UNESCO says about them: “Cultural values of biodiversity encompass aesthetic, spiritual, recreational, educational, inspirational values. They define peoples’ relations to biodiversity and are defined by culturally grounded and often intergenerational value and belief systems. Biodiversity, on the other hand, is an invaluable source of intangible cultural heritage, intercultural exchange, creativity and innovation. It strongly influences cultural value systems and underlie many cultural practices and cultural traditions. Cultural value systems are an important factor that drives people’s interactions with biodiversity including its conservation strategies and sustainable use and management practices.”

These are underacknowledged factors, but we feel them around us

all the time at the International Film Festival of India location on the banks of the gorgeous Mandovi River estuary, shaded by a profusion of trees, and just a couple of kilometres downriver from the tiny ecological jewel that is the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary on the island of Chorao. It may be difficult for most festival delegates to tear themselves away from morning-to-night screenings, but everyone should know that the amazing diversity of movies available here is mirrored closely by the magnificent biodiversity of India’s smallest state, where around 20% of its total surface area is protected forests including several spectacular wildlife sanctuaries that are home to hundreds of different species of birds and animals, including the hulking Gaur, the largest bovine species in the world and official state animal, and the lustrous Flame-throated Bulbul, the official state bird.

There is no way to separate the human and natural worlds in this blessed corner of the Konkan: they are one and the same. According to the excellent Goa Foundation, there are “fifteen villages in named after the mango tree [in the state], two after the kokum. There are villages named after the Banyan, the Tamarind and the Tulsi. Ten villages are named after the tiger, three after peacocks, five after snakes. Villages are named after anthills, forest land, gardens, waterfalls and water bodies.” Most of our festivals are similarly linked to nature, like the bacchanalian water carnival of San Joao – where the joyous celebrations coincide with the wells getting filled with the advent of the monsoons – to

Ganesh Chaturthi, where the deity is welcomed at home with a *matoli* made from an incredible range of indigenous plants, leaves, fruit and flowers.

Why is it no longer the same everywhere? And is not clear by now that humans suffer when their environments are compromised beyond redemption? Here in Goa, we have been inspired by the brilliant young defenders of nature in the Amche Mollem campaign that won the Sanctuary Asia Wildlife Service Award 2021, for their innovative and agile art-forward approach to advocate for better policy, and – crucially – created spaces for Goans from all walks of

life to articulate and express their relationships to the natural world via a range of different means including drawing and painting. This is one of the last hopeful ways remaining forward. It’s as the curator Nancy Adajania put it in her note for Art Dubai earlier this year: “We are as vulnerable as the species we have hunted into extinction, and our haunted pasts prefigure our threatened futures [but] perhaps art and poetry can show us a way forward, connecting us to one another across the Global North/ Global South, but also the human/non-human, animate/inanimate divides?”



Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro



Archie’s lambs

by Maaz Bin Bilal

Arch: Hey, Veronica, wanna play my harmonica?

V: No, Archie, I cannot comply, Reggie’s got a sty in his eye.

Jughead: Isn’t that the perennial chronica?

Betty: Shame on you all, teasing this sweet gal. Come let’s go, pal.

Reggie: Hola, you guys, you all met yet my Injun mate, Zoya?



Illustration by Nishant Saldanha

PRAGYAVERSE

by Pragma Bhagat

literacy: *noun*; possession of education

- asna - banyan - champa - dhobi elm
- egg fruit - flowerpecker - glory lily - honeysuckle
- impatiens - jackfruit - karvi - lychee
- mango - nirgud - oleander
- petrel - quail - robin
- sandpiper - tectorius
- ultramarine flycatcher - vovla - warbler
- xeranthemum
- yellownape
- zam

IFFI Screening Schedule – 22nd November

INOX SCREEN-I PANAJI	INOX SCREEN-II PANAJI	INOX SCREEN-III PANAJI	INOX SCREEN-IV PANAJI	MAQUINEZ PALACE	INOX SCREEN-I PORVORIM	INOX SCREEN-II PORVORIM	INOX SCREEN-III PORVORIM	INOX SCREEN-IV PORVORIM	SAMRAT AUDI	ASHOKA AUDI	KALA ACADEMY
BA1 ELEGIES 9:00AM - 10:43AM	BB1 VADH 10:00AM - 11:52AM	BC1 THE LAST BIRTHDAY 9:15AM - 10:35AM	BD1 MEASURES OF MEN 9:30AM - 11:26AM	BE1 CHILDREN OF GOD 9:00AM - 10:15AM	BF1 CLAP YOUR HANDS 10:00AM - 11:53AM	BG1 YANNICK 10:15AM - 11:22AM	BH1 KALEV 10:30AM - 12:05PM	BI1 ANTARCTICA CALLING 10:45AM - 12:07PM			BK2 FILM DIRECTION 10:30AM - 11:30AM
BA2 CLOSE YOUR EYES 11:15AM - 2:04PM	BB2 BARUAR XONGXAR / LIFE IN LOOM 12:45PM - 3:37PM	BC2 HOFFMAN'S FAIRY TALES 11:45AM - 1:14PM	BD2 BHANGAAR / SRI RUDRAM 12:00PM - 2:16PM	BE2 SHERSHAHAH 11:00AM - 1:17PM	BF2 THE INVISIBLE STEPS THROUGH LATIN AMERICA 1:00PM - 2:48PM	BG2 MORO 1:15PM - 2:35PM	BH2 A REAL JOB 1:30PM - 3:11PM	BI2 THE LAND WHERE WINDS STOOD STILL 1:45PM - 3:33PM	BJ1 WAKE ME 10:00AM - 11:26AM		BK3 LIVING THE CHARACTER 12:30PM - 1:30PM
BA3 SNOW LEOPARD 2:30PM - 4:19PM	BB3 MAU: THE SPIRIT DREAMS OF CHERAW / MANDALI 4:30PM - 6:36PM	BC3 FERESHTEH 3:30PM - 4:40PM	BD3 FRAGILE BLOOD 3:00PM - 4:33PM	BE3 THUNDERS 1:45PM - 3:00PM	BF3 ASOG 4:00PM - 5:39PM	BG3 IMAN 4:15PM - 6:05PM	BH3 THE PRIZE! 4:30PM - 6:06PM	BI3 BLOCKADE 4:45PM - 6:31PM		BL1 WHEN THE SEEDLINGS GROW 10:00AM - 11:24AM	BK4 MADHUR BHANDARKAR IN CONVERSATION WITH TARAN ADARSH 2:30PM - 4:00PM
BA4 KADAK SINGH 5:00PM - 7:15PM	BB4 THE SEA & SEVEN VILLAGES / ARDHANGINI 8:00PM - 11:12PM	BC4 THE VILLAGE 6:15PM - 7:15PM	BD4 OCARINA 6:00PM - 7:32PM	BE4 GOLIATH 3:30PM - 5:03PM	BF4 LUBO 7:00PM - 10:01PM	BG4 ROOM 999 7:15PM - 8:40PM	BH4 FORTUNE FOR ALL 7:30PM - 8:45PM	BI4 OTE 7:45PM - 9:33PM	BJ2 ADENTRO 2:00PM - 4:23PM		BK5 BRINGING STORIES ROOTED IN REALITY TO SCREEN 5:00PM - 6:30PM
BA5 ANATOMY OF A FALL 8:30PM - 11:00PM		BC5 COMANDANTE 9:00PM - 11:02PM	BD5 THE SUGAR EXPERIMENT 8:15PM - 9:46PM	BE5 AZIZ 5:30PM - 7:00PM							
			BD6 WE HAVE NEVER BEEN MODERN 10:30PM - 12:27AM	BE6 BEES SAAL BAAD 7:30PM - 10:03PM							

Today's spectacular cover artwork by Govit Morajkar pays tribute to the Malabar Banded Peacock butterfly, one of the most beautiful butterflies you will find anywhere in the world. It is endemic to the Western Ghats, one of the great biodiversity hotspots of the world, and is extremely swift in flight. Its main colour is black, with a broad iridescent central band that varies from blue and rich deep green to greenish-yellow, depending on the fluctuations of light.



Snow Leopard
14:30
INOX Screen-I Panaji



Anatomy of a Fall
20:30
INOX Screen-I Panaji

Kalev
10:30
INOX Screen-III Porvorim



Moro
13:15
INOX Screen-II Porvorim

