

Indian Cinema

1977/78

Published by the Directorate of Film Festivals,
Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Vigyan Bhawan Annexe, New Delhi-110 011.
January 1978.

Printed at Neo Art Press, Madras-600 002.

Director of Film Festivals: V. S. Katara

Co-ordinating Editor: Bindu Batra

Editor : Rani Burra

Layout : Rani Burra and Arun Pramanick

Cover Design : Zehra Tyebji and Arun Kolatkar

Photographs : Venugopal Thakker, Jahnu
Baruah, Shivarangan Gulvady,
Pablo Bartholomew, Screen,
Filmfare, National Film
Archive, Pune.

Production : D. Krishna Rao

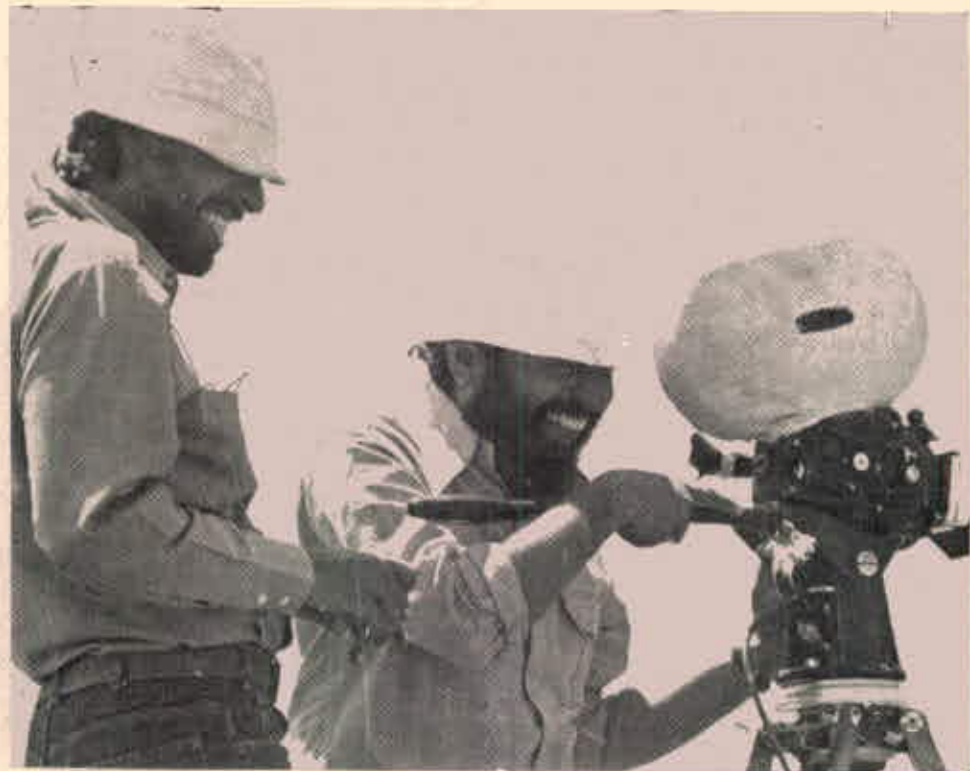
To Dream The Possible Dream

Shyam Benegal is an apothecary of the urban consciousness. The life of the city breathes in those unhappy with its range of vision, a need to distil it so that tomorrow's rut has a more meaningful groove. It is a part of urban guilt that all that is real, permanent, the basic values of good human beings who will order a good and generous society should spring rather from the earth; from the uncomplicated rice-fields and mountains, the timeless rivers, that betray no pottiness or hate or aggression like they have spawned in our urban agglomerations. Shyam Benegal, with the dilemmas of the city-dweller, has therefore sought to clarify the problems of his surroundings, through visions of the potentialities of the countryside. These—told with his cinematic vision—suppressed over the years in the less than arcane medium of the ad-film.

From Isaiah to Karl Marx, prophets have spoken with one voice. An ordered society is one where brother shall love brother and peace shall cover the earth as the waters cover

the sea. A sizeable chunk of present discontent is the exploitation of the poor by the rich. Where can this revolt begin against this oppressor? The oppressed have been conned by seductive promises from platforms and the individual nexus has remained unfulfilled in the callous and widening breach between public statement and private performance. But the seedling must sprout. Otherwise, your life and mine, committed to social consciousness, is a waste. For those of us who need our vision clarified and shown that other dark side of contemporary reality, **Ankur**, Shyam Benegal's first film, plants that first little sprig.

The *zamindar* in the time-honoured rural society is a have, and what he has, clearly, everyone else has not. Over the years, the duties that go with his privileges have been watered down into responsibilities for everyone but him. The guardian of society has sloth in his veins, can cheat and seduce and still expect (and get) rigid obedience from his fellow-beings.



In **Ankur**, Shyam Benegal casts his first stone against the system. He has been born to the feature film without the sin of compromise and can well aim his missiles at the largest glass-house. The *zamindar* in **Ankur**, Anant Nag, seduces Shabana Azmi, the wife of a labourer, a common enough occurrence in a common enough society. The tensions that this generates are lyrically delineated in an outstanding debut, set off by the need, as expressed in the film, for an initial act of revolt against the blatant hedonism of power.

Shabana Azmi, that golden girl of the gossip columns, is overnight transformed under Shyam Benegal's direction into an actress of surprising maturity. Anant Nag, in his hesitations and lack of moral fibre is another strongly believable creation. The black and white of moral conflict

is caught in superb colour by Benegal's cameraman, Govind Nihalani, sifting the Andhra countryside with its full rice-fields, a deceptively lush background for the beginnings of an elemental struggle. Vanraj Bhatia's background music is finely cued to the struggle of the protagonists. Sadhu Meher, as Shabana's dumb and drinking labourer-husband confirmed the acting talents which he had already so ably displayed in Mrinal Sen's **Bhuvan Shome**. Shyam Benegal has created his own tragic version of the *Commedia dell'Arte* where there are stock characters played by the same people, exploring progressively the aspects of social change.

Ankur (The Seedling), ends with a stone being thrown by a small boy at the *zamindar's* window. It is

not surprising that the major fault that most critics found with this film was the finery of Shabana Azmi's servant-maid glitter. Presumably, big minds react in a small way to major portents.

Nishant ends the first night of the new struggle in a cataclysm of destruction. This, Shyam Benegal's next film, has a more obvious rural tyrant, Amrish Puri, that raw, elemental actor of unusual power on the Hindi stage, as the godfather of a village. His brothers are mindless goons who terrorise its inhabitants. A school-teacher brings his wife into the village; she is kidnapped and raped by the *zamindar's* brother while in a chilling display of phallic compliance, the *zamindar* sits in his room cleaning his gun. Folk chants from Telugu songs and poetry throb with insistent fever as Vanraj Bhatia's music turns the village to blood and destruction. There is a massive raid on the *zamindar's* fortress; quiescent centuries of acceptance erupt into carnage of the oppressors. It seems so necessary, before society is born again, to bathe in the blood of those who block its growth.

It was felt by many that **Nishant** (Night's End) stated the conflict too clearly. Critics found that the characters were one-dimensional. That Shyam Benegal had not understated his theme, that his solutions were too obvious. Yet the solutions still needed to be stated; they had not been expressed by any other film-maker since Dada Saheb Phalke began it all sixty-five years ago. How Girish Karnad, the hapless schoolmaster in this film, watches his wife being taken away, ravaged, and then seeing her, a willing partner in her own destruction, is a strong and elemental parable that needed delineation only in the strongest and most virile terms.

Manthan (The Churning), then, is a retreat from obvious solutions. The political emergency, with its chilling



aftermath, suggested that there may not be obvious solutions. Social change needed a gentler hand—the smile of the veterinary doctor who would persuade the dairy-farmer to work within the system against the local tyrant. Yet, if the 500,000 dairy-farmers who contributed to finance the film, were to churn the ocean in the *primaeval* manner, there would not only be the nectar of milk for the gods, but an expelling of the poisons of the system, from our time-honoured society.

Girish Karnad, as a quiet agent of change, organising a dairy co-operative in Shyam Benegal's third film, is, in the ultimate context, the most reasonable solution in Shyam Benegal's continuing thesis. The doctor tries to get the buffalo-owners in the village together to prevent their surplus values in milk being taken away by the monopolist local capitalist—Amrish Puri again.

Rural society here is captured more lovingly in its frolic and underlined sexual frustrations. Smita Patil, a TV newsreader rescued by Shyam Benegal into almost instant stardom, has a platonic relationship of unusual eroticism with the vet, caught with great subtlety by the director in the scene where she bathes her legs in the flowing stream, and then stumbles accidentally into the vet's arms. The traditional, sex-less, vulgar treatment of such a scene in the commercial idiom is instantly exposed and codified by Shyam Benegal. His films are

clearly his. The director is no amanuensis for the whims of box-office stars.

The vet fights the milk-system in the village successfully at first. The theme of the film, which may well read like a committee report on the problems of implementing the Five-Year Plan, acquires beauty from Benegal's treatment. The rise of the harijan leader, Bhola (Naseeruddin Shah), the complex web of village elections, the problems of injecting urban upper middle-class liberal values into the eighty per-cent of our society—all form the warp of the rural broadcloth.

Ultimately the vet returns, defeated. It is inevitable. But Shyam Benegal concludes the film, as usual, on an upbeat. Bhola recovers from his temporary stupor. The dairy farmers slowly begin a co-operative on their own, and show the way to perpetual struggle.

Shyam Benegal is the ultimate optimist; the blinding light of

reality is diffused by the softness of idealism.

Manthan also goes back into the myths of Hinduism. When society had gone sour, the gods churned the ocean to find its essence or nectar and, for this, the demons also fought. Shiva swallowed some of the noxious poisons generated by the churning, and the world was rescued. Who will do so now?

In getting sensitive performances from his undiscovered stars, Shyam Benegal is unparalleled in Indian cinema today. Ray is already a master, his place in Valhalla is secure. Filmmakers like Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen and the rest have made their own contributions on their own terms. Shyam Benegal seems to make his on everyone's terms, still playing his idealism close to his chest, putting his aces down with that faint smile of irony.

So **Bhumika**, his fourth film, lets political solutions lie where they will. The individual needs expression too.





Hansa Wadkar, that star of Marathi folk theatre and cinema, had a life usual in its milieu but, told by Shyam Benegal, of sentimental and rich value in the current context of women in search of personal liberation.

Our society has defined rules even for an actress. Hypocrisy must be fed, that glutton is also an angry god. Smita Patil is the actress, whose career, is the career of film history for twenty years.

The atmosphere of the film studio in the forties, the tawdry lives of its parasites, the splendour of the landed rich who were patrons and lovers of film stars—Shyam Benegal has his first in-depth study of an individual in society.

Bhumika (The Role), untouched by political idealism and strongly sensitive to the agonies of a talented woman, will perhaps get the best reception from critics. Audiences have always responded to his films, but here may well respond least of all. Shyam Benegal here, talks most to the concerned intellectual (it is unfortunate that the unconcerned intellectuals number so many) and popular appeal is therefore likely to be limited.

Bhumika is astonishingly given an 'A', for Adult, certificate. One's worst fears come true. Its initial run in



Bombay was sold out for two weeks by unprecedented advance booking. A predominantly male audience grows restless with mere undress to petticoat and acceptance of unwed motherhood. Stereotypes have been broken, the audience is puzzled that the really bad cannot be told from the unreal good. Women who would have benefited most from the struggles of their sister under the skin, are kept away from the film by their husbands and fathers.

The director has encircled a direct inner confrontation of the actress with gentleness, an unstated compassion. Her succession of lovers are nowhere stated to be perverse, and an otherwise reasonable critic dubbing her a nymphomaniac, betrays deep prejudice.

Surely a woman can live on the same sexual terms as men? Our hypocrisy will not admit it, the sanctity of woman veils the sanctimoniousness of man.

Kondura, Shyam Benegal's latest film, in Telugu and Hindi, ends the first quartet of **Ankur**, **Nishant** and **Manthan**. Parasuram (Anant Nag, in what is clearly a several awards-winning role) is the agent of change from within the system. **Ankur** hints at violence, **Nishant** is blood-lust, and **Manthan** the Fabian smile.



Kondura uses village superstition and the power of religion to overthrow dogma, the strong chains of habit with which the *zamindar* binds his people.

Kondura's visuals are Govind Nihalani at his best, the Shyam Benegal company of players is fortified by Vanishree as Parasuram's wife. The sage from the sea (**Kondura**) is that inner voice that asks Parasuram, running away from his problems, to stay back and fight.

He does; tyranny is met on terms it can understand, can sympathise with. The ultimate moral is metaphysical. There are obvious death-regeneration

themes, there is the more unstated creation of hope out of physical ugliness, of fighting the social enemy with his own moral beliefs. A deeply disturbing film, where the endings are open, leaving the viewer to draw conclusions as he may wish. Coterie audiences will be enchanted, for the deliberate, reflective pace of the story cannot enchant the impatient.

Blaze Enterprises and Freny Variava, the producers, have full faith in Shyam Benegal. In an unusual partnership in Indian cinema, they have given him a free hand. He has played it with unusual ability, boldly pushing transitional cinema into greater permanence and the spin-offs in the commercial world already pop-up.

...All alchemists are dreamers. Shyam Benegal is also clearly one. To cleanse base metal, and bring it forth shining, has caught the imagination of those with and without talent. Shyam Benegal has shown his. His films make us feel that his impossible dreams may still be realised, and this is clearly his success.

—Shankar Menon

The Last-Minute-Happy-Ending

One of director Basu Chatterji's recent films running to packed houses is **Swami**, featuring Girish Karnad and Shabana Azmi.

Swami is based on Sarat Chandra's Bengali novel, set in the early 20th century. The word '*swami*' could be translated as 'lord and master', not in the sense of a tyrant, but as the traditional Hindu woman's concept of the ideal husband: gentle and protective, dependable and considerate, the perfect *grihastha* or householder.

The heroine, Saudamini, is an educated girl, a rare phenomenon at the turn of the century. Her uncle and guardian, who has imbibed of the British liberal tradition, offers her a measure of freedom that girls of that time were largely denied. Her widowed mother is critical of the girl's wayward and headstrong behaviour; she considers the uncle's handling of the girl indulgent and irresponsible, particularly with regard to marriage.

In the first part of the film, Saudamini is involved with a neighbour, literally the boy-next-door, Narendra, who is being educated in the nearby city of Calcutta.

Under repeated proddings from the mother, the uncle sets out to inspect a prospective and respectable bridegroom, Ghanashyam. Though a widower, he is considered highly eligible in the marriage-market, as the eldest son in a well-to-do family of businessmen.

But the uncle suffers a heart attack in the horse-carriage bearing him back home. Before he dies, however, he pleads with his niece to accept Ghanashyam who, he feels, will make an ideal husband for her.

Saudamini, who has been given her way thus far, suddenly finds the reins drawn in.

In a desperate bid for freedom, she writes a letter to her boy friend in Calcutta, asking him to come to her rescue. But he does not turn up and she has no choice.

In the new household, Saudamini encounters Ghanashyam's shrewish stepmother and step-family—a married brother and an unmarried sister. Saudamini, forced into an unwanted relationship, feels alienated, not only from the family, but from her husband.

Ghanashyam, sensing her state of mind, does not force his attentions upon her.

Slowly Saudamini observes how Ghanashyam, though he is the actual bread-winner in the family, is treated with neither respect nor care. Even the servants ignore his requests for water to wash with or for food, while the stepmother lavishes love and sweetmeats on her own son.

Ghanashyam seems to accept this situation with, what may be called, a gentle stoicism.

Saudamini finds her attitude changing to one of concern for her husband and decides to stand up for his rights.

When a prospective bridegroom for Ghanashyam's plump and ungainly stepsister ridicules the poor girl—at the same time demanding an exorbitant dowry—Ghanashyam puts his foot down. She is not a commodity on sale in the market, he says in defiance of the stepmother, who is only too eager to rid herself of this burden. This is a key incident in Saudamini's changing attitude towards her husband.

Just as prospects seem to be growing pleasant, there enters the snag-in-the plot, Narendra.

Narendra pleads with Saudamini to come away with him; discovering their tete-a-tete, the wicked stepmother accuses her of infidelity and forces the situation to a point, where Saudamini has no choice but to leave. . . .



But, waiting for the train on the station platform, Saudamini recalls the gentleness and tolerance of her husband.

As she loses herself in memories, her eyes fill with tears.

The train arrives.

But so does Ghanashyam. . . .

In a commercial or popular film world, that swears by the star-system and *masala* entertainment, director Basu Chatterji happens to be a phenomenon. For he has proved that box-office success does not depend on these factors alone.

Where popular cinema lumbers along its well-trodden plot, Basu breezes by; if the familiar formula stifles, then Basu is like a breath of fresh air.

Basu still uses elements of the popular film, such as romantic songs and situations, an occasional star or dance sequence.



But where he scores is in the choice and treatment of his stories, slender story-line regardless. His stories deal mainly with the middle-class milieu and the characters and situations in his films are such that the middle-class audience identifies with them readily.

Further, his boy meets girl not against contrived picturesque backdrops, through a screen of hill-station mist, or flitting around flowering shrubs—but in everyday surroundings, the city street, the bus stop, the office canteen, a real home.

By and large (more large than by) Basu deals in pre-marital and marital romance, its pleasures, and its complications.

Sara Akaash : Two very young people have an arranged marriage and are so shy of each other that they spend the first few months like strangers, not even exchanging so much as a greeting. But eventually the ice is broken . . .

Piya ka Ghar : A newly married couple have an accommodation problem in the city; they have neither privacy nor peace in the two rooms shared by the joint family; the film ends with the possibility of the couple finding separate accommodation.

Rajnigandha : A young girl is attracted to a government clerk, but she still remembers her first love. She happens to meet him again and is in two minds; she returns to her government clerk.

Chitchor : A young man is mistaken to be the suitor invited to meet a girl; the real suitor arrives but meanwhile the girl has fallen in love with the 'impostor'; young girl determinedly chooses to marry the first young man.

Safed Jhoot : A newly-married husband who cannot otherwise get

leave from the office lies to his boss and takes off on his honeymoon. At the dak-bungalow setting for the honeymoon, the boss arrives. After a series of misadventures, the couple leave again on their honeymoon, this time, with the blessings of the boss.

Priyatama : A middle-class man, married to an upper-class girl has to work hard at his job to support her. Feeling neglected, she misinterprets his relationship with a girl working in his office. A kindly uncle drives some sense into the heroine's head and brings about the happy reconciliation.

Basu specialises in the last-minute-happy-ending . . . so that the audience may heave a final sigh of relief and go home, girl safe with the boy, and their dreams secure.

Basu seems to have set himself a framework within which he operates unpretentiously, with an eye for the smaller detail, and a sense of humour, which the popular cinema lacks.

These set his films apart—and draw his audience close.

Basu's humour springs from human observation—from the way he looks at ordinary people in everyday life. Though there is often an element of caricature, Basu rarely lets his comic situations lapse into the kind of buffoonery that passes for comedy in the popular cinema.

In **Sara Akaash**, we have an amusing scene of a family group being photographed on the bungalow-terrace. The fussy old-school photographer tinkers interminably with his ancient camera as the hapless group waits, limbs stiffening and smiles freezing into grimaces.

In **Chitchor**, the mother of the girl, over-eager to impress the suitor (the wrong one actually) tries to pass off her own needle-work and cooking as her daughter's handiwork. When the



girl gives her mother away with an innocent remark, she snaps: "You keep out of this."

Choti-si-Baat opens with an introduction to the hero's office colleagues, tracing their romantic and marital entanglements, with a witty mock-reportorial narrative on the soundtrack. This effectively sets a light-hearted tone for the rest of the film.

Basu Chatterji began his career as a cartoonist and reporter, actively involved in the Bombay film society movement.

His first film, **Sara Akaash**, was made in 1969 with a Film Finance Corporation loan. This gave him the

opportunity to make **Piya ka Ghar** for a commercial distributor.

But it was only after **Rajnigandha**, made four years later, that Basu flashed back on to the cinema scene. (Incidentally the successful **Rajnigandha** was produced by Suresh Jindal, who has now produced Satyajit Ray's **Shatranj ke Khilari**.)

Basu began with low-budgets and small names on the marquee. But today, with a string of box-office successes behind him, he has moved into the orbit of big-money and superstars. What kind of denouement will Basu Chatterji write to his own success story?

— Ram Mohan

Who Are The Good Guys? Who, The Bad?



Go-dhuli (The Cow-dust Hour) is the second film Girish Karnad and B. V. Karanth have made together. It is in colour, unlike their earlier films; and bilingual (in Kannada and Hindi), also unlike their earlier films.

Go-dhuli is woven around the cow, the cultural motif of traditional Hinduism. Set in a village, it is the story of the Kalinga family. Legend has it that a forefather was saved from a tiger by a Punyakoti cow and as a result, down generations, the Kalinga family has worshipped generations of the Punyakoti breed of cow.

The film opens with a title-ballad, praising the Punyakoti cow, named for a 'million goodnesses' and worshipped by the Hindus as their mother goddess.

Once, so goes the ballad, a Punyakoti cow was waylaid by a fierce tiger.

The cow pleads with the tiger: "Release me, so I may suckle my calf one last time. I promise to return".

The skeptical tiger lets her go. The cow feeds her young one: "Truth is our mother, Truth is our father, so I must abide by my word".

She requests the other cows to take care of her calf, who is soon to be orphaned, and leaves to lay her life at the feet of the tiger.

The tiger is overcome by her goodness: "If I kill a good being like you, the God above will never forgive me!"

The tiger leaps off a cliff and kills himself instead.

Yet once again, good triumphs over evil!

The ballad makes a sharp-cut distinction between the two.



But the film develops as a counterpoint to this initial statement. Truth is tested, but it is not the scientific test of a laboratory. Human beings are concerned, human action and inter-action is involved. In the end, it is impossible to judge or to take a stand. In the end, every 'truth' becomes relative.

The young protagonist, Kalinga, returns home from America to farm his land—but he brings with him an English wife, Lydia. She makes every effort to understand the Hindu way of life, but the clash seems too resounding, the chasm perhaps too wide to bridge.

To Kalinga, himself, who is inclined to adjust, some of the traditional customs and rituals seem obsolete, and even ridiculous. His dumb mother and friends of long-standing turn away from him. The villagers, led by the

priest (Kalinga's closest childhood friend) refuse to accept them, despite Lydia's efforts to belong.

When it is known that Lydia is pregnant, growing tensions ease awhile.

But Kalinga violates tradition by selling old and useless cows to the butcher. Lydia, who has developed a kind of friendship with the priest, is now cursed by him: "The Kalinga family will be wiped out forever."

In Kalinga's absence, the outraged and pregnant Lydia orders a Punyakoti cow to be slaughtered. The frenzied villagers march upon the couple's farm-house; their fury is stilled only when Kalinga accepts to pay the traditional penance for such a heinous crime. Kalinga's mother now leaves the Punyakoti cows in the priest's care.

Kalinga's mother dies of misery.

Kalinga decides to take his wife and child back to America. But then Lydia is unable to suckle her baby. The priest refuses to let the starving child drink the Punyakoti's milk. Lydia denounces the priest for placing the life of the cow above a child's. The priest relents; he returns the cows to Kalinga. Once again, a child-Kalinga is saved by a Punyakoti cow as in fact, his father had been before him.

The priest decides to go far away to re-learn humanity, he has forgotten human values in the face of rite and ritual.

But he pleads with Kalinga to bring back the Punyakoti cows Kalinga has sold to an agent: "Cows are *gramalakshmi* (the wealth of the village). And these cows belong to your family." A guilt-ridden Kalinga runs after the cows he has sold away.

Lydia watches him leave, sitting on their half-packed luggage.

Kalinga catches up with the agent. But he cannot distinguish his own cows amongst the herd. He calls out their names in vain. The cows move on, around and away from him.

Kalinga is left alone, watching helplessly.

The Kannada novel, on which the film is based, is titled **Tabbiliyu Neenade Magane** or 'You are an orphan, my son. But there is more than one 'orphan'.

In societies that are growing, tensions develop simultaneously. The process of alienation which begins when Kalinga sets foot on native soil (and makes him a stranger amidst

family and friends) ultimately encroaches upon his own self.

Values act and inter-act; older ones may be cast aside, but often enough it is difficult to replace them with newer values. In such a situation, the sensitive individual suffers, and after a point it is difficult to say who is right, who is wrong, or who is good or evil.

The directors handle what is a highly emotional theme objectively. By building up the film in terms of argument and counter-argument, Karnad and Karanth have successfully avoided both a moralising tone and melodrama.

The photography is by Apurba Kishore Bir (whose **27 Down** won a national award) and there is uniformly excellent acting, not only from the main characters in this four-sided conflict, but from every actor cast in each smaller role.

When cinematography first came to India, Kannada film-makers were quick to assimilate the new techniques. But they soon lost ground to more lavish and popular productions in other languages.

The seventies saw a revival on the Kannada screen, when Girish Karnad and B. V. Karanth infused new blood into Kannada cinema.

Girish Karnad had already made his name as a playwright before he took to film-making. His plays, **Tughlaq** and **Hayavadana** in particular, are amongst the most vigorous of modern Indian plays. (His screen-playwriting too has this certain in-built explosive quality). Through his work, it is clear that Karnad is gifted with a creative and analytical mind, both opportune for the art medium that film-making is. Playwright, film-director and actor, Girish Karnad was



also Director of the Indian Film & TV Institute for two years. He is significantly responsible for triggering off the new-film movement in Karnataka.

B. V. Karanth began his career as an errand-boy in a popular and professional Kannada theatre troupe. Today he is Director of the National School of Drama (where he was a student 15 years ago). At Benares, he worked for a doctorate on Indian stage and Hindi drama. He has studied Carnatic music and, under Pandit Omkarnath Thakur, classical Hindustani music as well. His exposure to all ranges of theatre and music gives him an unique background in the Indian performing arts. His productions of *Hayavadana*, *Jo Kumaraswamy*, *Evam Indrajit* and scores of other plays have been widely acclaimed. He is responsible for rejuvenating the theatre movement in Karnataka.

Having thus a firm standing in theatre and literature, both Karnad

and Karanth understood clearly the flaw in the local sensibility which veered between western models and inanity. Experimentation had driven itself to a dead end; and there was a continuous lack of authenticity.

With extraordinary acumen, Karnad and Karanth resolved this polarity by focussing on socio-religious beliefs, caste and class relationships and cultural conflicts. The themes they chose were very close to the hearts of the people. Bonded labour, blood-ties, cow-worship — and slaughter — are genuine issues to Indians even today. And when these subjects were brought to the screen, their films instantly appealed to the masses (whose general preference is the fantasy-superstar production, packed with song and dance).

Diametrically opposed to these opiates, Indian cinema also offers an intellectual variety appreciated by the fewer initiates.

By avoiding both extremes, Karnad and Karanth broadcast the beginnings of an intelligent and authentic cinema in Kannada. Neither esoteric or non-communicative, nor mere frivolous indulgence in fantasy, their work set a new trend that told a powerful story straightforwardly, yet with subtlety.

Thanks to these two pioneers, big producers in Karnataka today, unlike in the past, are now prepared to finance low-budget, black and white, new-sensibility films. Today this movement in Karnataka seems hopefully large and significant enough to affect the national cinema climate.

The first film Girish Karnad and B. V. Karanth made together was **Vamsha Vriksha**. Independently, Karnad has made **Kaadu** while Karanth has made **Chomana Dudi**.

In these films, photography and cinematic technique do not exist independently. Rather they wait upon the unfolding of the dramatic narrative and theme.

The films are based on widely-read regional novels, with their background in rural and semi-rural India.

They do not end pessimistically, rather on a questioning note—that bears towards hope.

Samskara began Karnad's association with the film world and the new Kannada film movement as well.

In **Samskara** and **Chomana Dudi**, the focus is on the disintegration of the individual (though on different levels); while in **Vamsha Vriksha** it shifts to the disintegration of a family. If **Kaadu** highlights the hostility between two villages, then **Go-dhuli** dramatises it between two whole cultures.

Vamsha Vriksha (The Family Tree) is built around the significance of blood-ties in the Indian ethos.

Katyayini is a young widow. By re-marrying, she loses the custody of her son to her father-in-law, the orthodox brahmin, Shotri. Repeated miscarriages, however, drive her back to her only son. But reconciliation becomes impossible because of Shotri's bigotry. Traditionally, family-lineage is traced through the male progeny and Katyayini's re-marriage is not only a sin, it is a denial of Shotri's family. Therefore, Shotri, despite his sympathy for his daughter-in-law, believes that if he unites mother and son, he will violate *dharma* or traditional Hindu ethics. Shotri's attitude affects even his grandson, who rejects his mother.

Later, Shotri learns that he himself is of illegitimate birth—and is tragically shattered. Remorseful at the harshness he has shown his daughter-in-law, he hurries to her for forgiveness, but it is too late—for she lies upon her death-bed.

Shotri leaves on a pilgrimage; but the film ends on a shot of his grandson, swinging on the gate of the family-house. In the end he has returned to the family-fold. The experiences he has been through have changed him, brought him to the threshold of manhood.

In **Kaadu** (The Forest) Girish Karnad explores the theme of violence on a grander scale, by dealing with hostilities that spring up between two villages, geographically separated by a forest.

Violence, sparked off between individuals, spreads to the entire village and ultimately the urban police are called in.

Very compact in structure, **Kaadu** tells the story of a village *gowda*

(chieftain), who neglects his loving and beautiful wife, and goes every night instead to his mistress in the neighbouring village.

His wife resorts to ritual sacrifice—cock slaughter—to bring her straying husband back to her bed. The film opens with this ritual, where she is seen applying a *tikka* (the symbol of marital status) on her forehead, with the blood of the still-dying bird.

Hostilities flare up between the two villages when a married woman from one village sleeps with a man from the other. There is a futile attempt at reconciliation and violence explodes during the *okulli* festival (the water-fight with its ritual violence, is one of the film's most brilliant sequences).

The *gowda's* wife is raped and killed and the *gowda* hunts down the murderers. When law-enforcing institutions like the local *chavadi* are ineffective, because the moral codes of its members are ambiguous, brute physical force takes over. Consequently the village, as a social system, disintegrates.

The violence comes full circle, when the *gowda*, his finger smeared with his victims' blood, draws a *tikka* on his dead wife's forehead.

What is refreshing about *Kaadu* is that it is developed as events seen through a boy's eyes. The *gowda's* nephew, Kitti, is exposed to the conflicts and violence around him—which sadly, become a part of his growth.

The small details developed around Kitti make the film human and humorous and serve as a counterpoint to the brutality around him.

In *Chomana Dudi* (Choma's Drum), B. V. Karanth takes up the problem of oppression, in this case, of

caste and class. Choma and his family are harijan bonded-labour, sweating out their lives for the interest piled up on a paltry sum of twenty rupees borrowed years ago.

Choma dreams of owning land of his own some day, but his desire for betterment is personal and representative of a vulnerable, oppressed class, rather than the harijan caste.

Tragedy strikes his family. He loses his sons—one to the river, another to Christianity and a third to cholera.

The Christian priest attempts to convert Choma to Christianity by promising him two acres of land—and for a moment, Choma is tempted. But he resists and returns to his primitive *bhoota* or spirit-worship.

His daughter, Belli, sleeps with the plantation overseer and redeems their loan. Overjoyed, Choma celebrates her return lavishly, but when he later sees her in the arms of the overseer, he is totally disillusioned.

Then Choma dies.

All through the film Karanth uses implicit symbols, which heighten the violence of the action; the landlord's mother who represents stagnant values; the plantation overseer who is the exploiter—and the introduction of the white man widens the theme of oppression.

The drum is Choma's other self, through which he expresses anger, joy, sorrow. Long after Choma is dead, the drum continues to be heard. Where Choma may have failed, others continue to seek fulfilment.

In the film, people as individuals are good-natured enough, even kind, but as part of a social system or



group, they lose their human faces. For example, when Choma's son is drowning in the river, one of the brahmins on the bank instinctively jumps in to his rescue, but the others call him back. Not only is the boy a harijan (an untouchable), he is a corpse, which for the brahmin would compound the crime.

The sound track is inevitably evocative, and at its best in the sequence where the workers sing as they cross the *ghats* (hills) to seek employment in the plantation. Karanth here uses traditional folk music. In the song the *ghats* are personalised, and one sings to the other:

"O Subramanya, you came to me
(And we were together many
years)

But one day, early morning, you
went very far away . . .

Now many hills stand
between us
And separate us . . ."

The synthesis of sound and visual seem to take us to a space and time without definition, where man is eternally trudging.

— Vidya-Arya

The mother tongue & the other tongue

Shatranj ke Khilari (The Chess Players), based on Prem Chand's celebrated Hindi story, is Satyajit Ray's first attempt to make a film in a language other than his mother tongue, Bengali.

It is ironic that Ray's films are more widely seen, outside Bengal, in Europe, Japan and the U. S. A., than in the non-Bengali regions of India. One of the reasons for this is that non-Bengali audiences are unable to follow the language, and seeing subtitled films, outside of film society viewings, is not very much in vogue. And naturally Ray is averse to the dubbing of his films into other languages as that would spoil the flavour of the original.

For years producers have been trying to persuade Ray to make films in Hindi, which have an all-India market, unlike films made in the other Indian languages, which are restricted to their particular regions. But till now Ray has been hesitant to step out of his Bengali milieu. Unlike many other Bengali film makers working in Hindi he did not want to make films with characters speaking Hindi in a Bengali setting.

Moreover, he was not sure if his style of film making would be acceptable to Hindi film audiences which, for the past fifty years, have

been fed on a diet of song and dance extravaganzas, based on theatrical conventions inspired by Victorian musicals and melodramas.

However, in the last decade, a number of film makers, inspired by Ray's example in Bengali have tried to make films of a more cinematic nature in Hindi. This has led to a new awareness in the Hindi cinema and there is now a sizeable following for what is called the "parallel" cinema. This must have influenced his decision to attempt a film in Hindi after having refused to do so for so long.

Perhaps he was also unable to find a suitable theme with which he could identify and which really inspired him.

But a few years ago when he happened to read a Bengali translation of Prem Chand's short story **Shatranj ke Khilari**, it did seem to him that the story offered possibilities as the basis for a film.

About this time Suresh Jindal approached Ray through a common friend and offered to produce a film in Hindi on any theme which might interest Ray. Ray suggested Prem Chand's story, which Jindal also happened to admire, and so it was decided to go ahead with the project.



The original story of **Shatranj ke Khilari** is very brief—about 10 pages — and so could only form the nucleus of a film-script and would need considerable accretions and additions.

When Satyajit Ray first thought of what his approach to the script would be, he seemed quite excited by the idea of being able to juxtapose the stasis of the chess playing noblemen with the turmoil of the battle, which must have accompanied the annexation of Oudh.



This was, of course, before he had read anything about the actual historical events which occurred at the time of the annexation. Because when he did, he discovered that there was no battle at all—in fact not a single shot was fired and Wajid Ali Shah, the last King of Oudh, gave up his throne without any recourse to action.

At this point he was almost on the point of abandoning the project altogether, as he thought the film would suffer from a lack of movement. But then he thought it over and decided to treat the story of the chess players in a tongue-in-cheek fashion, juxtaposing their little drama with the machinations of the East India Company and the bewildered outrage of Wajid Ali Shah.



The rulers of Oudh had been successively deprived of their dominions and powers by a rapacious East India Company and Wajid Ali was the nominal ruler of a kingdom half the size of his great-grandfather's, with control only of coinage, agricultural taxes, octroi, police and the administration of justice. In return for these privileges, he was given protection from outside aggression by the armies of the East India Company posted in his provinces, and for whose upkeep he had to pay.



As a young man he tried to play at being a 'real' king and raised forces of his own but was discouraged by the English Resident. With a lot of time on his hands he turned to the pleasures of his harem and to song and dance and the performance of operatic plays.

The English historians of the period have painted him as a debauched and profligate monarch, but he was a not-untypical representative of his class and age and also a man of multi-faceted talents — poet, composer, dancer and musician.



Some Indian historians trying to correct the earlier descriptions have attempted to paint him as a paragon of virtue, a helpless victim of colonial treachery.

Ray wanted to avoid both these extremes and present him as a sympathetic and multi-faceted personality who, though basically weak, was not without a certain pathetic and misplaced dignity. His British antagonist, General Outram, is also portrayed as a man who knows that his masters, the East India Company, have no moral right to deprive Wajid Ali Shah of his kingdom, but so firm is his belief in the rightness of the colonial cause that he is willing to go against the dictates of his own conscience. He is firmly convinced that 'progress' and the greater glory of the Empire consist in ruling the natives directly.



The two chess playing noblemen represent the complete indifference of the feudal ruling classes to the events of the day—as long as their immediate interests were not affected.

Ray felt that the theme of non-involvement of the elite in current political events had great relevance to the modern Indian situation.

But the peaceful annexation of Oudh had violent repercussions, which resulted in the bloody uprisings of 1857, known to English historians

as the Sepoy Mutiny. The bloodiest battles of the so-called mutiny took place in the former kingdom of Oudh where the uprising was in the nature of an insurrectionary war. During this time Wajid Ali Shah was imprisoned in Fort William, Calcutta, as it was feared that he was instigating the rebels.

Apart from the theme of the story, it was the period and the setting which appealed to Ray. Wajid Ali Shah was not a stranger to Bengalis as he spent the last years of his life in Calcutta and contributed much to the cultural life of the city (including its first zoo).

As a child, Ray spent his vacations in Lucknow visiting his uncle and remembers being entranced with the old world courtliness of the typical Lucknowi. Remnants of the old feudal Lucknow in the form of speech, mores, and amusements continued to be found in Lucknow until 1947 when many of the *jagirdars* and *nawabs* of Lucknow decided to throw in their lot with Pakistan and migrated to that country.

Indolent, aristocratic Lucknow represented a world in itself. The Lucknowi *nawab* or nobleman has become a stock figure in the popular imagination—a quixotic combination of exaggerated good manners, courtliness, quaint eccentricities and fin-de-siècle ennui.

Lucknow of the times of Wajid Ali Shah evokes possibly more nostalgia than any other comparable period in North Indian history. It was the period of the greatest Urdu poetry ranging from the tragic elegies commemorating the martyrdom of Hussain, to frivolous narrative romances, and bawdy 'closet' verse. The nobility outdid one another in introducing new and bizarre forms of art and entertainment. Male fashions set by the elegant Lucknowi set the tone for the rest of North India. Although Western influences were evident in

architecture and dress, the prevalent fashion was for the ornate—almost rococo—refinements, which the classical Mughal styles had by then acquired.

When Ray had completed the first draft of the script with all the dialogues, he wanted all the portions in Urdu to be translated. But he said that it was not to be a literal translation—the spirit was more important.

The language used in that period was very ornate, highly Persianised and replete with difficult idiom.

It was necessary to keep the flavour of the period without making the speech unintelligible for the present-day viewer. Then there had to be a difference in the language used in the court of Wajid Ali Shah and the more everyday-speech used by the chess playing noblemen and their acquaintances. In that period the women used a different style of Urdu, which had certain peculiar idioms and terms of expression. This also had to be kept in mind. Also there are the servants and the village boy who speak the dialect used in the villages around Lucknow. And, of course, there are the British characters who speak Victorian English.

After the dialogues had been rendered in Urdu, Ray went over them word by word asking for a change of word here, a dropping of a certain phrase there, the addition of a paragraph, or the quotation of a couplet.

In his Bengali films he makes almost no changes in the dialogues once he has written them, but in this film he kept making minor changes—sometimes just before the shooting started. Even the English portions were re-written in this manner.

Unlike his other films, Ray has made almost no use of non-actors except in the case of the little boy, Kallu, whom the chess players meet in the village.

Probably because he was working in a new language and because it was a historical film, he preferred working with professionals, with whose work he was familiar. He says that in Bengali he is able to work with new actors because he can instruct them about each gesture and the exact intonation of each word by demonstrating what he wants—but not being as fluent in Hindi, he could only do so by suggestion.

I think Ray is being overmodest in professing ignorance of Hindi or Urdu, although most people who have written about the film have made much of his unfamiliarity with the language. Especially as most of the directors, who have in the past made Hindi or Urdu films, were not particularly fluent in the language. But then, they probably do not feel it necessary to have such complete control of every aspect of a film as Ray. Because Ray is a perfectionist and takes great pains over minutiae.

Amjad Khan, who plays Wajid Ali Shah, is a popular 'bad guy' in Hindi films. When he looms large on the screen, the audience knows trouble is on the way. Ray had set his heart on having Amjad play the last King of Oudh, and when just a few weeks before the film was to start, Amjad was involved in a very bad car accident, Ray said he was prepared to delay the film rather than have any one else play the role.

Just a short time before this, another actor, Sanjeev Kumar, one of the two chess playing noblemen, had a slight heart attack and was advised complete rest for some months. Sanjeev Kumar, whose mother tongue is Gujarati, has been working on the Hindi stage and screen for many years.

The project really seemed to be jinxed when it was heard that the second nobleman, Saeed Jaffrey, had also been involved in a car accident at about the same time as

Amjad. Saeed Jaffrey lives in London and works there in films, television and theatre. This is his first appearance in an Indian film. Ray had met him in London many years ago and had seen him on the stage. He met him again, in between connecting flights sometime later, and Saeed, half in jest, made him promise that if he ever made a film in Hindi or Urdu, Saeed was to be in the cast. When he received Ray's letter offering him a role no one was more surprised than Saeed.

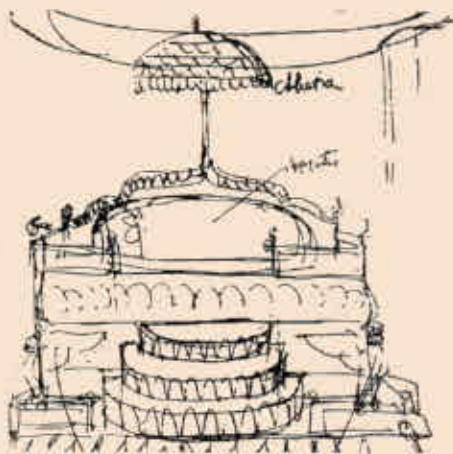
Ray and Attenborough had served on the jury of a film festival in Delhi and Ray thought he would like him to play Outram. As the film was previously scheduled this was not possible, because Attenborough was busy filming **A Bridge Too Far**. After this, Ray considered many other actors. Then due to a delay in the film, it was possible for Attenborough to squeeze in enough time to make an appearance in **Shatranj ke Khilari**.

Shabana Azmi, who plays Sanjeev Kumar's neglected wife, is an actress admired for her intense playing. Farida Jalal, who plays Saeed Jaffrey's young and wayward wife, is a very versatile actress and especially good at slightly comic roles.

Re-creating the period was as difficult for Ray as working in a new language.

He first thought that certain portions of the film could be shot on actual locations and the rest on sets. A trip was made to Lucknow for this purpose and it was found that most of the palaces and buildings of the period had been destroyed during the 1857 uprising.

So, except for the last sequence which was shot in a village near Lucknow, almost everything else had to be constructed—largely from conjecture—by Ray's designer Bansi Chandragupta.



Ray himself would draw the rough sketches for the sets he wanted and Bansi would modify them accordingly. The patch-work chessboard, the crown and the throne used by Wajid Ali Shah were designed by Ray himself. He also worked out the palette of colours to be used in the costumes and the decor of the whole film. He stuck cuttings of all the fabrics used in the film in his little red book.

This red book was a stoutly bound volume of the sort traditionally used by merchants to keep their accounts. Ray likes them to use for his personal copy of the script as they are sturdily bound and the paper is thick and glossy. In this red book he writes all the dialogues — in this film he transliterated everything into Bengali letters — along with small sketches of the shot compositions he wanted and any other detail he might need.

Ray would spare no pains to track down a particular prop required for a scene, whether it was a piece of Victorian bric-a-brac, a Siamese cat or a silver *hookah*. The most elusive of these was the Siamese cat, which disappeared during the dance scene. It was later discovered on the roof of the studio, when it bit the assistant



cameraman and ran away altogether, only to re-appear after the scene had been completed.

The dance itself has been composed by Birju Maharaj and is based on a composition by his grandfather, Bindadin, who was the leading dancer in Wajid Ali Shah's court.

The borrowing of all the cashmere shawls, gold and silver *hookahs*, Victoriana, chandeliers lamps and utensils was itself a ritual.

Ray himself visited the houses of collectors and old Calcutta families. They were only too pleased to lend their heirlooms to 'Manik Babu', as Ray is known in Calcutta. Many of them would later come to watch the shooting of the scenes where their loaned items were used. In each of these houses, we would be graciously offered tea and traditional Bengali snacks, and after a suitably polite interval, the things which Ray wanted to borrow were displayed, some were selected, and then packed to be carried to the studio. I think this sense of involvement on the part of everyone concerned is what gives Ray's films their great feeling of warmth and humanity.

—Shama Zaidi

SATYAJIT RAY
*Own
films
their
films*

Satyajit Ray is an uncommon, unlikely artist, not least for his equal facility as a film-maker, artist, composer & writer. Someone has already drawn attention to the spoof-like quality of his

film credits, which read: Story, Screenplay, Music, Camera, Direction: Satyajit Ray. One cannot help but ransack **Our Films, Their Films** (by Satyajit Ray, Pub.: Orient Longman) for some clue to such pervasive, prodigious talent. But there are no clues, only attitudes that spring from the exercise of those talents, the talents subsumed as prior fact. For instance, Ray reacting to the union situation in Hollywood, and shuddering at the sight of an army of grips, gaffers, dolly-hands and assistants that, in precisely stipulated number, are obligatory to every film in production. The Hollywood dream-factory is an assembly-line affair, one man to each bolt and Ray the renaissance master-craftsman is appalled. It is a wonderful cameo of the guild artisan visiting his occidental markets and shaking his head in knowing disbelief at the methods of mechanised industry. It is encapsulated in Ray's anecdote about Billy Wilder, who says to him: "You won a prize at Cannes? Well, I guess you're an artist, but I'm not, I'm just a commercial man and I like it that way."

When Ray, or any creative artist, writes about his craft, he commits an act that makes him peculiarly vulnerable. We no longer judge him in that rarefied state of surrender that we assume in darkened auditoria—what he risks is being read on the loo, catching his audience with his pants down, so to speak, its critical faculties honed to a fine point of irritation at

indigestible matter (I refer, of course, to reading matter). He risks being recognised as the king strolling incognito in the bazaar, he risks revelations of his ordinariness. And yet somehow, Ray survives the exposure, his greatness intact, emerging lofty and distant as before, but mainly by dint of revealing very little. To read his essays is to stroll in the company of the great, to give Michelangelo Antonioni an encouraging pat on the head, to watch two generations of film-makers jockey for position from a perch of great self-assurance. For an Indian, this is a dizzying, heady height, for Ray is the solitary instance of an artist for whom we are not scurrying for the cover of ancient tradition in order to assert his respectability.

Written over a period of twenty-five years, the earliest six years before the release of **Pather Panchali**, the essays are remarkably consistent—you look for development, perhaps for brash over-statement in the early essays—but there is calm, measured assurance at the outset. Among the constants is Ray's fascination with musical structures, with the possibilities of integrating narrative design, rhythm and musical form. Among directors working in India, Ray is surely unique in that he combines a deep knowledge of western classical music with a familiarity with Indian modes. What is surprising is the extent to which musical ideas spill over their own bounds and colour the other spheres of Ray's craft, the one supreme conceptual design that leaves its mark on all the others. Musical structure, and particularly the sonata, is for Ray the supreme architectonics, abstract, metaphoric, and totally valid in its applicability to film.

Another constant is Ray's sensibility—we glimpse it fashioning an anecdote, reporting an event, choosing filmic material. Ray is



essentially an observer, an acute perceptive onlooker, and his achievements as a raconteur derive from this ability to 'stand apart'. Here, for example is Ray in Benares while shooting *Aparajito*:—

Set out at 5 a. m. to explore the ghats. Half an hour to sunrise, yet more light than one would have thought, and more activity ... the pigeons not active yet, but the wrestlers are. Incomparable "atmosphere". One just wants to go on absorbing it, being chastened and invigorated by it... In the afternoon the same ghats present an utterly different aspect. Clusters of immobile widows make white patches on the greyish ochre of the broad steps. The bustle of ablution is absent Stopped on the way back at the temple. Were told we were in time for the *Saptarshi Arati*. A spine-tingling experience. Those who miss it miss one of the great audio-visual treats Visited the Durga temple. People who come here with the intent of offering a prayer to the deity usually do so with half a mind, the other half being on the monkeys. These animals go about the place as if they owned

it. Irresistibly funny, they sometimes go for your bag of peanuts with alarming viciousness. But when they swing from the bell-ropes and perform an impromptu *carillon*, the sight and sound are no longer merely comic

This could well be an extract from a foreigner's diary of an Indian journey. Forster's *Hill of Devi* has exactly the same quality of freshness and discovery, of excavating the telling detail of the strangeness of Indian everyday life. A foreigner, writing about India, derives his emphasis by comparison — the more private, ordered, secular world of the English is one reference. What is Ray's reference? Whether he describes a temple rite, a brahmin bathing in the river, or the narrow, twisted lanes of Benares, Ray's perceptions are never inured to the commonness of such scenes, he is repeatedly surprised, shocked, amused, "invigorated". Not many Indians would speak of the "incomparable atmosphere" of a Benares street, fewer still would be likely to describe the *Saptarshi puja* as a "great audio-visual treat." It is the language and sensibility of a visitor.

Is this bad? Is Ray guilty of looking at India through borrowed spectacles? On the contrary, Ray's achievement is that he is able to overcome inurement, to dishabituate his perceptions—it is what they mean by 'aesthetic distance', and it is this quest of 'seeing with new eyes,' that explains Ray's sensibility as well as his devotion to naturalistic values in cinema.

—Extract from book-review by
Pradip Krishen

A legend in his lifetime

kanneshwara RAMA



Once in a while a director bursts upon the scene, out of the blue as it were, with something new to say, and with a mature—even epic—way of saying it. *Garm Hava* (The Aftermath) when it was first screened to surprised audiences, was a film by one such director, M. S. Sathyu. The film was an instant sensation, as much for its content as for its style, and was hailed as amongst the best in new Indian cinema.

Sathyu's second film, *Kanneshwara Rama* (The Legendary Outlaw) is the story of how a politically naive individual, who determines to avenge the poverty and suffering around him by the only means he knows—terrorism—finally comes to grief at the hands of a political system, which is much more powerful than any single man.

The film is set in the early twenties, when Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent movement had gained its initial momentum. It takes place in the north-west hills (Malnad) of Mysore State, then one of the richest of India's princely kingdoms. The film is based on a real-life character, about whom folk songs are sung to this day in this part of the country.

Kanneshwara Rama, a long sought-after fugitive, has been caught by the police. He is being paraded through the streets of Shimoga before being taken to the State Capital for his execution. On the way, Rama glimpses many people who have figured in his life. Each one recalls particular events...

Rama is a hot-headed peasant, who bristles at the slightest threat of intimidation. He finds his marriage constricting and despises his meek, woe-begone wife. Rama defies the village *Patel* (the local representative of law and order), which leads to a midnight scuffle, in which Rama kills him.

In prison, Rama meets Gandhi's disciples. Under cover of a nationalist demonstration, he escapes. Rama joins a band of outlaws led by Junja, who zealously guards the gang's hoard of stolen jewels, watched over by Malli, his mistress.

Junja's reliance on Rama is resented by the dacoits. Rama is befriended only by Chennira. Junja is mortally wounded in a skirmish with the police. He names Rama as his successor. Malli quietly decamps with the hoarded loot.

Rama becomes notorious as an outrageously bold dacoit. He helps the poor, providing the dowry for an impoverished bride, and breaking the fanatical hold of feudal lords on the property of the peasants. Rama becomes a local hero.

He raids a landlord's safe, and accidentally finds refuge in Malli's house. She is now a high-priced prostitute. They become lovers, and Rama seizes the opportunity to steal her jewels.

Rama's daring exploits, his growing popularity and success, begin to worry the police. He ridicules both Nara-nappa, the Indian policeman, as well as his superior officer from whom he rescues a group of Gandhi's volunteers. He is both amused and impressed by the latter's non-violent ideology and dedication to a national cause and their symbolic flag.

Some members of Rama's own gang are disloyal to him. He out-manoeuvres them in their break-away attempt to rob an armed treasury. Typically, he forgives the culprits, against Chennira's advice.

Rama begins to wonder whether any group can be loyal to an individual. He feels that a guiding principle symbolised by a flag, and a village in which to live, are both necessary. He is reminded that they are wanted men. Rama frees a village

under bondage to a *math* (a religious order). He adopts the village and places a flag in a fort that guards it. Rama becomes a legend in his own lifetime. Ballad singers compose songs praising his courage and exploits.

The British District Collector instructs his force to capture Rama at any cost. The British Police Superintendent is told by one of Rama's men that Malli alone can arrange Rama's capture. The Police Superintendent first tries to trap Rama through her, but she flatly refuses. He then threatens the people in Rama's village, and imprisons some of them as hostages.

The police increase the offensive against Rama. At an encounter, they kill most of his gang, including Chennira. Rama runs to his villagers for protection, but they are now too timid to offer him shelter. Instead, they decide to give him up. Enraged, he retaliates by setting fire to the village. Even Malli cannot deter him from this action.

The Police Superintendent tries once more to obtain Malli's help in capturing Rama. She refuses at first, but is forced to acquiesce when the relatives of the hostages plead with her.

Rama is now alone and helpless. He abandons his gun at the altar of a temple. At night, he visits Malli. She signals his arrival to the police surrounding her house. They trap him. Malli defends her duplicity by saying that his vindictiveness drove her to it. He says he had come to her with his jewels to be given as compensation to the villagers for the loss they suffered in the fire. Malli now regrets her betrayal of Rama. But it is too late...

Sathyu's personal predilections are in a way at work in this film. As a self-made man, (he once sold newspapers on the pavements of Bombay



for a living) he developed early on an instinctive sympathy for the underdog and gathered together a vast storehouse of unusual real-life situations and characters.

His statements are basically political ones, whatever the form. His film on the legendary outlaw is nonetheless a commentary on the crumbling British hold in India and what then appeared to be the highly impractical non-violent Gandhian opposition to it.

The folk-form the film employs is a theatrical device—the entire story is narrated through a folk ballad and the events pictured later. The entire film unfolds in retrospect—we begin with the tragedy and then we see how it began—in idealism and ignorance, both eventually powerless in the face of organised might. The interest is

not in *what* the action is, since we know it already, but *how* it takes place, and we taste for a few brief moments, the heady intoxication of Rama, his Rousseau-like freedom, before the grim and bitter end.

* * *

Before **Garm Hava**, Sathyu was quite unknown. After **Garm Hava** he became an international figure. How did this phenomenon occur?

Such a director does not burst upon the scene, ready-made, without reference to the soil from which he has sprung. There is always a background of similar work, a mosaic or framework of experience and knowledge in which his creativeness has germinated.

Sathyu's milieu has been the theatre. He began his artistic career with the Hindusthani Theatre in Delhi and



Later came over to the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) in Bombay. He had already enlarged his interest from stage-designing to direction and was involved in a number of outstanding and interesting plays staged by IPTA. Inevitably, around this time he began to make advertising and documentary films, particularly the latter, as his true talent began to find expression. **Garm Hava** was the fruit of this diverse activity, the flowering of a creative style both naturalistic and emotive, following the pattern of realistic narrative normally found in the theatre. The film documents the tragic aftermath of the partition in India as seen through the eyes of a Muslim family, disintegrating under

the impact of forces larger than themselves.

All the actors, almost without exception, were from the theatre, and for many of them it was a first film as well. As a result, no doubt, even the minor characters have a life of their own. The entire film is characterised by a remarkably restrained and uniform standard of acting, quite unlike the melodramatic excesses of popular Hindi cinema.

The theatre which has nurtured Sathyu's talents, has been a catalyst to the regional small-budget film-movement as well, particularly in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Each of these areas boasts a flourishing professional theatre and a number of award-winning films have been made here in the last few years.

* * *

Sathyu's first film, **Garm Hava** is set against the political canvas of 1948, following the partition between India and Pakistan.

Mirza Salim is a middle-aged trader, whose family have for generations been shoe-manufacturers in North India. He has his roots there in Agra and sees no reason to leave, unlike his elder brother Halim Mirza who emigrates to Pakistan with his wife and son Kazim.

Kazim was engaged to be married to Salim's daughter Amina, but is unable to return. Eventually he manages to sneak across the border to see Amina and feverish preparations are made for the wedding. In the middle of the ceremonies the police come and take Kazim away. This is a terrible time for Amina.

Meanwhile, the ancestral house in India, being in Halim Mirza's name, is declared evacuee property. A refugee Sindhi businessman, Ajmani, stakes his claim to the house and Salim Mirza and his family are forced

to shift to a much smaller, rented place nearby.

The family business begins to suffer. Fearing that Salim Mirza may decamp with the money, banks refuse to advance him loans. Moreover, Sindhi and Punjabi refugees have practically taken over the leather trade. Mirza Salim is too timid, too set in the mores of a bygone era to try and compete with them, and in any case he is unable to raise any finance.

Fed up with deteriorating conditions, Salim's eldest son, Baqar also emigrates. Salim Mirza finds it increasingly difficult to manage the family business single-handed. His younger son Sikander is not interested in the shoe-business and wants to get an executive job in a firm.

Meanwhile, another cousin Shamshad, who is anxious to marry Amina, persuades her to raise herself from her despondency and snatch what moments of happiness she can. She really comes to love Shamshad and gives herself completely to him. Unfortunately, even he has to leave when his unscrupulous father is forced to flee across the border, to escape his debtors. He never returns to India and finally news comes that Shamshad is to be married there. This is a shattering blow for the simple Amina. A second successive tragedy is too much for her to bear, and she commits suicide.

Mirza Salim is a broken man now. Eventually, when he is suspected to be a spy, he decides to leave the country.

As they are leaving in a tonga piled high with their possessions, they are stopped by a huge procession demanding jobs, bread and better education. Sikander, seeing his friends in the procession, is unable to restrain himself and, jumping off the tonga, joins them.

Salim watches the procession for sometime, his son in their midst, and then he too comes to a decision. He gets off and joins them.

Thus he re-enters the mainstream and is swallowed up in it.

In both **Kanneshwara Rama** and **Garm Hava**, there is the same meticulous attention to detail and authenticity of costume, region and language, that characterise Sathyu's films—whether it is the evocation of small-town life of Agra in **Garm Hava** or the atmosphere of a little village in the Malnad hills of Mysore (Sathyu's home-state) in **Kanneshwara Rama**.

Added to this is Sathyu's sense of humour, which leavens even the most pompous of statements. It is never contrived humour—whether it is the little child threatening to 'tell' on his amorous uncle in **Garm Hava** or the bewilderment of the Gandhian workers in the face of the gruff joviality of Rama's men; or even the 'utensil-loving' thief in Rama's gang. There is no attempt at comedy as such—the humour is rich with meaning and springs naturally from the situation. Sathyu has carried humour even further in his new political satire **Chitegu Chinte** (*The Anxious Corpse*) made in Kannada and again shot on location in Karnataka. It is a complete debunking of political pretensions and 'bossism' and a satire even on the current methods of 'dramatic' film-making in popular cinema.

Sathyu weaves skilfully a tapestry of emotional life in conflict with historical circumstances. We may expect to see a further development of this theme in his proposed new films—one, a satire on wish-fulfilment among the very lowly; another, a political commentary on corruption in high places as it affects a famine-affected district; and third, the saga of a village torn asunder by its own feudal forces—in an eternal cycle of self-destruction.

—Siddharth Kak

THE ART OF EBULLIENCE

(or Mrinal Goes To Malabar)

Mrinal Sen once said: "My film career has been uncertain, erratic, desperate". The word 'desperate' seems to fascinate him. When questioned, Mrinal says he is reacting both to the conformism of the commercial film and the brutal demands of the distribution system. If I were to choose a single word to sum up Mrinal's work it would be 'ebullience'. The same restless energy, the same sense of being possessed by a daemon which characterised the first unsatisfactory film **Raat Bhore** (Night's End, 1956), also marks his latest **Oka Oorie Katha** (The Story of a Village, 1977)

During that period a variety of enthusiasms have possessed Mrinal. Take Eisenstein for instance; his influence will be felt in one particular strand which runs through Mrinal Sen's work—the aggressive black and white portrayal, the symbolic overpowering might of the oppressor. It also accounts for the streak of inhumanity in movies like **Mrigaya** where money lenders are equated with wild pigs and liquidated. Standing behind Eisenstein, it is really the October Revolution which colours Mrinal's cinematic vision.

In his third film **Baishey Sravana** (The Wedding Day, 1966) the great famine of 1943 stalks through a marriage and destroys it. Mrinal calls it a "cruel film". **Baishey Sra-vana** revolves around a bitter husband and wife hurting each other all the

time. The famine is around them like a prison and they cannot break out of a hopeless relationship. At the end, the woman hangs herself. The emphasis in the film is not on the inherent problems of bourgeois marriage but on the environment. Again and again, Mrinal comes up against a situation like this but refuses to enter into or exploit the relationship, except in relation to what he considers the objective reality. This is both the strength and the weakness of his films, depending upon the circumstances and the angle of vision in each case. For instance, in **Akash Kusum** (The Daydream, 1965) he almost brings it off. To use the word 'human' in respect of the films of a confessedly "committed" film maker would perhaps be like holding up a red rag to a bull. But I would apply that adjective both to **Bhuvan Shome** and to **Akash Kusum** (1969).

Akash Kusum is memorable not only as a stage in Mrinal's development but also because it generated a passage of arms between Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen in the columns of the *Calcutta Statesman* (Ashish Burman, co-scriptwriter and director of **Akash Kusum**, robustly collaborating). The *Statesman* reviewed the film coolly. Ray's letter on what he called a "crow film" is a classic exercise in the art of deflation. Still, he missed the point of this gentle, beautiful film about a young man of Calcutta making a dés-



perate bid to break the wealth barrier by marriage. The film has an undeniable Chekovian charm and it tries to capture the ambiguity of Scott Fitzgerald's remark: "The very rich are different from us." Incidentally, the correspondence revealed the encyclopaedic filmic and literary knowledge of our film makers which ranges from Mrs. Gaskell to Godard. As Dylan Thomas once remarked in desperation at an American seminar: "Education is a wonderful thing."

Mrinal's next film **Matira Manusha** (Two Brothers) in Oriya represented perhaps the first notable attempt by a Bengali director to make a film in a non-Bengali, non-Hindi language. This was yet another aspect of his ebullience. **Matira Manusha** was not the result of the "mad impulse" which Mrinal often commends. It represented a deliberate choice to leave the rather claustrophobic urban atmosphere and to demythize the filmic village scene. The story explores the life of a village, and in particular of two brothers, who confront

each other at the end—becoming symbolic of the larger rural confrontation. The weakness of this film is in its excessive and artificial symbolism—the juxtaposing of cranes flying and planes, of dressing up a government messenger as Hitler. But it remains one of the first films to knock fresh air into the stuffy world of filmic rural India.

Bhuvan Shome (1969) is a precise and haunting film. Perhaps the Chekovian bit is overdone in this film described by Mrinal as "Big Bad Bureaucrat Chastised by a Charmer's Cheek." This was Mrinal's first film to charm large audiences. Today it is rather portentously accepted as one of the beginnings of the 'new wave' and Mrinal remarks modestly that "it has a certain freshness in approach, and that is all." But that was not all. **Bhuvan Shome** was the first film since **Pather Panchali** to 'see' the Indian landscape. Who can forget those shots of the sands of Cambay where the trite phrase 'footprints on the sands of time' assumed

a magic reality, or the marvellous patterns of flamingoes in flight? The tenuous, ambiguous relationship between the high official and the girl-wife of the lowly corrupt clerk, has never been bettered. Only the evasion at the end rankles — how can the bureaucrat prance about like an aged faun when he has been pushed back to his particular desert after a brief and reckless holiday? If this was Utpal Dutt's idea (as Mrinal claims) it was a bad one. **Bhuvan Shome** also reveals one side of Mrinal, which he usually seems to wilfully suppress or twist out of recognition—his sensuousness. The sequence of the girl sitting in the window, and then walking through the silent palace, glows with a special radiance taking you back to the famous 'swing' scene in Ray's **Charulatha**. **Bhuvan Shome** is a film to which one can go back again and again with increasing pleasure.

After **Bhuvan Shome**, Mrinal becomes—as if in atonement—self-confessedly "committed" and "political". Mrinal is not the least loquacious of film makers. In his repeated interviews on his work, he has emphasised the element of "nonsense", "madness", "youthfulness", "serving-a-slap-in-the-establishment's-face" (something Truffaut-Godardian here). This kind of 'greening-of-India' approach might portend a flood of counter-culture clichés but here again it is the inner vitality of Mrinal which saves him from becoming a mere Cheer-Leader-of-the-Coming-Revolution.

The Calcutta trilogy: **The Interview** (1970), **Calcutta 71** (1972), and **Padatik** (Guerilla, 1973)—in spite of their derivative political pamphleteering, comes across in a remarkable way to disturb and to move. This is indeed a bold essay into political cinema. The same cannot be said of **Chorus** (1974) and **Mrigaya** (Royal Hunt, 1976). In **Chorus**

Mrinal works symbolism and allegory almost to death. **Mrigaya** is a low point in spite of all those awards. The intentions are good—to show up the use and abuse of the agricultural proletariat. But Mrinal here has tried to ride astride two horses—of realism or neo-realism and of fantasy. It just has not worked.

In the Telugu film **Oka Oorie Katha**, Mrinal, with typical resilience, has staged a brilliant comeback. The movie, based on a celebrated short story **Kafan** by the noted Hindi/Urdu writer Prem Chand, explores the world of ultimate poverty in eastern Uttar Pradesh. A father and son, parasitic and work-shy in principle, who pilfer food when they have to eat, wait for the son's wife to die in child-birth—after all when she is going to die why make her suffer by reviving her? On her death, father and son beg for money to buy a *kafan* (shroud) and then drink it away at the village liquor shop. The story has a direct, brutal, impact. Mrinal, with great psychological insight, has built up this movie with a fine tension between individual character and environment. Its rhythm has three movements. Before the son's marriage, the father and son live in happy partnership—defiant, lazy, mocking 'regular' labour, exploiting in a petty way their exploiters, mouthing false bravado—symptoms typical of the universal culture of poverty. Then the son's marriage brings in a disturbing factor. The wife actually works, she detests the father Venkayya (played by the brilliant actor, Vasudeva Rao, of **Chomana Dudi**). The father feels this as a destroying commentary on his whole way of life and feels estranged as the son wavers between drudgery in thrall to a feudal system and the old anarchic-animal existence. It is in the sequences after the wife's death that Mrinal departs significantly from author Prem Chand. The scene in the liquor



shop is replaced by the image of Vasudeva Rao under a tree, holding fast to the money and shouting "give me food, clothes, a house" and finally pleading—"Let her come alive!" as his daughter-in-law's face is engulfed in final dissolution, a brilliant image.

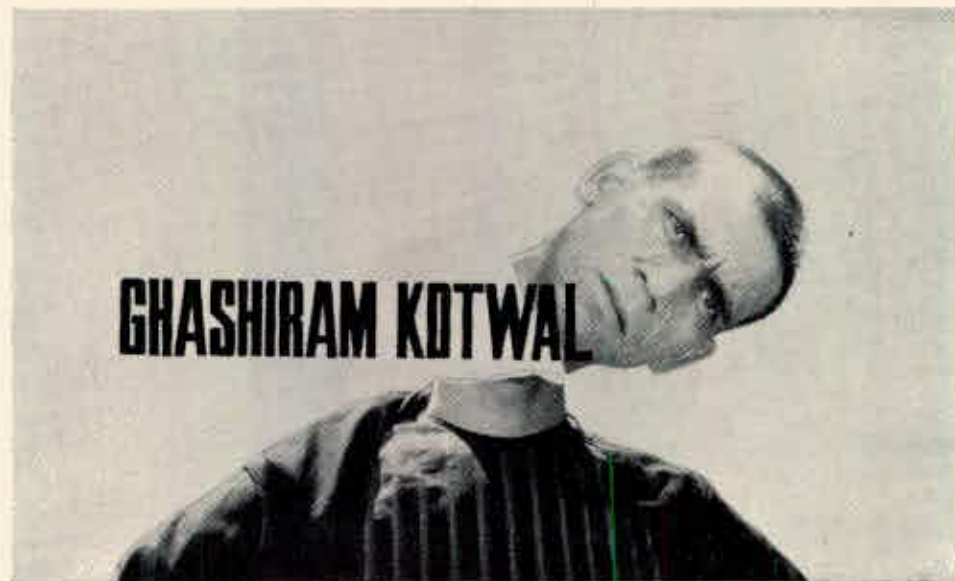
As a commentary on the culture of utter destitution, *Katha* is unique in Indian cinema for its subtlety, its detached and precise recording of degradation, for its total grasp of circumstance. "I have shifted the locale from U. P. to Telangana" says Mrinal, "but it makes no difference. The physical face of poverty is the same all over India."

Any problems for a Bengali director who makes a Telugu film? "Yes, a few. I co-scripted it with Mohit Chattopadhyay, the famous playwright, but got more than one

person to work on the Telugu version. A local political activist, Krishnamurthy, who also plays a memorable role in the movie, was invaluable in preventing us from committing obvious blunders. One more thing. I have not bothered about dialect—that is a fashionable gimmick. The Telugu used here is the language understood all over Andhra. I chose Vasudeva Rao to play the part for his coiled energy, sarcasm, fury."

Mrinal is now already at work on a film on the Kayyar (north Malabar) peasant uprising in the early forties. *Oka Oorie Katha* appears to have released some secret spring.

—Iqbal Masud



Ghashiram Kotwal, a colour film in Marathi, is largely built upon certain historical events at the close of the Peshwa regime (1773—1797).

The Peshwa empire was the only one of its extent in India under brahmin rule.

Peshwa Madhav Rao II was born in 1774. But the real power was wielded by the Peshwa's prime minister, Nana Phadnavis.

Even as Nana enthrones the child Peshwa, Ghashiram Kotwal, a brahmin from Kanauj, arrives upon the scene. He is installed as Nana's espionage agent.

Raghoba, the young Peshwa's grand-uncle, allies himself with the British.

In the heart of an almost romantic, yet feudal and decadent, atmosphere, there sprout intrigue, murder, alliances—and alongside, the advent of British power in India.

Through his espionage network Nana brings to light the subversive operations of the British. Nana resists them and they face a rout at Wadgaon (1779).

Ghashiram develops into a mirror-image of Nana. As the lecherous Nana gets married—for the sixth time—to a child-bride, Ghashiram unleashes a reign of terror against the intriguing brahmins.

Ghashiram's star has risen, but only to set—swiftly.

A group of brahmins from Andhra suffocates to death in a dungeon where they were confined on Ghashiram's orders.

An enraged brahmin mob, unable to have Nana's, demand Ghashiram's head instead.

Nana tries to placate the imprisoned Ghashiram by offering him metaphysical solutions to life and death. But all protest has died in Ghashiram.

The Peshwas hang on, when all other Indian rulers have gone under. But finally they too are brought to heel—and the British obtain a strong foothold in India.

Ghashiram Kotwal is the first venture of YUKT, a film co-operative comprising sixteen Bombay-based students from Pune's Film and Television Institute. The co-operative came into existence on October 14, 1976 and it is now one year and one film old. The breakdown, vocation-wise, is four directors, four cameramen, four sound recordists, three editors and one actor.

Understandably, they wanted to base their maiden effort on a work familiar to the public. Vijay Tendulkar's play **Ghashiram Kotwal** as directed by Dr. Jabbar Patel, with music by Bhaskar Chandavarkar and produced by the Theatre Academy, Pune, had proved to be a stage hit. This offered at least some kind of assurance of interest on the part of financing bodies and audiences.

But quite obviously the film could not be a mere re-make of the stage performance. As the *sutradhara* says in his opening lines:

"Film is like a line engraved on
stone. What

I'll do now will be duplicated
in all the shows

Fixed, identical....."

And he tells the audience:

"But who are you? I don't have
a clue!

You're watching me. But I
can't see you...

I can't hear your sobs or your
laughter,

Your applause or your whistles
for that matter."

What is the essence of the film? The theme, which is its core. It's there in the play too—brahmin power and the intrigues in the Peshwa's court. But the members of YUKT wanted to go beyond, and to come to grips with the notion of history itself. Is history to be viewed through the eyes of the protagonists? Is it a pageant, a period-piece frozen in time? Should the benefit of hindsight not be employed to bring into focus economic and social factors barely noticed by chroniclers of the past?

At first, Vijay Tendulkar (who worked on the film-script as well) wondered how he was going to re-shape the material that he had already once cast into the format of a play. But seven years had lapsed since he penned it; in this span of time he had himself come to appreciate what sociological stress meant. It was a matter of learning anew, from young people trained in a different medium and wedded to different concepts:

"We set down the structure on a sixty-foot scroll illustrating the film's movement. The dialogue was to match this sequence. The film follows no linear plot; individual historical events are linked (or rather separated) by title-cards which carry the events forward."

The play had concentrated on the decadence of the brahmins; in the theatre the spectators took an almost voyeurist delight in Nana's infatuation with young females.

The film, on the other hand, quotes extensively from Nana's autobiography; the excerpts are heard over images of a brahmin bathing, of ritualistic dancing. What is suggested is that strict orthodoxy cannot be sustained without lechery or for that matter that a debauchee needs the crutch of ritual or ceremony.



In the play, Ghashiram is the outsider climbing to power through the surrender of his own daughter to Nana's sensuality. Her death probably results in a kind of self-loathing which transforms Ghashiram into a moral monstrosity. Such individual motivation is eliminated in the film. Ghashiram's first appearance on the screen and his evolution into a mirror-image of Nana hint at a more complex approach. In troubled times, the outsider is the perfect agent and also the convenient scapegoat.

A more important departure from the play is the introduction of quarry workers engaged in forced labour and of the *Kulkarni* or exploiter, setting out his rights in song. The *Sutradhara* addresses a fat *Kulkarni*

thus :

"Why so lost and woe-begone ?
Do not tell me
Your earnings have dropped ?
Or that the workers
don't work free on your land ?"

This is in keeping with the film's objective which is to place incidents in the total context of economic functions and class relationships.

The film covers a larger time span (1772 — 1795) than the play. It begins a little before the installation of the child Peshwa and draws to a close in the year following his death. In the play, the British interest in Maratha affairs is epitomised by the figure of a Britisher quietly watching

the social scene in Pune. The film, however, shows the British intriguing actively against the Maratha state; through a telescoping into the future (by an image of a telegraph pole and wires) they are made to represent an advanced technology, one that will inevitably supercede the feudal order prevailing in the country.

Thus Ghashiram in the film emerges not as a character in his own right, but as symptomatic of the period's malaise. His brutal confinement of brahmins to a dungeon where they suffocate to death is simply the culmination of a chain of unbridled actions; it serves to bring about his own downfall. Only in that final confrontation with Nana does the condemned Ghashiram come alive, as he listens with blazing eyes to his former master holding forth on the illusory nature of life itself.

This kind of treatment is typical of the film's style for it is not just a story of the rise and fall of Ghashiram

Kotwal. It is more in the nature of an enquiry into the causes of the decline of Maratha power. The probe encompasses a large canvas; it demands from the spectator a degree of acquaintance with the details of Maratha history, an alert and agile mental make-up, the ability to pick up hints, make connections, draw conclusions. Events, even major ones, such as the rout of the British at Wadgaon (1779) are almost symbolically defined. Only the scaffolding rises before our eyes. But the edifice of a film - investigation into the features of such an important period in our history, would have called for financial resources unthinkable for a fledgling co-operative. The most striking of images speaks a stringency of budget.

The play was a lively, vivid theatre experience. The film, brimming with ideas, offers food for thought. In this sense, it is educative.

— K. M.

Soft Options & Hard Choices



Sandhya Raag (Evening Song) is produced and directed by Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia, a prolific writer, whose speciality is short stories. His film, is based on his own story **Bana-prastha**. **Sandhya Raag** is his first film, which has not only been successful commercially, but recognised as an original work of art.

Dr. Saikia is, in fact, a man of science with a doctorate in Physics from London University and has worked in the Physics Department in Gauhati University. No wonder then that his characters and situations are closely observed, the minute details adding up to a stark reality.

The story of **Sandhya Raag** is simple, centres on a poor family from

an equally poor village. Putali is a widow, lives with her two young daughters and a legacy of poverty left by her husband. She is forced to send her elder daughter, Charu, to work as a maid-servant in the house of a well-to-do family in town. With sympathetic understanding from the master and mistress, and the loving companionship of their daughter Kanta, Charu finds no difficulty in adjusting to the new environment.

Time flies. News of Charu's hard work and honesty reaches the ears of Urmila, another town-man's wife. As a result Taru, the younger sister, is also brought to town to work as a maid. Charu grows up with Kanta in a world that boasts of refrigerators, pressure-cookers, record-players,



radios, cars, Moti, a chauffeur in the town and unhappily married, is attracted to Charu. But she, brought up thus, dismisses him as a mere driver.

Meanwhile, Kanta is married and the Das family decides to send Charu back to her village, since she has come of age and there is practically no work for her in the household. At the same time, Urmila's son Pintoo lusts after Taru. Urmila, sensing danger, decides to send Taru back too.

Thus the two sisters return to their village. Putali has grown old with age and been beaten by poverty. She

has only her hunger pangs to swallow. But Charu and Taru find themselves misfits in their village world, far away from that of pressure-cookers and refrigerators. Without work, money and food, the three women have now shattered hopes, empty stomachs and broken spirits.

* * *

So do dreams die. Charu decides to go away with Moti, knowing fully well that he may be sterile. Her sister and mother bury their shame and beg her to take them along so that they too may survive.

—Satya Ranjan Baruah

Hindi Cinema : BHIMSAIN
ARUNA-VIKAS
VINAY SHUKLA

Boy Does Not Get Girl? (!)

Three first features by new directors. **Gharaonda** by Bhimsain, maker of a long string of short films and an animation-specialist, one of whose shorts, **The Climb**, was awarded the Silver Hugo at the Chicago film festival some years ago. **Shaque**, jointly directed by Aruna and her husband Vikas Desai, both trained at the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. And **Wohi Baat**, by Vinay Shukla, also trained at the Pune Film Institute. All three films represent, in varying degrees, a revolt against the routine, assembly-line order of film-making. All of them are marked by a measure of freshness which is quite unusual for Hindi films, all share a notable skill in handling characterisation, so that the cardboard-types of the average Hindi film are side-stepped to create much more flesh-and-blood individuals. Yet, none of the three films is a wild departure from the traditional idiom of the Hindi narrative film. All three, for example, find room for songs, the directors quite sanely feeling that there are much worse things in the conventional pack that must be discarded first. In any case, the songs composed by the late Vasant Desai for **Shaque** and by Jaidev for the other two films, are ear-catching. All three films too cast stars but employ them as actors.

Gharaonda/BHIMSAIN

To take them individually, in random order, **Gharaonda** (The City Has A Heart of Stone) is about, as the synopsis puts it, the two most compelling "animal instincts, the instinct to nest and the instinct to mate." That's zoologist's terminology for the social problem of housing and the individual problem of sexual relationships. Affected acutely by the twin problems are Sudip (Amol Palekar) and Chhaya (Zarina Wahab), the film's two central characters. Sudip works as a clerk in the small office of a rich businessman and, soon after Chhaya arrives there as the new typist, the two strike up a friendship. Both belong to lower middle-class backgrounds where most of the high drama derives from economic hardships. The ruthless impact of social conditions on individual lives is seen in the convoluted course of the relationship between Sudip and Chhaya. Falling in love is one thing, getting married and living together is another. With the first stage over, the lovers find the second stage still out of their reach. But they hope against hope and plan against frustration. Sudip raises a loan to book an apartment in a building under construction.



Desperation strikes when the estate-agent turns out to be a swindler and vanishes with the money. Sudip's room-mate, similarly affected, commits suicide. Dazed, he can no longer think coherently. In a wild flight of derailed fancy, he suggests a solution : Chhaya should go ahead and marry their employer, Modi (Shreeram Lagoo), a widower, with a serious heart condition, whose romantic interest in her has not exactly been a secret. After he dies, as he must sooner rather than later, the lovers can realise their dreams.

Instead of laughing the perverse proposal off, Chhaya chooses to be appalled. She breaks off with him, without giving him a chance to explain or recant. She has a few meetings with Modi which persuade her that he is not a bad man after all. So, one day when he proposes marriage, Chhaya accepts. With Modi for a husband, her nesting instinct is taken care of.

The shattered Sudip, still working in Modi's office, drifts into a confused, meaningless way of life. If he doesn't cross Chhaya's path, he still hovers on its edge. Is it possible that Chhaya, the sedate Mrs. Modi, is just play-acting—in order to further an

atrocious plot, blabbered in a moment of desperation? Sudip is never seen to entertain the thought, but the viewer might.

The film's last scene is intended to remove the suspicion. Chhaya has decided to find happiness with Modi, and Sudip is reconciled to reality sufficiently to think that the world should be able to offer him other jobs, and other Chhayas.

Boy does not always marry girl, sometimes millionaire gets her.

The film rejects the screen's favourite myth in a casual manner, without getting breathless, while making the statement and without striking that tragic note which is normally reserved for the ending of such stories, on the rare occasions that they are attempted. Director Bhimsain is able to integrate authenticity of setting into the story. The tenement house in which Chhaya lives with her family harbours people reflecting a variety of middle-class cultural attitudes—ranging from those who aspire to foreign-education and play linguistic-games to those who stand in front of a neighbour's open door to stare at a visitor: The brief long shot showing Chhaya, all decked up beyond her class after the marriage,

returning to the tenement house and drawing unabashed stares from her former neighbours, is an acute piece of observation. The lodge in which Sudip shares a room with three others is appropriately shabby—unmade beds, clothes scattered all over, room-mates quarrelling over misappropriated cosmetics, the blare of a transistor being objected to because somebody is writing a letter. In comparison, the picture drawn of Modi's office is shaky—the frivolity tends to get out of hand, and the petty intrigues and some of the leers directed at female colleagues could have been acceptable if handled with restraint.

Dr. Shanker Shesh's story has the virtue of being able to describe some nagging problems of contemporary urban life without flaunting the pretensions of a 'message' piece. Gulzar's script and dialogue (the latter in collaboration with Bhoshan Banmali) are notable for a skilful attempt at combining bitter reality with humour.

Shaque, ARUNA-VIKAS

Shaque (The Doubt), at first sight, would seem to have little claim to distinction. Dealing with murder and blackmail, the plot is constructed like a whodunit. Scattered throughout the film are the routine flutters of a suspense thriller. But a routine-thriller's preoccupations with peddling sensation tends to exclude sensitivity. What distinguishes **Shaque** from other films of the kind is its capacity to notice the pauses in the melodrama and the intervals separating the events. In **Shaque**, murder is the starting point, blackmail a recurring motif, and a thrilling pursuit of the criminal, the climax. But essentially, the film is about reactions rather than actions—the reaction of a loving wife whose husband is whispered to be a murderer, the reaction of a husband, so proud of his

innocence, so unyielding in demanding blind trust from his wife, that he considers it humiliating to have to explain to his wife how, suddenly, he got promoted from lower middle-class frustrations to the luxuries of an upper middle-class life style.

Maybe the film is not able to do justice to the essence and probe the theme to the bone. Maybe the camera should have lingered more broodingly on the wife in Bergman style. Maybe a more prolonged passive observation of an impassive husband, going through a hundred details and revealing little, could have given the film a fraction of the kind of density you get in a Bresson film (remember the husband in **A Gentle Woman**?). But that would be asking for an entirely another film made in entirely different circumstances. **Shaque** is solidly set in the commercial tradition—the important thing is that it manages to be intelligent and interesting within that framework.

No viewer, weary of the false notes struck by Hindi films, can fail to give Aruna-Vikas credit for those numerous little scenes so delightfully capturing the prim affectations and the status symbols of the new entrants to the Upper Middle Class League. The directors bring so much observation to the details that you are inclined to think that this class of society has never before been portrayed more authentically in Indian cinema by anybody except Satyajit Ray. Shabana Azmi, as the wife, flitting about in the kitchen, supervising the vegetables being shredded, attending to the chocolate cake, daintily wiping her hands on her apron before opening the letter. The family at the dining table, in a corner of the living room, husband Vinod Khanna's hair slick and moisturised like any good executive's should be at breakfast. The child, full of "good nights" and "good mornings", so absorbed in his comics that he won't get up to ans-



wer the phone ("Mummy, you take it"). Vinod, squatting on the bed, asking for the nail-clipper before the crucial discovery of the letter from the blackmailer. Vinod, ready to leave the house to take a plane, asking the servant to put the briefcase inside the car, not in the boot. Shabana, visiting a rich old man in his luxurious apartment on her hunt for information about the husband, unable to reject the role of captive audience as the man, obsessed with classical music, compulsively plays a favourite tape. And her visit to the wife (Farida Jalal of the innocent man, who is undergoing a prison term for somebody else's crime. The melodrama generated by the visit is a trifle over-pitched, but the children, coolly playing cricket in the corridor outside, treating the visitor as an unavoidable interruption in their game, is a richly evocative detail.

The film's last passage, constituting the climax, is obviously tailored to the distributors' requirements but, even here, the film wages a battle for the preservation of logic and credibility. Utpal Dutt's blackmailer-cum-murderer, finally unveiled as an acutely psychic case, is far more credible than those many villains who get overpowered in the finale.

The film's failures are there—the chief one being the lack of adequate tension in the deteriorating relation-



ship between the husband and the wife—but that cannot obscure the fact that **Shaque**, made with enough skill and wit, stands out in the context of the commercial Hindi cinema. A most notable asset of the film is the brilliant colour photography by A. K. Bir, the man who photographed **27 Down**.

Wohi Baat/VINAY SHUKLA

Vinay Shukla's **Wohi Baat** (All Over Again), shot by thrice-award winner, K. K. Mahajan, is certainly a daring piece, even by the most advanced standards of audience acceptability as assumed by Hindi film-makers. Two men and a woman—that is the superficially banal plot, but director Vinay Shukla and writer Kamleshwar do not merely flirt with the subject, they take it seriously, trying to cloak the serious approach under a casual manner, and go further with the theme than you can remember any other film-maker doing.

Here is a wife (Shabana Azmi), married to an ambitious promotion-pursuing civil engineer (Parikshat Sahni), virtually marooned on a site where a dam is to come up and trying to make the marriage work. They are in love, they are decent people, but things begin to go wrong. The job and promotion-politics weigh too heavily on his mind; the wife—her feelings, her chores, her boredom—are taken so much for granted,

it looks as if she does not have any problems, all the problems are the husband's.

Enter second young man (Mittun Chakraborty), the husband's junior colleague. A new relationship takes root and develops into intimacy. And here comes one of the many 'daring' passages. The wife walks up to the husband and tells all. The marriage breaks up, violence and hurt being confined to the emotions.

The new relationship—between Shabana and Mittun Chakraborty—takes the shape of a second marriage (for her). The film tries to explore its course, whether it shows better prospects of enduring.

A closer viewing would be in order to assess Shukla's technique. But of one thing there is no doubt—he is adept at judging the distances between intimate relationships. The shadows that fall between Shabana and Parikshat Sahni, the light that brightens up the moments when she is with Mittun are surely observed. As a sort of chorus, Amol Palekar, playing a more off-beat role than he has ever done before, provides expression to some of those things that seem to elude the grasp of speech.

With their first features, Bhimsain, Vinay Shukla and the team of Aruna-Vikas join the ranks of those whose work raises expectations of a measure of qualitative change in Hindi cinema.

The film **Aagantuk** (The Stranger) marks actor Amol Palekar's first attempt at direction. Nearly complete, the film in two versions, Hindi and Kannada, is based on a Kannada story by Chandrashekar and has Amol Palekar himself, his wife Chitra and the Pune Film Institute-trained Tom Alter playing the main roles.

There is this trend towards regional films being made in local language versions and in Hindi; there is a movement of directors from their

home-states to other realms; and Satyajit Ray has now graced the Hindi film-arena.

Other notable projects underway—or on their way there—are: **Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Dastan** (The Strange Life of Arvind Desai), the second film of YUKT, the enterprising co-operative, which started off with the Marathi film, **Ghashiram Kotwal**. Directed by Saeed Mirza, **Arvind Desai** is set in Bombay and revolves round a central character, whose milieu is the urban upper middle-class. His personal dilemmas, viewed against a wide socio-economic backdrop, are probed in this film, in the writing of which Vijay Tendulkar, Saeed Mirza, Kamal Swaroop and Cyrus Mistry have collaborated.

Mani Kaul, the best known member of YUKT (and director of **Uski Roti**, **Aashad Ka Ek Din**, **Duvidha**), has plans to make his next film in Kannada. Based on a fairy-tale, updated to the forties and set in Mysore, the film's tentative title is **The Modern Prince**. Meanwhile, Kaul is busy with a two-reel documentary, in colour, which he is shooting for The Films Division. It deals with a little known form of Konkan folk art, called *Chitrakathi*, in which music and story-telling, combined with ancient paintings are "used as a primitive version of slide-projection."

Kumar Shahani, whose **Maya Darpan** continues to be one of the most hotly debated films in recent times, is currently engaged in research on the "epic form", on a Homi Bhabha fellowship. He has plans for three feature films, one of them about a doctor's "heroic efforts to overcome the dehumanisation in his profession". The second project deals with the problems and conflicts created by industrialisation, while the third will attempt the "interweaving of an episode from the Mahabharata with contemporary life."

—Bikram Singh

Kannada Cinema : "the point is that it is very much alive & kicking"

The Barefoot Director

Samskara (1970) was the first successful Kannada film made without a star-cast, without the conventional songs, dances, etc. It sparked off a series of events that have made Karnataka the most exciting regional centre for new Indian cinema today.

Little did Pattabhi Rama Reddy and his dedicated friends realise that the hectic picnic at Vaikuntapura (a tiny village near Sringeri *math* and the locale for shooting) would land them initially in trouble (the film was banned for a year) but finally lead on to greater things.

When **Samskara** was shown in Madras at the Children's Theatre, a bare-headed, barefooted elderly man in a *lungi* announced that he too would make a 'progressive' film like **Samskara** but no one in that enthusiastic audience paid him any particular attention. But years later, the same man produced **Vamsha Vriksha** and gave to Kannada two directors, who have never looked back from that day. Girish Karnad and B. V. Karanth, who directed **Vamsha Vriksha** won the national award for best direction that year.

Ganapathi Venkataramana Iyer (for that is his name) is a barefoot director—literally. (perhaps he wants to leave his foot prints more distinctly on the sands?) At a very young age, when he decided that the then-existing education system failed him in more than one sense, he ran away from home and took a one-way ticket to fame. He went to Pune, hung around the Prabhat film studios, and finally landed up in a professional drama company, run by that cultured-comedian, Sri Gubbi Veeranna.

G. V. Iyer (as he is known to all Kannada film-goers) did all sorts of odd jobs, from prop-carrying to sign-painting—while imbibing the atmosphere of the theatre. It was there that B. V. Karanth, also a young runaway from home, came into contact with Iyer. Iyer is reputed to have introduced all the now-famous names in Kannada films to the world of celluloid.

A sort of *dada* (one translation would be 'Big Daddy') amongst the film and theatre-crowd, G. V. Iyer met his Waterloo when he made **Chowkada Deepa** (Light at the Cross-Roads), which infuriated the film audience and Iyer repaired to Delhi in voluntary exile. There he met his erstwhile protege, B. V. Karanth, now a name in the Delhi theatre, and decided he would make only films of an artistic nature, and that Karanth was the man to do it for him. Karanth sought the help of Girish Karnad, who was at least one film older than Karanth, and Iyer decided to produce **Vamsha Vriksha**. Iyer's dreams had turned to ashes in the disaster of **Chowkada Deepa** but like a phoenix he staged a comeback through these two young directors.

Iyer announced that he would be a student of the new school and like a humble disciple learn at the feet of these youngsters. He, himself would make a film in the new genre when he felt he had learnt adequately. Before launching into his new enterprise, he helped another protege, Nanjaraj Urs to make **Sankalpa** (The Resolution), where Anant Nag (today a



G. V. Iyer in *Vamsha Vriksha*

big star) featured for the first time. **Sankalpa** was given a regional award and Iyer began to plot his Magnum Opus **Hamsegeethe** (The Swan-song).

Hamsegeethe, narrates the near-legendary tale of a musical genius Bhairavi Venkatasubbiah. In its two-and-a-half-hour length, there are only about 15 minutes of dialogue. In a music-packed Indian cinema, **Hamsegeethe** is a musical in the real sense of the term.

The significant point about present-day Kannada cinema is that it is very much alive and kicking. Nobody has stopped making films, not even young V. R. K. Prasad, whose **Rishyashringa** which, despite winning national awards for its music-director and cameraman did not fare well market-wise. He is now shooting a three-in-one film, two of the short stories being directed by G. V. Iyer and S. Diwakar. All three are using the same cast, unit and location.

Chandamarutha/PATTABHI RAMA REDDY

Pattabhi Rama Reddy, who had gone into hibernation for a long time after **Samskara**, partly because of the many troubles he suffered during the emergency, is now all set to release his bilingual **Chandamarutha** (**Wild Wind** in English). It is a political film (perhaps the first political film in Kannada) and explores the futility of violence in public life. Ironically enough, the censors had, at first, refused it a certificate on the grounds that it would provoke people to violently overthrow governments. Reddy's entire family was arrested during the emergency. Later authorities held his wife Snehalata Reddy (**Samskara's** heroine) and released the others.

Reddy was able to complete his film only after the lifting of the emergency. His wife, who plays a major role in **Chandamarutha** died some days after her release.

Chandamarutha (based on a short story by P. Lankesh) features a professor who preaches radicalism and violence, without actually acting upon it. But his student decides to put this teaching into practice.

Pallavi/P. LANKESH

P. Lankesh, described as the 'angry young man' of Kannada literature, leapt into the film-arena with **Pallavi**. His first film, set against an urban background, won him a national award for direction.

Pallavi is about a typical, slightly headstrong college girl, Shanta, whose heroines are film-stars and whose ambition is to pass her B.A. exam at the first attempt. Her boyfriend, Chandru, is of a more wayward temperament. They both apply for jobs but, while Chandru rudely defies the bosses at the interview, Shanta, with her charm and self-

confidence, gets herself a job straight away. Chandru does not. Shanta offers to support him, but he prefers to break off the relationship.

Her employer, an industrial director, Jagannathan (played by Lankesh himself) is attracted towards her. By degrees, and with the subtle combination of his money, his benevolence and his pleasantries, he breaks down her resistance. They marry.

Shanta then combines her new leisurely existence as a sophisticated wife with traditional chores and rituals. Boredom overcomes her so does pregnancy.

Chandru re-enters her life battered and poverty-stricken, to seek asylum from the police. Shanta is, at first intrigued by his attitudes which are so opposed to hers. When he harangues her for resigning herself to security and a constricting marriage, she refuses to go away with him—and accuses him of discarding her in the first place. He threatens to destroy her world, but is finally overpowered by the police.

Shanta is left to carry on with her undisturbing, uneventful life.

New cinema, itself seems to be heading off the off-beat. Earlier, off-beat cinema meant that it concerned itself only with socially relevant themes (which usually meant the caste-system).

The same film-makers who gave birth to this cinema are branching off into untrodden, more exciting fields. Girish Karnad is planning, what he calls 'a total entertainer' based on an original script. Its story revolves around a band of mercenary warriors who roamed through Karnataka during the 13th century. They 'fought others' battles for gold and, when unemployed, looted and plundered homesteads and properties. B.V. Karanth's next project is based on **Bharatipura**, a novel by Dr. U. Ananthamurthy (author of

Samskara, about a young student from London who returns to his temple-town home in India, with intent to politicise the oppressed there. P. Lankesh has not 'gone to the village' in his films—and Pattabhi Rama Reddy has made a film **Paper Boats**, with only two characters and in three languages. While M. S. Sathyu has made one entertainer in **Kanneshwara Rama** (a Robin-Hood from the Malnad hills), and his next film he says, is a take-off on everyone from politicians to film-directors.

Ghatashraddha/G. KASARAVALLI

While the older hands of the 'new wave' carry on with unstemmed fervour, 26-year-old Girish Kasaravalli heralds the onset of a newer and younger school of film-makers.

In his very first film **Ghatashraddha**, he reveals such a high order of cinematic talent, that he even manages to enrich Dr. Ananthamurthy's story, set in pre-independence India. A predominantly young audience has taken to Kasaravalli's artistry, despite the view that it is an outdated tale projecting an out-of-times philosophy. Ananthamurthy, as a novelist, is known for his ruthless unmasking of empty brahmin orthodoxy, a hypocrisy that cloaks itself in puritanical ritual.

Ghatashraddha is a ritual where-by 'immoral' brahmin widows were ex-communicated. It is akin to a death-ceremony, while the immoral soul is as yet alive, depriving her of family relationships, property rights and exiling her from the brahmin *agrahara* (the brahmin dwellings).

The ritual consists of smashing an earthen pot, which symbolises the womb, and thereby fertility, *Ghatashraddha* is thus an act against life or a sentence to living death.

Yamunakka is the young widowed daughter of the ageing Udupa, a

Vedic scholar. On the sly she meets the village school-teacher, who seduces her. She conceives and futilely attempts to conceal her pregnant condition. When she attempts suicide also without success, she, at the instance of the teacher-seducer, undergoes a crude abortion.

Sanctimonious brahmin society will not let her go free, it must have its pound of flesh. Her own father performs the *ghatashraddha* ceremony.

A few days later, a proposal is brought to the old Udupa, offering him a young girl in marriage—which society is perfectly willing to accept, while simultaneously discarding the young woman who has just had an affair.

As Kasaravalli explains, the story is not treated realistically and traces—one might say ritualistically—the tragic course the young woman's life takes. He pictures an emotional tale almost clinically, with intent to shake people out of their complacency; While the film's emphasis is clearly on style, Kasaravalli, who has a firm hold over his medium, has made a very disturbing film.

Incidentally, except for B.V. Karanth the music director, the rest of the unit are graduates of the Indian Film & TV Institute in Pune.

Kanakambara/S. KSHIRSAGAR

Sridhar Kshirsagar's **Kanakambara** is inspired by a short story written by Yeshwant Chittal about a motherless, adolescent girl whose name gives the film its title. *Kanakambara* are also slight orange flowers, strung together and used to decorate women's hair or offered at the altar of the gods. The other main character in the film is Uddanda, the local libertine, who has already lost two wives.

The film is set against the beautiful, hill-lined sea-coast of North Kanara,

and casts Girish Karnad in the—for him—novel role of the rakish Uddanda who truly desires this young girl on the threshold of womanhood. *Kanakambara* is played by T. Rameshwari from the Film Institute.

The film is a psychological study of a young girl's coming of age and its accompanying perplexities. It attempts to study the torments of loneliness and guilt—and the almost casual, yet devastating impositions of superstition. Thus far, new cinema has been examining themes that affect larger sections of society, with the emphasis on sociology rather than psychology. In this psychological-bias, Kshirsagar is once again exploring new avenues.

The film was photographed by Apurba Kishore Bir, also a graduate from the Film Institute, in 16mm. and blown-up, and shot entirely on location in the amazingly short period of 8½ days. (Kshirsagar, however, who has an advertising and documentary-film background, has been planning his first feature film for over two years.)



Incidentally, *Kanakambara* also brings to the Indian screen the first kiss since Himansu Rai made **Karma** in 1933.

Ghatashradha



Kanakambara





Kokila/BALU MAHENDRA

Kokila, the pleasant surprise-success of the year, is indicative of the cosmopolitan make-up of the Kannada cine-industry. Its director and cameraman (from Pune's Film Institute) is a Sinhalese Tamilian; the main leads are played by Shobha from Kerala, Rojaramani from Andhra and Kamalahasan the popular Tamil film-star.

A young man comes to stay as a paying guest in a household, and the slender storyline describes his encounters with the daughter of the house and her maid.

Kokila shows that Mahendra is at his best in capturing the little things in life—which in fact have made his film a big hit. The film marks a new beginning in the commercial cine-world of Karnataka and with its expertly put-across charm, directly touches the hearts of the audience.

Kakankote/C. R. SIMHA

The danger inherent in making a film out of a play is that it could end up as filmed theatre. Simha's **Kakankote**, a musical based on a folk play by Dr. Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, manages to avoid this pitfall.

Set in the days of the Maharaja of Mysore, the story revolves around the

kaadu kurubas (jungle shepherds) who inhabit the elephant-filled forests of Heggadevanakote (where in fact the film was shot). The story relates how a young, rebellious *kuruba* successfully ends years of exploitation of his downtrodden tribe.

Rishyashringa/V. R. K. PRASAD

Only the mythical Rishyashringa, so goes the legend, the pure and untouched man of god, can bring rain to the drought-stricken people.

Prasad's film too is based on a folk play by Dr. Chandrashekar Kambar (who wrote **Jo Kumara-swamy**) and probes life in a village that is dying from drought. Kambar explores the consequence of fertile soil in the lives of farmers. On another plane, the play also delves into the import of fertility in human life.

Kudremotte/G. V. IYER

Kudremotte (The Horse's Egg) marks yet another phase in the reel-life of G. V. Iyer. The film is based on a novel by Kamaroopa and woven around an old fable: Two clever rascals make a simpleton believe that a horse's egg really exists! They present him a pumpkin and with the gift-of-their-gab convince him that it is in truth a horse's egg.

The novel portrays the degeneration of a brahmin family and its relationship with the non-brahmin family of the village-leader. B. V. Karanth and his wife, Prema, play important roles in this latest instalment of G. V. Iyer's adventures.

The popular Kannada film world continues to be dominated by Superstar Raj Kumar, who has given that much-needed economic base to Kannada cinema. Even his films are

Geejagana Goodu



made with a lot of care and without many of the inanities that characterise the run-of-the-mill popular film.

Director Puttanna Kanagal has created his own school of film-making. His films are a half-way house between new and popular trends and appeal enormously to his audiences, and in particular, to women.

Apart from the subsidy that the State Government gives to films made in Karnataka, the real thing is that the Kannadiga is basically a lover of cinema. Bangalore is a film-goer's paradise with a staggering 85 cinemas for its 19-lakh population. One street alone, Kempegowda Circle, barely half-a-mile in length, boasts 25 cinemas. (The Bangalorean is exposed to films in six languages,

including English). Added to this are the city's numerous film societies.

There are also of course, the regular fans of what may now, hopefully, be called the 'other' cinema. The multi-star curry-western **Sholay** (in Hindi) ran for 115 weeks in Bangalore.

Waiting in the wings are even more young film-makers:

T. S. Ranga has directed **Geejagana Goodu** (The geejaga-bird's nest), based on a story by Krishna Alanahalli (author of **Kaadu**). The story is built around three characters staying in a forest lodge. There is the young girl who comes to the lodge with an ageing hotel owner. She meets a young student and attempts to entice him with her charms. She plays upon his emotions, as well as on the hotel-owner's and subsequently slips out of both their lives. Nagabharana, who assisted in **Go-dhuli** has made **Grahana** (The Eclipse) and Chandrashekhar has made **Huli Bantu Huli** (The Tiger is Coming! The Tiger is Coming!). Playwright Kambar has launched a film now, **Karimayi** while Krishnan Hariharan (from the YUKT film co-operative) is planning a film based on Mokashe-Punekar's **Gangavva mattu Gangamai** which stands amongst the most important novels published in Kannada since independence. Even Amol Palekar (Hindi film-star and stage-director), in association with Chandrashekhar, is near-completing his bilingual film **Prashasti** in Kannada and in Hindi. As we were saying, the significant point about present-day Kannada cinema is...etc., etc.

—K. G.

Malayalam Cinema : G. ARAVINDAN
K. G. GEORGE,
P. A. BACKER
ADOOR GOPALAKRISHNAN

Rama Re-filmed



Any number of films have been based directly upon the Ramayana and those inspired by it — that is, transposing its multifold characters, plots and situations to other places, other times — are probably countless. Yet G. Aravindan's **Kanchana Sita** manages to look afresh at this oft-told epic.

Kanchana Sita (Golden Sita) is based on a play by renowned Malayalam playwright C.N. Sreekanthan Nair who, in turn, took the inspiration for his play from the Uttarakanda of Valmiki's **Ramayana**. The title alludes to the golden image of Sita that Rama sets by his side for the *aswamedha yaga* (the ritual sacrifice of a horse to *Agni*, the god of fire) that he performs. The *yaga*, a symbol of imperial power requires that the king who performs it should be ac-



companied by his wife and since Rama has abandoned Sita twelve years earlier, the *kulaguru* (family preceptor), Vasishtha, advises that he place a golden image of Sita at his side.

Though the film is based on Sreekanthan Nair's play, it is conceived differently. Sita does not appear in the film at all, but is depicted as *prakriti* or all-pervading nature and the different moods of Sita are shown as the different aspects of nature.

The film begins with the journey of Rama and Lakshmana to kill Shambooka the *sudra* who performs penance —but Shambooka is spared upon his wife's pleadings. Rama and Lakshmana return to Ayodhya to face Urmila, the spirited wife of Lakshmana. Rama can only say in reply to her reproaches for abandoning Sita in

the Dandakaranya forests—through which they have just journeyed—that “the husband of Sita is only a servant of the people of Ayodhya.”

The very next day Vasishtha arrives to suggest that Rama perform the *aswamedha yaga* but Rama cannot do without his wife by his side and is averse to taking a second wife, as Vasishtha further suggests. The anguish of Rama at this point is juxtaposed with the people of Ayodhya joyously celebrating the harvest.

Now, Bharata, another brother, who had left Ayodhya twelve years ago returns and takes objection to Rama performing the *yaga* without Sita. Their argument almost culminates in physical fight, but nature intervenes; the skies open and a cooling rain pours down upon them.

The *yaga* begins, with Lakshmana accompanying the *yaga* horse. The horse strays into Valmiki's *ashrama*, where Rama's sons Lava and Kusha are being brought up by the sage. Lava stops the horse and is ready to fight Lakshmana (as the *yaga* demands). Lakshmana orders that the horse be released, but once again nature takes a hand. Valmiki is strangely moved by what he sees and he begins to compose the Uttara Rama Charita—the story of Rama.

The horse is led back to Ayodhya and the ritualistic second stage of the *yaga* starts. Just then Rama receives the news that Shambhuka has resumed his penance and Lakshmana is despatched to slay the erring *sudra*. Even as the ceremony nears completion, Valmiki arrives with Lava and Kusha, but Vasishtha debar Valmiki from entering the *yagashala*. But Rama recognises Lava and Kusha as his sons and takes them to his heart. The joy of Sita, then, is represented in the glorious splendour of nature.

The film ends with an epilogue which depicts the last journey of Rama, the *mahaprasthan*, as he

walks into the river Sarayu and becomes one with Sita or *prakriti*.

In the film, the roles of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, Lava and Kusha are played by tribals from Andhra Pradesh, known as the Ramachenchus, who claim that they are the descendants of the Ikshwaku *vamsha* or family, to which Rama belonged.

This film was shot in colour, entirely in Andhra Pradesh, partly on the banks of the Godavari and partly at Undavalli in Vijayawada and in the Vicarabad forest belt in Telangana. The film captures the natural beauty of these locations, presents a veritable feast for the eyes.

Swapnadanam/K. G. GEORGE

Swapnadanam is K. G. George's first independent film. A graduate from the Pune Film Institute, he has won a number of awards for this film, the silver lotus for the best feature film in Malayalam, the Kerala State awards for the best film of the year, best screenplay, best background music, best actress, best supporting actress and for the director, a special Filmfare award.

That **Swapnadanam** is also enjoying a successful commercial run, even though it is designed without the usual song and dance sequences, is ample testimony to George's mastery of film craft.

Swapnadanam (Journey by Dream) proceeds in a series of flashbacks as the hero, Dr. Gopi, who has had a nervous breakdown, relives his past under psychiatric probing. It is the story of an ill-matched marriage—the husband, sensitive, introverted and plagued by memories of a bygone love and the wife, rich, spoilt and self-centred—and how under the mounting stresses of daily life, the husband cracks up.

Gopi is the only son of a widowed mother and, in strained circumstan-

Swapnadanam



ces, is put through medical college by his rich uncle—on the understanding that Gopi marries his daughter Sumitra. Gopi, while in college, falls in love with a fellow-student, but they part company when his mother meets the girl and persuades her to give up the betrothed Gopi. Gopi's marriage with his rich cousin takes place, but it is doomed from its very start. They are not made for each other in either taste or temperament, and besides Gopi is haunted by memories of his former love. And Gopi, being the introvert he is, "consummates" the marriage, as it were, in a psychiatric ward.

Dr. Mohandas plays the silent and brooding husband and the late Rani Chandra (she died in a recent plane crash) is remarkably good as the wife, Sumitra.

The film is made at a very realistic level—it could be happening right in your neighbourhood.

Manimuzhakkam/P. A. BACKER

Manimuzhakkam (The Tolling of Bells) is director P.A. Backer's second film. It's two most outstanding qualities are its sensitivity and the economy with which Backer unfolds the story.

Jose Paul is a young man brought up in a Roman Catholic orphanage and later transferred to his Hindu ancestral home, where he is subtly persuaded to conform to Hindu religious beliefs. **Manimuzhakkam** is about Jose's attempts to establish an identity for himself in a situation full of conflicts.

Jose Paul grows up in the narrow world of an orphanage amongst hundreds of other deprived children; he takes his first steps into a wider world when, having brilliantly passed his school exams, he is sent to college by his indulgent mentor Fr. Francis. In college, he is bewildered at first, but relentlessly pursued by a rich girl, Jose slowly learns a new confidence. When the girl suddenly drops him on learning of his orphanage upbringing, he is shaken badly. He returns to the orphanage, to familiar surroundings.

Then he is whisked off into a completely new world, being claimed by the family of his rich uncle. There, in luxury's lap he receives a family's affection but, alongside, gentle pressure is exerted to persuade him to give up the Christian faith.

The daughter of a family friend visits the home with whom he (Jose is now known by another name, Rajan) is on the threshold of developing a meaningful personal relationship. But once again disappointment strikes, when the Hindu girl's family rejects him because of his early Christian upbringing.

Totally disillusioned, he leaves to work in Madras. He is once again known as Jose and his Christian employer, impressed by him, offers his sister in marriage to Jose. But he is thrice-unfortunate. His employer withdraws the offer on learning that, though he is Jose in name and Christian by way of belief, he has Hindu ancestry. Jose's search for an identity and for a place in society has to continue.

—Ammu Mathew



A streaming pennant going up the burnished flag-pillar marks the beginning of the annual festival of the village temple. This is known as *Kodiyettam*. *Kodiyettam* is the story of the growing up of Sankaran Kutty, who is supported by Sarojini, his only sister. Sankaran Kutty also earns a pittance by carrying out odd-jobs.

On one of her visits home Sarojini persuades Sankaran Kutty to marry Shanthamma. But neither does marriage awaken him to his responsibilities.

It is at that phase of his life when he is employed as a truck-cleaner, that his harsh experiences on and off the road, finally mould him into an individual.

And that is the theme of the film—the birth of an individual. Sankaran Kutty is left without moorings when the traditional society of the village disintegrates. Timid, diffident, hopelessly trying to shrink away from the changes around him, he is a character original in conception and universal in appeal. With the impact of the modern age,

he emerges an individual, confident enough to face a hostile world.

There are a number of parallel themes unobtrusively woven into the web of the film — the wearing away of un-biblical ties with a patriarchal society, the forming of new relationships in a period of fluctuating values; facing up to the rough competitive, masculine world of a technological civilisation—and through all these intimate, personal details runs the social history of Kerala.

Kodiyettam marks the emergence of the Malayalam film into modern times, speaking a common language with other arts. There is a blend of lyricism and realism which has been an attainment coveted by writers since the birth of modern Malayalam literature.

Subtlety is the soul of the film's style. The camera adds together fragments of reality—a flight of steps leading into a pond, rotting leaves in water, the awning before a shop drenched in rain, delicate curves of an elephant's raised trunk—into exquisite artifice. The only background music is provided by natural sounds. The history of a social transition seems contained between the exultant rhythm of temple drums vibrating through the stillness of the village—and a snatch of vulgar music blaring through the window of a speeding lorry.

The whole film reveals a genuine awareness of universal human tragedy. Even the moment of fulfilment only emphasises the silent pathos that surrounds it. As children peer into cracks in a sun-dried field, we glimpse a mysterious darkness that floats under solid ground.

Kodiyettam is a truly Malayalam film, in that it honestly reflects the life of the Malayalam speaking people.

— Ramanarayanan

The victory

Jait Re Jait which may be translated as 'The victory', is about a young tribal who challenged god.

The tribal boy Nagya is the son of the village *bhagat* (oracle) who teaches him the value of being virtuous and absolutely faithful to the deity of the tribe, which stands in the form of a mountain-peak, Lingoba or Mahadeo. At the foot of this mountain, the tribe has existed and thrived for years—maybe centuries.

A myth exists that God Lingoba descends from the mountain's peak on full-moon nights, riding his Nandi (the bull) and can be seen only by those who are pure and abide strictly by the rules of the faith.

Nagya, from his childhood days, has cherished the dream of meeting and being blessed by Lingoba and becoming a *bhagat* after his father. Nagya, in the true tradition of the dance and music-loving tribe, is a good drummer.

Chindi, a tribal girl and divorcee, is fascinated by Nagya's youthful zest, the spell of his drum and his dreamy eyes which light up at the sight of Lingoba's mountain peak.

Nagya's complete faith in Lingoba is violently shaken first of all when his father, the *bhagat* dies of snake-



bite. The second shock is when the bees from the many beehives on the mountain-peak attack Nagya and he loses one eye.

Nagya feels that this is too harsh a punishment and what has he done to deserve it? The angry Nagya vows to have his vengeance. He takes an oath to smash the beehives on the holy mountain-peak, supposedly insurmountable by the tribals. Nagya will drive away the queen-bee from the mountain-peak forever, come what may. He loses all interest in playing his drum, and lays it aside. He is obsessed with his single idea.

Chindi, more mature than Nagya, knows that it will turn out to be a futile exercise. But because of the



intense love she feels for him, she decides to assist him in his bizarre plan. She wants him to attain his mad goal and return to his original self.

Nagya does reach the mountain peak. He attacks and destroys the beehives on Lingoba. He achieves his goal but he loses Chindhi—the mother of his future child—in this mad adventure. Chindi dies of bee-stings.

The film ends with a grief-stricken Nagya becoming an introvert, looking only at the sky-high Lingoba, in all its terrifyingly mystic splendour.

The film, which is based on a Marathi novel of the same title written by G. N. Dandekar, has been treated in the style of a musical. The music is based on various traditional folk-styles, with a stress on choral singing.

Marathi films *do* abound in song and dance in the normal course, but *Jait Re Jait* happens to be the first musical of its kind.

Garambicha Bapu, (Wild Bapu of Garambi) directed by Baba Majgavkar from Pune's Film Institute, is subject-wise a departure from the traditional film-scene. It is based on S.N. Pendse's novel, and translated into English by Ian Raeside under UNESCO's cultural exchange programme (one other such novel being Bibhuti Bhushan Bannerjee's *Pather Panchali*). The story's central character is Bapu, a young rebel from an orthodox village, who fights its moth-eaten conventions. (In the process he marries a young widow belonging to a lower caste). The ultimate confrontation is between Bapu and Anna Khot, the village *sarpanch* or chief. In the main roles are Kashinath Ghanekar, Gita Siddharth and Dattabhat.

— Vijay Tendulkar

Tamil Cinema : K. BALACHANDER
DEVRAJ & MOHAN
A. BHIMSINGH

What's Entertainment?

The concept of entertainment has been changing in the past few years, and nowhere as in films has it been so clearly demonstrated. This has been so in Tamil films. No doubt the change was perceptible in the Tamil theatre as well. But it was not as rapid as in films. Among the media, film is the only form that reaches the masses of Tamil Nadu in a big way. By their very nature, films in general allow themselves to be influenced more immediately than theatre—where change occurs more slowly and gradually.

Certain phases can be clearly identified in Tamil films. Not so long ago, it was considered entertainment to have gorgeous sets, a big star-cast with many songs and dances. Dream-sequences were a convenient device to introduce the hero and the heroine in varying costumes and in different locales. This happened in what are called 'social' films as well. Dance sequences were introduced in colour. An added line in a film advertisement ran thus: "Songs and Dances in Colour".

This type of entertainment was provided by big companies. But the impact of small-budget films in the west had its own echo in the Hollywood of India. Films with stories of kings and queens were eased out and 'social' films made their appear-

ance. To make this a reality, independent film producers and directors came upon the scene. Film-making was no longer just the prerogative of studio-owners.

The spate of foreign movies with revenge as their theme appealed enormously to local film makers. Language versions of these films began to appear. Ringo and Ringo-style movies, the Silver Dollar series, had their own Tamil interpretations. Very often the story was skeletal, and every excuse was invented to put in as many fights as possible. Oddly enough, the costume and dream-drama vanished but the horses, pistols and the bars persisted. Many elements in the story were unrelated to the problems of the masses and to the life of the Tamilian. But these successful films had their own reality. Surprisingly, the audience accepted with equal pleasure both the original films of Franco-Italian origin and the imitated ones in Tamil.

When this wave receded, and spy-oriented films made their entry it was also reflected in Tamil films. These were not exactly 007 films but some version of them. Films which provided scope for violence and vengeance as motifs had their special appeal till the then government came down heavily upon them. Cinema Karate died at the hands of the censors.

A successful Bombay or Calcutta film is re-made in Tamil. And, often is quite successful at the box-office. Films are re-oriented to the needs of the Tamil audience. One advantage that Tamil Nadu has over other states is that here a film can be made in any one of the Southern Indian languages Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam—and if that is found successful, it is soon made in other languages and eventually in Hindi—for a wider market too. A film has several rebirths.

It is against this background that the emergence of independent-minded directors and their works are to be seen.

Formula films are on their way out. With that also goes the concept of big stars. Many young artistes have been introduced and were soon found popular with the people. Thus Jai Shanker, Ravichandran, Kamalahasan, Shiva Kumar, Sri Kanth, Jai Ganesh, Rajni Kanth appeared as heroes and character-actors, and Thengai Srinivasan, Surli Rajan and Cho as comedians. A number of heroines were also introduced: Lakshmi, Sujatha, Sri Priya, Jaya Sudha, Jaya Pradha, Jaya Chitra, Latha, Sumithra, Roja Ramani and Srividya. Horizons keep expanding.

In the technical field also a number of new technicians appeared as cameramen, editors, etc. This was the result of two film-institutes, a national one in Pune and a regional one in Madras. The traditional approach to film-making and structuring began to crack.

A new generation of film directors like C. V. Rajendran, Devaraj and Mohan, A. Bhimsingh, K. Balachander, Tirumalai, Mahalingam, and S. P. Muthuraman were born. Each one had his own style of film-making. Only a few old-timers could re-adjust their technique and change their approach to co-exist in highly-competitive, fast-changing times. The younger generation of directors broke

away from all traditional concepts of entertainment.

They sought out popular novels and new authors, to explore and communicate new values. They took up even relationships that were taboo for examination and exploration.

The middle and lower middle-classes which were not represented at all, began to appear in greater measure. Thus a school-teacher, a porter, a rickshaw-puller, a postman, a policeman or a cobbler became central characters. This was a reflection of social change and the film directors' awareness of it. There may be exaggerations in the portrayals but, again, this is in keeping with the qualities of the Tamil personality. The new directors also opt for plot-oriented films. This is not so much a defect, as a preference.

The phenomenal success of **Samskara** in Kannada gave new impetus to these directors. They got away from the strangle-hold of studio confines and went out to actual locations. Simulation lost its charm and the beauty of the landscape began to be exploited. Family stories built around complex relationships were projected against these newly discovered locales. Rural Tamil Nadu got its share of limelight. Color still holds sway but black and white too has staged a come-back. Wordy dialogues still dominate.

In the field of music also older concepts—like using only Carnatic ragas—were given up. New rhythms were employed—to the extent of borrowing. In the last two years, young music director Ilaya Raja has arrived like a tornado. He uses mainly folk-tunes and folk-rhythms but in a modern setting.

A new generation of directors, technicians and artistes have appeared on the horizon. And may success crown their ventures—for they dare and act.



Avargal means characters. Anu and Bharani are lovers. They live in Madras. Anu has to leave Madras and goes to Bombay with her father. By a quirk of circumstance, there is a total lack of communication between the lovers. Anu does not get any reply to her letters. Her dying father arranges her marriage with Ramnath, his boss, who is a sadist.

Anu's life with Ramnath becomes unbearable. She leaves him after the birth of a child. They are divorced.

Back in Madras, she finds a job in the office where her father worked. There she meets Johnny. He is an introvert, full of compassion, and unexpressed love.

Anu discovers that Bharani is her neighbour. The almost written-off love affair begins to blossom once again.

Ramnath is transferred to Madras. Ramnath's mother, knowing her son only too well wants to atone for his behaviour. She works as a maid-servant for Anu. She looks after Anu's child.

Ramnath and Anu are in the same office. Ramnath pretends that he is a new man. He attempts to destroy all chances of Anu's marriage with Bharani. Anu takes Ramnath seriously only to discover he hasn't changed at all.

Anu totally disillusioned, decides to leave Madras for Trivandrum. She is forlorn and thoroughly shaken. She boards the train. As the train moves, she discovers there *is* someone to feel for her and to comfort her—Ramnath's mother. She wants to expiate the sins and crimes of her son.



Annakili (The Darling). A small picturesque village. Almost poetic. In this village lives Annam. She is the darling of the village. She is an orphan. She lives with her elder-sister. Annam's brother-in-law is a good-for-nothing parasite. The family manages to live on the bare earnings of Annam and her sister.

Annam and her sister do odd jobs in several households. Annam has no special want in life. She lives with nature and identifies herself with it.

To the only school of the village, comes Thiagarajan, a teacher from the town. Annam and Thiagarajan long for each other, but do not openly express themselves.

In that village, there is also a touring-cinema run by an unscrupulous middle-aged man. He makes several attempts to seduce Annam but fails. He swears he will have her.

By sheer force of circumstance, Thiagarajan marries the daughter of the big landlord in the village. Annam accepts this disappointment and decides to remain a spinster.

A few years later, the teacher returns to the village with his son Babu. Annam shows great affection on this child, as if he were her own. The touring-cinema operator; calculating the depth of Annam's love for Babu, plans to abduct the child and keep him as hostage.

Knowing Annam's frantic desire to save the child, he stipulates he will release the child only if Annam gives in to his sexual demands. Annam is enraged. She sets fire to the cinema and, in a grand rescue-bid, saves the child. But she is consumed by the fire.

The entire village sheds tears for Annam who, far from resenting her unfulfilled love, becomes a symbol of sacrifice.

Sila Nerangalil Sila Manithargal (Moments and People), is the story of Ganga, a poor, young brahmin girl, and Prabhakar, a middle-aged man of affluence—and their confrontation.

One evening it is raining heavily. Ganga is returning from college. Prabhakar in his big car offers her a lift. But before she is dropped home, he forces himself upon her. She is so young that she is not aware of what is happening to her.

Back home, she informs her mother, Kanakam, of the episode. Ganga lives with her brother, Ganesan, and his termagant wife. The entire family accuses her of having brought disrepute to the family-name.

The mother sends Ganga to her distant cousin, Rangu. Rangu gives Ganga shelter and educates her. She graduates and gets a good job. All along Rangu makes desperate attempts to go to bed with Ganga. He is a widower. Ganga resists these attempts.

Rangu tells Ganga she can only be a concubine after her experience, and no one will marry her. In the course of an altercation, he challenges her to find the man who deflowered her and live with him.

Through the good offices of a writer, Viswanatha Sastri, she meets Prabhakar. Subsequently, they meet several times and discover each other. It is an unusual relationship. Ganga has sympathy for Prabhakar. But Ganga's mother hates the relationship. She makes hectic efforts to get her married off. In a fit of anger, Ganga throws her mother out of the house. Rangu goes back to his village after apologizing to Ganga. Now Ganga is alone.

Prabhakar is already married, with two children. He has a nagging wife and takes refuge in alcohol. Ganga accepts him as he is.

Prabhakar resists Ganga's proposals for marriage. He confesses he is afraid that what befell Ganga will happen to his daughter also. One day he tells her that their relationship is at an end.

Ganga is alone. She has to live with memories of the brief life she has had with Prabhakar. She, a brahmin girl of orthodox upbringing, takes to alcohol.

—S. Gopalie

Telugu Cinema : ERANKI SARMA
SINGITAM SRINIVASA RAO

Prince Charming & the Sleep-in Maid



A lyric touch is given in **Chilakamma Cheppindi** (The Parrot's Prediction) to the oft-told tale of a village girl's loss of innocence. Malli believes the happy predictions of a fortune-telling parrot; she is going to ride away into the sunset with a handsome Prince Charming from the city. She goes to the city as a live-in maid. She is all eyes for the young and fashionable Madhu and she is a willing party to his eager seduction.

When Malli becomes pregnant, Madhu deserts her; his sister Bharati who offered her shelter to start with, shuns her. Ravi, a friend of theirs, comes to her rescue and leaves her in charge of Kasi, a simpleton who is secretly in love with her.

The passage of time teaches Malli that there is more to love and life than good clothes, expensive perfumes and powders. She stands up at last, not against male chauvinism but against injustice. She chooses silent love over voluble lust.



The film is in black and white, but the photography captures the pastoral quality of village life, and when the dramatic tension closes in, contributes unobtrusively to the moment's mood. Some rustic songs and a romantic one—and low-keyed performances round off the film suitably.

The public's enthusiastic response to Eranki Sarma's debut has made him already a director to reckon with. Producer Chalasanani Gopi has an earlier Telugu hit, **Krishnaveni**, to his credit.

Taram Marindi/S. SRINIVASA RAO

A film that holds up a mirror to life in an Andhra village. It could be a village anywhere, if one forgets for the moment, the language and the costumes. A place where love is at a premium and exploitation rules supreme.

Rami Reddy marries off his daughter Ramulamma to an elderly widower. Why? For money, prestige and the



other perquisites which matter to such people. The elderly groom, Kota Reddy is both a drunk and a debaucher, carrying on with his own sister-in-law. This marriage angers Venkata Reddy, Rami Reddy's progressive son.

Venkata Reddy marries Parvati, his childhood love; this too is against his father's wishes. He is made to leave his father's house, to set up home in a colony of harijans.

The politics of a village, the egos of self-centred village elders bring matters to a boil. Violence ravages the innocent, but only for a time.

When one intelligently takes the reins into one's hands, surely — to mix metaphors — a dawn cannot be lagging behind. Times change, so should people. (**Taram Marindi** is translated as *The Wind Changes*).

Singitam Srinivasa Rao espouses no political ideology. He is on the side of a humanitarian outlook. He shows, not preaches, that no man is an island. Shobha as the vulnerable girl, Chenna, Venkata Reddy, Rami Reddy, Kota Reddy, these are all cameos brought from real life onto the screen. G. K. Venkatesh's background scoring and Balu Mahendra's photography, weave a web of involvement around the audience.

Seetha Geetha Datithe (If Seetha Crosses the Line), directed by C. V. Sridhar, takes a compassionate look at marital problems and suspected infidelity. Ravi is young and loving, but forever lost in literary discussions with his men-friends while his young wife Seetha frets for lack of mental and physical release.

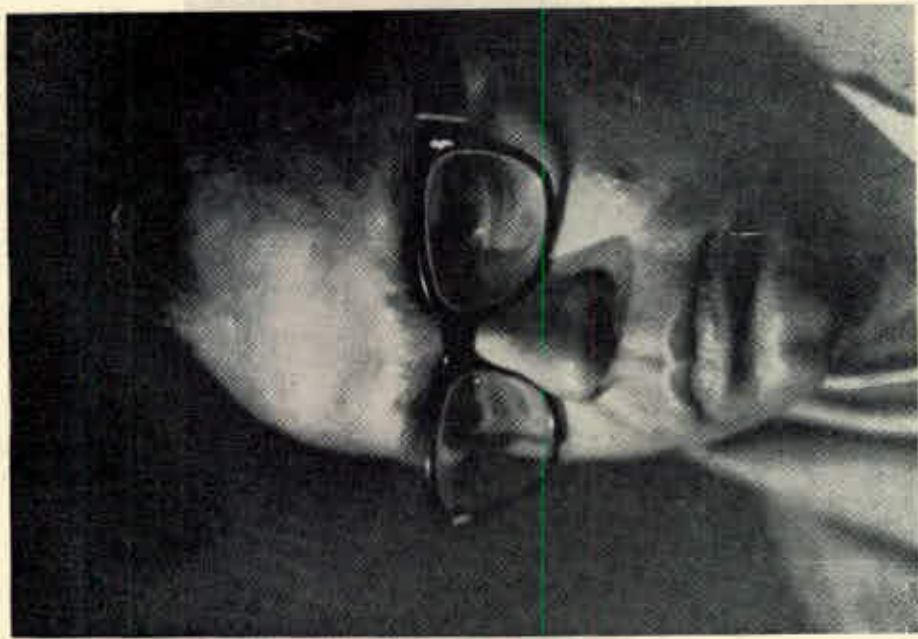
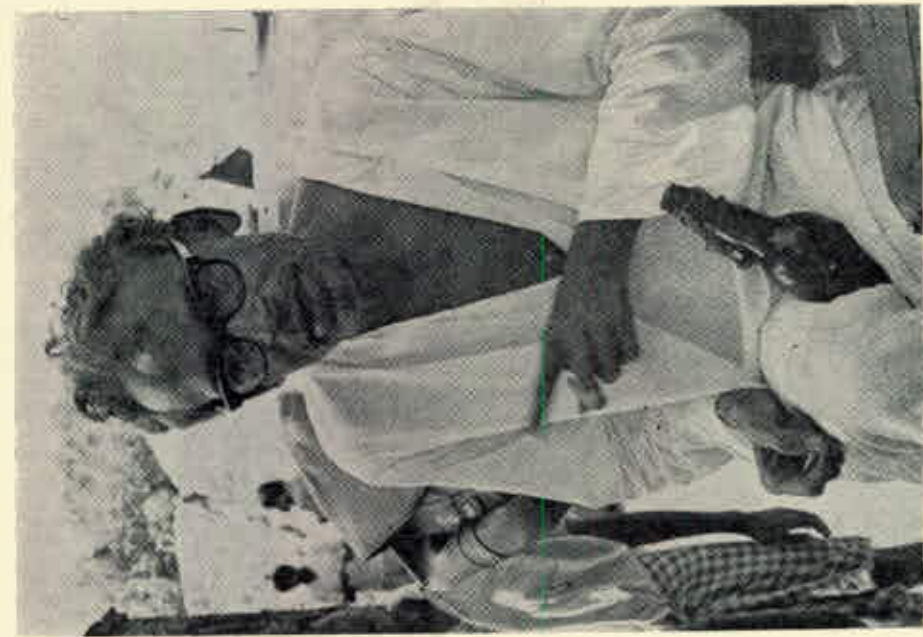
Enter a catalyst in the shape of a couple: Deepa who is unable to have sex with her husband Venu. Seetha and Venu soon develop an

empathy, brought about by their mutual predicament. In one explosive moment, when Ravi discovers Venu with a seemingly compliant Seetha, incompatibility solidifies into estrangement.

In a strange reversal of circumstance, Venu suspects *his* wife of infidelity. Then realising his folly, he apologises and explains all to Ravi. The air is cleared of tension and Ravi, Seetha and their child are once again together.

—V. A. K. Ranga Rao

RETROSPECTIVE/Ritwik Ghatak



RITWIK GHATAK & HIS FILMS

Ritwik Ghatak came to films from the stage. Actually one should go even beyond and say that it was his experience of the war years in undivided Bengal and the final phase of the freedom struggle, culminating in partition, that ultimately brought him to film. His years with the theatre were only a phase, a very important one, in his search for a medium of expression that would enable him to immortalise the soul of a people in turmoil and torment. A spirit of dissent and sensitivity to human suffering brought him to the Indian People's Theatre movement and the communist party. We had felt at that time that through the stage he could rouse the conscience of his people and also the masses from their inertia. And so he wrote plays, acted in them, even directed some and moved from village to village performing before mass audiences. There was a thrill in this direct communication with the masses.

Then came independence and with it partition. This was a shattering experience for Ritwik, because his roots were in that part of Bengal, which now became foreign territory. This was followed by dissensions within the IPTA. Individual idiosyncracies of artists, kept in check by a common approach to the problem of theatre in the service of the people, broke out when the bond was snapped by authoritarianism, and sectarian militancy. It was in this situation that Ritwik began to look beyond his chosen field. He felt that what he had

to say had an immediacy and an urgency. It could not be fully expressed through the restricted framework of the stage. A wider canvas, a more pliant medium, and a wider audience were required. The cinema appeared to him as the right medium for mass communication, with a purpose.

Although, it was with **Ajantrik** (The Pathetic Fallacy) in 1958 that Ritwik sprang into fame, he had actually started even earlier than Satyajit Ray, who pioneered modern film-making in India. Unfortunately his two earlier films, including **Nagarik** (The Citizen) did not see the light of day in his lifetime. The story of **Ajantrik** had impressed me, when I first read it, as a rare expression of industrial culture. Our writers even today, find it difficult to find drama in the exciting relationship between man and machine—a relationship full of contradictions. I had, however, thought that it could be successfully translated into a film. Critics have seen in **Ajantrik** a study in human obsessions, and even an element of satire. The basic social content, to my mind, has been missed by them. To me **Ajantrik** remains a rich experience of a study of a basically agrarian society moving towards industrialisation. It has been handled with a great deal of tenderness and humour, arising out of the artistic exaggeration of humanising the machine. Such a treatment could have only been possible in the cinema, and that too by a director who had already grasped the language of the medium.



It was possible for Ritwik to get away with this seeming unreality, by placing it in the background of the tribal areas, with their child-like primitive myths. It was bold of Ritwik to suggest, through the various episodes, that the machine was more loyal than human beings. The ultimate tragedy is also the result of human betrayal. And the death of the machine is not the end. It is only the beginning. Life continues, though on a different plane, as the boy plays with the discarded horn of the dead car. Despite Ritwik's obsession with human suffering and death, even violent death, he is no pessimist. Practically every film of his ends on this note of the continuity of life. As he has himself said, "Through decay I see life. I believe in the continuity of life."

Ajantrik also explores another favourite theme of Ritwik's—the alienation born of the conflict between the individual and society, especially in post-independence West Bengal. This is really an expression of his own

deep sense of alienation, which had virtually made him a social-misfit. This theme emerges more strongly in his later films, as also does his deep involvement with the disastrous effects of partition on the entire social fabric of the land of his birth. This is the theme of his next important films, **Meghe Dhaka Tara** (The Cloud-Capped Star) and **Suvarnarekha**. All these deal with refugees from East Bengal, now Bangladesh, and post-partition problems.

The story of Nita in **Meghe Dhaka Tara** is the story of many a refugee girl. It is the tragedy of the unsettled uprooted for whom old values have lost meaning. And yet they die hard and live on in the women. So Nita sacrifices her life and love to keep this family alive. Life itself becomes a slow dying and yet at the moment of death she cries out "I want to live". **Komal Gandhar** is another complex study of alienation in a web of situations. It has a very personal message of Ritwik's own experiences with the IPTA, and is a portrait of a strife-torn



era, bringing out man's essential loneliness. And yet once again life continues, as Anasuya decides to break away from her past and start life afresh with Bhrigu, despite the shattering of all that they had dreamed of building. The search for something beyond the alienation finds a different form of expression in **Bari Theke Paliye** (The Runaway), through the eyes of a child.

Suvarnarekha is a more brutal and frank depiction of the social impact of partition. Life begins anew for the hero, at the end of the tragedy, with his sister's child looking forward to fresh life on the banks of the **Suvarnarekha**. After **Suvarnarekha** came a long break—partly because of lack of opportunities and also because of illness brought on by reckless living. In between he wrote a few scenarios, produced commercial shorts and worked for a year as Vice-Principal, Pune Film Institute.

The liberation struggle of Bangladesh infused new life into him, but

at the same time a death-wish, born of years of illness and alienation, prevailed. It was in this frame of mind that he conceived of **Jukti, Takko aar Gappo** (Reason, Debate and a Tale), dealing with another facet of turmoil, dissent and alienation. This time it was the story of young men involved in a futile armed struggle. Ritwik felt drawn to the naxalites but also realised the futility of their struggle and so he wove into it his own personal tragedy.

Before he could finish this film Bangladesh called. He was asked to direct **Titas Ekti Nadir Naam** (A River Named Titas) for a young Bangladesh producer. This was typical of the developing relationship between Bangladesh and India, with all its hopes and contradictions. It was equally typical of Ritwik to accept and involve himself heart and soul in the project, ending up with an attack of T. B. After a long break from creative film-making he

Nagarik



had to prove himself more for his own morale, than for those who believed in him. And he did.

In *Titas*, Ritwik had a bigger canvas, of an entire people and their struggle for existence, with the eternal river, as the source of life and also of disaster. The film has the rhythm of the ebb and flow of the river, of floods and droughts. Ritwik has also proved in the process, the existence of remarkable acting and technical talent in Bangladesh, waiting to be revealed by a sensitive film maker. *Titas*, too, ends with death and life interwoven in a moving sequence.

In all his films there is the strong impress of Ritwik's own personality and character. This accounts for a special quality, absent in the works of other film-makers as well as for certain weaknesses of treatment. All his films are imbued with a kind of romanticism. They are at times melodramatic and full of passion. The rhythm is seldom smooth and there is often a lack of restraint and balance. And yet every single film of his breathes a passionate

involvement with life, because of his strong commitment to—and emotional involvement with—contemporary reality, basically in its aspects of turmoil and torment.

His films are an expression of a tormented soul in conflict with the world around him but full of confidence in the emergence of life that will assert itself. The finest expression of this philosophy is in the last sequences of *Titas*, where the dying heroine, searching for water in a drought-ridden land, sees visions of a field swaying with corn and a child moving about playing a flute. This is the essence of Ritwik's philosophy of life as expressed through his films, which serve as creative vehicles for him to resolve the alienation that he had failed to resolve in life.

— Subrata Banerjee

(Courtesy: Bengalee Club,
New Delhi.)

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Ritwik Ghatak's first film *Nagarik* (The Citizen—1953) has been released only now, after his death. No distributor or exhibitor was willing to buy the film in those times. The negative was lost. Later a print was fortunately found, from which a dupe negative was made. *Nagarik* is the story of a young man in search of a job. After every interview he appears for, he is optimistic; he dreams romantically of a better life. But soon enough he has to face the reality around him—the family is forced to move into a slum. Yet there is a positive note of hope in the statement that the have-nots must unite to bring about social revolution.

Music/RITWIK GHATAK

Question : "Dada, don't you think you create melodrama, by overdoing things?"

Ritwik Ghatak : "Son of a pig that you are, you are bound to think so! It is the right and privilege of an artist to take the leap from the ridiculous to the sublime. That's what I've done .."

It was in the small hours of the morning, 3.30 a.m., at the end of the month of April. An extremely hot Poona summer! Yet the early dawn was cool as usual. Cool, calm and joyous! A tall man—nearly six feet tall—clad in a white *dhoti* and *kurta* was engrossed in beating the life out of a variety of instruments in the recording studio. He got them to produce unusual sounds. He blew on the Indian flute to get a shrill whistle-like sound, struck three different *tablas* with sticks, banged the Burmese gong and carried on thus for a fair while. This was the well-known Bengali film-maker Ritwik Kumar Ghatak. Our music-recording and his drinking sessions had started simultaneously that evening. He went off to sleep at nine that night, because he had a peg too many. Certainly more than he could hold. And was now refreshed as only Ghatak could be in the early hours of dawn. The recordist, myself and the orchestra-crew were flabbergasted by this show, totally unable to understand the happening.

Only after two months did we hear and see what all that noise was about. The short film was completed. It left all of us stunned. Those weird sounds Ritwikda created that early April dawn suddenly came alive as we watched the film. Months later I happened to see many—almost all—of his films. Most of them are object lessons for students wanting to learn the use of music in films. If one set out to list films with superb use of music, Ritwikda's '**Meghe Dhaka Tara**' would lead the rest;

while his '**Suvarnarekha**' would probably take second place.

A treasure-house of creative and volatile ideas, his sound tracks are immensely educative. '**Meghe Dhaka Tara**' displays his powerful hold and control on sound, the other half—to a musician, the better half—of films. This film depicts the victimisation of an innocent young girl from a refugee family migrated to India after the partition. Due to family commitments and economic strains the girl virtually sacrifices her life. The film is apparently based on a very short story. The brother in the original story is a footballer. Ritwikda in his script introduced yet another brother, a singer. This gave him the opportunity to skilfully underline the film with music, which makes a simple but powerful story scale great heights and attain sublimation. Jyotirindra Moitra has scored music for this film. However, once the music director is consciously aware of Ritwikda's ideas and approach, the sound and music belong to Ritwikda as much as to the music director. ('*da*' is an abbreviation in Bengali for '*dada*' or elder brother, used to indicate both affection and respect.)

Meghe Dhaka Tara opens with some broken phrases of *raga* *Ham-sadhvani*. You hear the sound of a train shearing through the strains of the *raga*. Then the birds are chirping and all these sounds together transport you to a complete and lucid world of music.

The world blossoms slowly as the film unreels Towards the end one

hears the complete, fully woven *raga* Hamsadhwani of which one has only heard a few broken phrases in the beginning. The words "*Laagi lagan sati patisang*" | *Param sukh anand* ("Her whole being exists for him alone") move the listeners deeply. The slow unfolding of the *raga* from the glimpses of *swaras* to the *drut cheez* (allegro vivace) is a salient feature of this sound track. It is very skilfully woven in with the other sounds. There is also the subtle use of other *ragas* as *Bairagi*, *Aasawari*, *Malhar* and *Bageshri*. "*Jey rate more* | *Dwargoli bhango jhore....*" ("I knew not that thou came to me the night when the storm broke open my doors")—*Rabindra Sangeet*, a *Bhatiyali* sung by *Nirmalendu Chaudhuri*, a sweet and penetrating *Assamese folk-song* sung when a bride is sent to her husband's home, *Pahadi songs* sung by people from the hills—all these are intermixed with masterly exactitude and intensity.

Generally music in films is associated with sounds created either by musical instruments or emanating from the vocal chords. But *Ritwikda*, when defining music, gave it much wider connotations. He was of the view that the whole sound-track flowing alongside the visual-track must be treated as the music-track. He believed in, and worked towards the goal of fortifying this music-track with 'muscle'. We had heard about his making the track literally 'thick' at a mixing and recording session in a *Calcutta studio*. While mixing, he heard the whine of a projector leaking in from the projection room. Obviously, the glass plane on the projection window was missing. A live track was also being fed into the mixer from the studio. *Ritwikda* heard the whine awhile and then advised the recordist to leave it as it was. "Let the window remain open, he said, "The sound of the projector", mixed with these others is lending the track an added and effective

perspective, I prefer it that way." He had the knack of incorporating the uninvited or the most accidental of sounds to enrich his sound-track.

His sensitivity could turn mundane sounds into creative music. The effects-track of *Meghe Dhaka Tara* is replete with these—the drone of frogs on the riverside, the sounds of a train and of other vehicles, the chirping of the crickets in the night, the not-so-uncommon sounds of rain, wind and gales, the noises of children, their reciting the number-tables, the crackle of a boiling rice-pot cooking atop a *choolha* (oven)—but above all, the one effect-sound, which is of breathtaking intensity, and more effective, perhaps than any music, the one that cuts through to the innards of your heart is the sound of the whiplash. (It is used when *Nita*, the heroine discovers that the man she loves — and believes loves her — is actually about to marry her younger and somewhat skittish sister.) The sound of the whip turns like a hacksaw blade inside you.

In the last scene of *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, *Nita* is in a *T.B. sanatorium*. *Shankar*, the singer-brother comes to meet her. One hears a *Pahadi* song seconds before he enters the sanatorium. The *gamak* (vibrato) in that song is like a stab of a dagger taking you unawares. One finds the undulation in the pitch terribly inauspicious though one may not understand the language at all. Yet perhaps 'all is well' as *Nita* is seen sitting alone reading a letter. One sees the tall hills, the green valleys, the beauty all around. This beauty and warmth unprepares you for the wet, cold slap that follows. *Shankar* meets his sister and the visuals and sounds that succeed in the next two minutes shake you violently to the innermost depths of your being. *Neeta's* sobs and the ominous vibrato of the folk song suddenly discover their relationship. They become the

sobs of all down-trodden and exploited womanhood. No soul in the auditorium is left untouched as Ritwikda weaves Nita's sobs into her words: "*Dada ami bachbo, ami bachbo*" ("Brother, I want to live, I want to live!"). His use of reverberation in this sequence is unique. I have watched this scene not less than twenty-five times and can unashamedly say it still moves me. Many of my colleagues have seen it two, three, four times either because they admire or because they want to test their strength. It is impossible to hold back the tears or to stop the lump in the throat. The force, the impact and the intensity of this sound-track remains unmatched by any film-maker in the world.

In the creative and short life he lived, Ritwikda achieved much more than a lesser person would have in a longer life-span. After getting his master's degree in English literature he worked in a textile mill on a daily wage of one and a half rupees; he rode on elephant back in the thick jungles of Assam, directed plays as member of the Indian People's Theatre Association, heard the masters of classical music, played the flute and made his best films before he turned forty. He was a *gandabandh shagird* (sworn disciple) of Ustad Allauddin Khan whose pupils number Ravi Shankar, Annapoornadevi, Ali Akbar and Pannalal.

Sadly, Ritwikda lacked a sense of proportion. His love for music like his taste for alcohol knew no bounds. His passion banished reason and logic. He did not know when to stop. The song '*Lagi Lagan*' in *Meghe Dakha Tara*, for instance opens when Shankar, now a famous singer, returns home. It is cut abruptly on a beat. This scene is followed by a simple dialogue sequence and as it ends, lo, the song is back! Exactly, where it was left—200 feet ago.

Very often, he does not bother to visually justify the sounds or the instruments used. Bhatiyali singers are seen plucking their one-string *tukaris* but later when Shankar sings in a street, the sound-track is full of *tabla*, *tanpura* and *swaramandala* sounds as if it were a *mehfil* (musical-gathering) instead of a lone singer in the street. The crackle of the boiling rice-pot is at times overdone. The very idea of using the sound of the whiplash bespeaks the expressive artistic calibre of the film-maker. Others may have used it once. But not Ritwikda. He uses it three times and each subsequent time it seems to linger on a little longer than it should.

Someone once dared to ask him: "Dada, don't you think you create melodrama, by overdoing things?" "Son of a pig that you are" (he swore often) "You are bound to think so", he answered "It is the right and privilege of an artist to take the leap from the ridiculous to the sublime. That's what I have done and I am sure I have succeeded."

—Bhaskar Chandavarkar

“ I am burning, everyone is burning... the universe is burning...”

— Nilkantha Bagchi in *Jukti, Takko aar Gappo*

After a generation has passed, Ritwik Ghatak's first film is released —along with his autobiographical last. Yet, we should not be surprised, we have a habit of offering oblations to the dead while we starve the living. I remember him at a screening of *Komal Gandhar*, at the Film Institute, the burning ash of his *bidi* falling on his *kurta*, watching his own film as if he had never seen it before. It had been taken off from Calcutta's cinemas a few days after its release. He had tears in his eyes when a well-known Marathi film-director who, along with a couple of Ritwik's favourite pupils, watched the film and often turned around to express spontaneous appreciation. If Ritwik had a particular fault, it was that of arrogance. So we were surprised by his child-like, helpless response when we told him that he should show this film to the whole wide world. We did not know then that he had felt deserted after *Komal Gandhar* and his deep sense of waste, so sharply expressed in *Suvarnarekha*, was being frenetically confirmed by his addiction to the bottle.

Nilkantha Bagchi: “For a bottle I will lie or steal, but for name or fame or position— I will never lie!”

Young man: You have practised that pose long enough to have become an adept!”

Nilkantha (laughing): “You have caught me out!”

But it was true of Ritwik. It is not a vain boast by a film-maker, narcissistically looking at himself. His commitment to truth in and through the cinema was total. It is not surprising therefore, that even in his alcoholic condition, he is not

self-indulgent when he presents himself. He himself is guilty, like his generation: a humbug whose childish demands never ceased.

With the suffering of the partition (into East and West Bengal) he also took on the guilt of the dismemberment of his ‘mother’. He always wished to be fed, by the bottle, by his wife—by his Bengal. He tried to fight those who had violated and killed the unity of this mother-surrogate. In *Meghe Dakha Tara*, the fertility-principle* suffers the same three-way split that Bengali society does: the cruel mother, the sensual daughter and the preserving and nurturing heroine who dies in the process.

The middle-class itself is seen at the unsteady apex of an inverted triangle, a society divided three ways, which can find no equilibrium.

In *Jukti, Takko aar Gappo*, the contact with the fertility-principle is almost lost. The wife has rejected him, justifiably. The young girl, the future mother, is unabashedly asked: Are you the soul of Bengal? Resurrected after the massacre of Bangladesh? Will she unite those who have already violated her for

* The fertility-principle, at its origin is employed for the rejuvenation of the forces of nature, through the performance of procreative activity in which the mother-goddess plays a central role. It is opposed to the other-worldly viewpoint of religious elites, who were not directly engaged in agricultural production. To further their cultural domination, these religious elites often assimilated only the *symbology* of the fertility-principle, divorcing it from its material intent of increased produce.

Meghe Dakha Tara



selfish needs or narrow pre-occupations? Will her desire for the young man, who resents her presence, bring forth children, who—unlike Ritwik's generation—will not prostitute her? Perhaps—but he gives the girl no flesh and blood. And those that have flesh and blood are dehumanised by that very condition.

No, Ritwik doesn't take a pessimistic view-point. He only recognises the inevitability of violence. And caught in that cross-fire, it is not he alone who dies unheroic, but also those young heroes whose moral courage he admires. But when, in his own way, he tries to deepen their humanisation and criticises himself, the answer is that, "You have practised that pose long enough to have become an adept!" Perhaps, the soul of Bangladesh will now deliver a child of flesh-and-blood, with a purity which is not one-dimensional; or, will cruelty, violence, the recurrent dreams of youth, generation after generation, merely reproduce themselves? Ritwik seems to rejoice in the contemplation of the mere fact that life will go on: For, if it moves on, it must to something better, though the knowledge of the process frightens him.

Ritwik was world-weary but could not forgive himself for that. After all, he was the most robust of the filmmakers that India has produced. Unlike most others, he was ruthless in the analysis and condemnation of the social decadence that he observed. The other cineastes, in search of mass acceptance, have often tended to caricature, either by way of slogan-raising or an appeal to indulgent humanism. The heroes and heroines of Ritwik's films, while their energies are sapped by a society which can sustain no growth, have inner resources that seem to assert themselves. In **Suvarnarekha**, the young, slim, slip of a girl is given, by way of curious inversion of symbolisation—the sound

of an anklet—a great strength. The apparently weak hero, the singer of **Meghe Dhaka Tara**, for whom the economy has no use, derives his strength from his disciplined pursuit. The cry of the nourishing woman, Nita, even as she dies, asserts itself against the grand indifference of nature.

Ritwik's films are replete with semi-circular panoramics which show that nature is too great a container for individual sentiment. It is implied in the contradiction that while characters often express their own feelings—and often, even social failure—through the poetry of nature, the pathetic fallacy is an untruthful device.

For this reason, one thing that I cannot forgive in Ritwik's last film is the cliché-ridden sequence of his youthful love, "I am in love, there's pleasure and there is pain...in my every limb the flute is playing..."

Here alone is a glaring flaw within his own aesthetic. The technical flaws are understandable. He had told me that he was short of funds and vomiting blood when he made the film.

Perhaps he was tired—that's all. Yet in the scenes of confrontation with his wife and when the young woman of Bangladesh appears, he has shown his usual dynamism. The shot, where he sits against the light falling from the window, the face emerging from the washed-out area as of a ghost is dazingly expressive. His performance of a drunken man, is to my mind, unparalleled in world cinema.

In Indian cinema, the only other performance of such great simplicity and directness that I know is that of the saint-poet Tukaram (in the film of the same name) played by Pagnis. The great saint in his own time was also surely considered a deviant. Is it a commentary on our society—in the

vein of Ritwik himself—that modern saints should be so driven to alcoholism or such other behaviour that they are emasculated before they can make a lasting impact? Sant Tukaram has lived through his songs and the legends about him amongst the people of Maharashtra. He had made a permanent dent in the rigid caste structure. In his own small way, Ritwik must have hoped to help make a global change. In all of the fifteen years that I knew him, every objective crisis, brought to him a sense of euphoria. The communist upbringing of his youth had taught him to act with renewed vigour and hope, whenever a crisis or a breakdown occurred. But, like most other poets, he had not the ability to organise. He chose instead to sing. Or was that his form of action?

At the time I met him, in the early sixties, he had already rejected the mechanistic and somewhat alienated modes of some of his colleagues. He was extremely disenchanted with those of his colleagues who wanted to maintain a false unity and were not, implicitly, pained enough by the splintering of every form of social and cultural values and movement. His **Komal Gandhar**, interweaving the emotional break-up and confusion of the heroine with the splintering of Bengal and the communist theatre movement was boycotted by those of his colleagues who had produced this very situation.

But, in this social destitution, he continued to draw strength from the proto-materialism of the fertility-cults. It is this tradition, secularised, that transforms the films by its complex structure—what may appear to the uninitiated to be mere melodrama. Moreover, by his extraordinary use of sound and the brutality of his narrative technique, the melodrama takes on an epic, rather than a tragic dimension. More and more, the episodes are fragmented and emotive signs, like the whiplash, become

commentative signs. The ridiculous elements of the commercial cinema and theatre are here turned upside down and given sublime brutality. In nearly all of our commercial cinema, the audiences are made to enjoy the subterranean feelings of incest through an unspoken sexuality. In Ritwik's films, particularly **Suvarna-rekha**, incest is *named* as violation: destroying the very base of family entertainment.

It is these factors that make Ritwik's films a vitally generative force for the young. He does not hide behind a medieval or dead past or a decorative Indianness. Nor is he content with the nineteenth century critical tradition of the novel, moving from the romantic to the iconoclastic frenzies of a basically anarchist political genre. Very few of his contemporaries have avoided these pitfalls, whether they work in the cinema and the other arts, or in the theoretical and cultural sphere. The conservatives have glorified the past in decorative and theological terms and the moderns have rejected tradition and history to deprive even the contemporary of its meaning. The problems of underdevelopment have led them to civilise themselves through chauvinism or a totally alien reference-system. It is as if they were ashamed of being themselves, today, with their true history.

I hope that the young who are beginning to return the love that Ritwik had for them, will neither be ashamed nor haughty about themselves and their society; but that they will meet the darkness around with Ritwik's bright agility.

I remember him on the days when he stalked down the Institute corridors, and we addressed him as the Tiger from Blake's poem that he loved to quote. In **Jukti, Takko ar Gappo**, he seemed to remember it too—only with a change of meaning: "I am burning, everyone is burning....the universe is burning....".

—Kumar Shahani



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ASHANI SANKET (Distant Thunder), 1973:— Screenplay, Music & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Soumendu Roy; Players: Soumitra Chatterjee, Sandhya Roy, Babita (Bangladesh). Col. For Trade Enquiries: Balaka Movies Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta.

THE INNER EYE (A documentary), 1974:— Music, Screenplay & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Soumendu Roy. Col. For Trade Enquiries: Films Division, 24 G. Deshmukh Marg, Bombay-400 026.

SONAR KELLA (Golden Fortress), 1974:— Story, Screenplay, Music & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Soumendu Roy; Players: Soumitra Chatterjee. Col. For Trade Enquiries: West Bengal Government, Calcutta.

JANA ARANYA (The Middle Man), 1975:— Screenplay, Music & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Soumendu Roy; Players: Utpal Dutt, Pradip Mukherjee, Robi Ghosh, Arati Bhattacharya, Dipankar Dey, Lily Chakravarty. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Indus, 11/1 Sooterkin Street, Calcutta-700 013.

BALA (A documentary), 1976:— Music, Screenplay & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Soumendu Roy. Col. For Trade Enquiries: National Centre for the Performing Arts, Nariman Point, Bombay-400 021 and the Tamil Nadu Government, Madras.

SHATRANJ KE KHILARI (The Chess Players), 1977:— Music, Screenplay & Direction: Satyajit Ray; Camera: Soumendu Roy; Players: Amjad Khan, Richard Attenborough, Sanjeev Kumar, Saeed Jaffrey, Shabana Azmi, Farida Jalal. Col. For Trade Enquiries: Devki Chitra, Eden Hall, Worli-400 018. Phone:370258.

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M. S. SATHYU

GARM HAVA (The Aftermath), 1973:—Direction: M. S. Sathyu; Screenplay: Kaifi Azmi, Shama Zaidi; Camera: Ishan Arya; Music: Ustad Bahadur Khan; Players: Balraj Sahni, Gita Siddharth, Shaukat Kaifi, Jalal Agha, Abu Siwani, A. K. Hangal. Col. For Trade Enquiries: Film Finance Corporation, Regent Chambers, 1st Floor, Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021. Phone: 231832/231861.

KANNESHWARA RAMA, 1977:— Direction: M. S. Sathyu; Screenplay: Shama Zaidi; Camera: Ashok Gunjal; Music: B. V. Karanth; Players: Anant Nag, Shabana Azmi, Amol Palekar, B. V. Karanth. Col. For Trade Enquiries: Sharda Movie Productions, Gandhinagar, Bangalore 560 009. Phone: 75808.

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MRINAL SEN

RAAT BHOORE (Night's End), 1956: Screenplay & Direction: Mrinal Sen; Camera: Ramananda Sen Gupta; Music: Salil Chowdhury, Anal Chatterjee; Players: Manik Chatterjee, Sabitri Chatterjee. B & W: For Trade Enquiries: SB Pictures, 3A Hindusthan Road, Calcutta 700 029.

NEEL AKASHER NEECHEY (Under the Blue Sky), 1959:—Screenplay & Direction: Mrinal Sen; Camera: Sailaja Chatterjee; Music: Hemanta Mukherjee; Players: Kali Benerjee, Manju Dey. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Hemanta & Bela Mukherjee, Geetanjali, 14th A Rd., Khar, Bombay 400 052.

BAISHEY SHRAVANA (The Wedding Day), 1960: Screenplay & Direction: Mrinal Sen; Camera: Sailaja Chatterjee; Music: Hemanta Mukherjee; Players: Madhabhi Mukherjee, Gnanesh Mukherjee. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: B.N. Roy, Kallol Films, Care Chhayaloke Pvt. Ltd., 2 Chowringhee Rd., Calcutta 700 013.

PUNASCHA (Over Again), 1961 :— Screenplay & Direction : Mrinal Sen; Camera : Sailaja Chatterjee; Music: Samaresh Roy; Players : Soumitra Chatterjee, Kanika Majumdar, N. Viswanathan. B & W. For Trade Enquiries : Mrinal Sen Productions, 4E Motilal Nehru Rd., Calcutta 700 029. Phone : 466888.

ABASHESHEY (And at Last), 1962 :— Screenplay & Direction : Mrinal Sen; Camera: Sailaja Chatterjee; Music: Robin Chatterjee; Players: Sabitri Chatterjee; Asit Baran. B & W. For Trade Enquiries : Skups Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta.

PRATINIDHI (Two Plus One), 1964 :— Screenplay & Direction : Mrinal Sen; Camera : Sailaja Chatterjee; Music : Hemanta Mukherjee; Players: Soumitra Chatterjee, Sabitri Chatterjee. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Sabitri Chatterjee, Care Chandimata Films, 63 Lenin Sarani, Calcutta 700013.

AKASH KUSUM (The Daydream), 1965 :— Screenplay & Direction : Mrinal Sen; Camera : Sailaja Chatterjee; Music: Sudhin Das Gupta; Players : Soumitra Chatterjee, Subhendu Chatterjee, Aparna Sen. B & W. For Trade Enquiries : Ranjit Bose, 11/6 Debi Chowdhury Rd., Calcutta 700 023.

MATIRA MANISHA (Two Brothers), 1967 :— Screenplay & Direction : Mrinal Sen; Camera : Sailaja Chatterjee; Music : Bhubaneswar Misra; Players : Sarat Pujari, Prasanta Nanda, Sujata. B & W. For Trade Enquiries : B. L. Doshi, Chhayavani Pictures, Oriya Bazaar, Cuttack 1, Orissa. Foreign rights : Image India Films, 9/1 Lovelock Place, Calcutta 700 019.

BHUVAN SHOME, 1969:—Screenplay & Direction: Mrinal Sen; Camera: K. K. Mahajan; Music: Vijay Raghava Rao; Players: Suhasini Mulay, Utpal Dutt, Sadhu Meher, Shekhar Chatterjee; B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Film Finance Corporation, 13-16 Regent Chambers, Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021. Phone: 231861/231832. (In Hindi).

ICHHAPURAN (Wish-fulfilment), 1970:— Screenplay & Direction: Mrinal Sen; Camera: K. K. Mahajan; Music: Vijay Raghava Rao; Players: Raju, Sadhu Meher, Shekhar Chatterjee. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Children's Film Society, Hingorani House, Dr. Annie Besant Rd., Bombay-400 018. Phone: 377478/379302. (In Bengali & Hindi).

INTERVIEW, 1971:— Direction : Mrinal Sen; Screenplay: Mrinal Sen, Ashis Burman; Camera : K. K. Mahajan; Music: Vijay Raghava Rao. Players: Ranjit Mullick, Bulbul Mukherjee. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Mrinal Sen Productions, Calcutta 700 029.

EK ADHURI KAHANI (An Unfinished Story), 1972:— Screenplay & Direction: Mrinal Sen; Camera: K. K. Mahajan; Music: Vijay Raghava Rao; Players: Utpal Dutt, Shekhar Chatterjee; Arati Bhattacharya. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Film Finance Corporation, Bombay 400 021. (In Hindi).

CALCUTTA 71, 1972:— Screenplay & Direction: Mrinal Sen; Camera: K. K. Mahajan; Music: Ananda Shankar; Players: Madhabi Mukherjee, Suhasini Mulay, Geeta Sen, Utpal Dutt Shekhar Chatterjee, Raju, Robi Ghosh; B & W. For Trade Enquiries: D. S. Sultania, 12th Cross, Banjara Hills, Kimti Colony, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. Phone: 36081.

PADATIK (The Guerilla), 1973:— Direction: Mrinal Sen; Screenplay: Mrinal Sen Ashis Burman; Camera: K. K. Mahajan; Music: Ananda Shankar; Players: Simmi, Dhritiman Chatterjee. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Mrinal Sen, Calcutta 700 029.

CHORUS, 1974:— Direction: Mrinal Sen; Screenplay: Mrinal Sen, Mohit Chattopadhyaya; Camera: K. K. Mahajan; Music: Ananda Shankar; Players: Utpa Dutt, Shekhar Chatterjee. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Mrinal Sen, Calcutta 700 029.

MRIGAYA (The Royal Hunt), 1976:— Direction: Mrinal Sen; Screenplay: Mrinal Sen, Mohit Chattopadhyaya; Camera: K. K. Mahajan; Music: Ananda Shankar; Players: Mittun Chakraborty, Mamata Shankar. Col. For Trade Enquiries: Udaya Bhaskar International, Hindi St., Gandhinagaram, Vijayawada 3, Andhra Pradesh. (In Hindi).

OKA OORIE KATHA (The Story of a Village), 1977:— Direction: Mrinal Sen Screenplay: Mrinal Sen, Mohit Chattopadhyaya; Camera: K. K. Mahajan, Players: Vasudeva Rao, Mamata Shankar, Narayan Rao. Col. For Trade Enquiries: A. Parandhama Reddy, 20/A Raja Bather St., Madras-600 017. (In Telugu & Hindi).

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YUKT

GHASHIRAM KOTWAL: Direction & Camera: Members of Yukt Film Co-operative; Screenplay: Vijay Tendulkar & Yukt members; Music: Bhaskar Chandavarkar; Players: Mohan Agashe, Vilom Puri, and members of Theatre Academy, Pune. For Trade Enquiries: YUKT Film Co-operative Society Ltd., 3 Cynthia, Central Avenue, Santa Cruz West, Bombay 400 054. Phone: 537584.

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ASSAMESE CINEMA

SANDHYA RAAG (Evening Song), 1977:— Screenplay & Direction: Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia; Camera: Nikunja Bhattacharya; Music: Bhupen Hazarika; Players: Runu Devi, Arati Barua, Arun Sarma, Raju Bordoloi, Kashmiri Saikia, Ishan Baruah, Maya Baruah. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia, Dept. of Physics, Gauhati University, Assam.

HINDI CINEMA

SHAQUE (The Doubt), 1977:— Screenplay & Direction: Aruna-Vikas; Camera: A. K. Bir; Music: Vasant Desai; Players: Vinod Khanna, Shabana Azmi, Utpal Dutt, Bindu. Col. For Trade Enquiries: N. B. Kamat, 2A Naaz Bldg., Lamington Rd., Bombay 400 004. Phone: 354560.

GHARAONDA (The City Has a Heart of Stone) 1977:— Direction: Bhimsain; Screenplay: Gulzar; Camera: A. K. Bir; Music: Jaidev; Players: Amol Palekar, Zarina Wahab, Shree Ram Lagoo, Jalal Agha, Sadhu Meher. Col. For Trade Enquiries: Bhimsain, Climb Films, 22 Arun Chambers, Tardeo Rd., Bombay 400 034. Phone: 395629.

WOHI BAAT (All Over Again), 1977: Direction: Vinay Shukla; Screenplay: Kamleshwar; Camera: K. K. Mahajan; Music: Jaidev. Players: Shabana Azmi, Parikshat Sahni, Mittun Chakraborty. Col. For Trade Enquiries: Sanket Chitra, 5B West View, S. V. Rd., Santa Cruz, Bombay 400 054. Phone: 532197.

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KANNADA CINEMA

G. V. IYER

BHOODANA, (Gift of Land), 1960:— Screenplay & Direction: G. V. Iyer; Camera: B. Dorairaj; Music: G. Venkatesh; Trade Enquiries: G. V. Iyer, 2, Patel St., Madras-600 024.

RANADHEERA KANTEERAVA, 1960:— Screenplay & Direction: G. V. Iyer; Camera: B. Dorairaj, Music: G.K. Venkatesh, Players: Rajkumar, Leelavathi; For Trade Enquiries: G.V. Iyer, Madras.

THAI KARULU (Mother's Heart), 1962:— Screenplay & Direction: G. V. Iyer; Camera: B. Dorairaj; Music: G.K. Venkatesh; Players: Kalyana Kumari, Vandana, Udaya Kumar, Leelavathi; For Trade Enquiries: G.V. Iyer, Madras.

HAMSA GEETHE (The Swan Song), 1975:— Screenplay and Direction: G.V. Iyer; Camera: Nimai Ghosh; Music: Balamurali Krishna and B.V. Karanth; Players: Anant Nag, Rekha Rao. Col. For Trade Enquiries: G.V. Iyer, Ananthalakshmi Films, Madras.

KUDURE MOTTE: (Horse's egg), 1977:— Screenplay and Direction: G.V. Iyer, Camera: Madhu Ambat; Music: B.V. Karanth; Players: Devadas Megaravalli; Rekha Rao, For Trade Enquiries: G.V. Iyer, Madras.

(Between 1942/1977, — G.V. Iyer has directed 35 films, and produced 18, associate director and script writer of 67 films.)

PATTABHI RAMA REDDY

SAMSKARA, 1970:— Direction : Pattabhi Rama Reddy; Screenplay : Girish Karnad; Camera : Tom Cowan; Music : Rajeev Taranath; Players : Snehalata Reddy, Girish Karnad. B&W. For Trade Enquires : Pattabhi Rama Reddy, 58 St. Mark's Rd., Bangalore 560 001. Phone 52423.

CHANDAMARUTHA (Wild Wind), 1977:— Screenplay & Direction : Pattabhi Rama Reddy; Camera : Tom Cowan; Music : Konarak Reddy; Players : Snehalata Reddy, Bhakta, Ashok Mandanna, Nandana, Chandrashekhar. Col. For Trade Enquiries : Pattabhi Rama Reddy, Bangalore.

PALLAVI, 1977 :— Screenplay & Direction : P. Lankesh ; Camera : S. Ramachandra; Music : Rajeev Taranath; Players : Vimala Naidu, T.N. Seetharam, P. Lankesh. B&W. For Trade Enquiries : K. S. Indira Lankesh, Care Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce, Bangalore.

GHATASHRADDHA, 1977:— Screenplay & Direction: Girish Kasaravalli; Camera S. Ramachandra; Music: B. V. Karanth; Players: Meena, Ajit Kumar, Narayana Bhat, Ramakrishna, Shanta; B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Suvarnagiri Films, Care Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce, 25, Seshadri Road, Bangalore-560 009. Phone: 27819/75371.

KANAKAMBARA 1977:— Screenplay & Direction: Sridhar Kshirsagar; Camera: A.K. Bir; Music: Amaresh; Players: T. Rameshwari, Girish Karnad, Rita Anchan. Col. For Trade Enquiries: Samvad Chitra, Yashodan, 501 47A Cross, Jaynagar Fifth Block, Bangalore-560 041, Phone : 40359.

THE GREAT INDIAN FILM BAZAAR (a feature length documentary on the Indian film from 1913 to 1977), 1978:— Compiled & directed by Sridhar Kshirsagar. For Trade Enquiries: 103, Olympus, Altamount Rd., Bombay-400 026. Phone : 380235.

KOKILA, 1977:— Camera, Screenplay & Direction: Balu Mahendra; Music: Salil Chowdhary; Players: Rojaramani, Kamalahasan; For Trade Enquiries: T. Motcham Fernando, Commercial Films, Care Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce, Bangalore.

RISHYASHRINGA, 1977:— Direction: V.R.K. Prasad; Camera: S. Ramachandra; Music: B.V. Karanth; Players: Suresh Heblikar; Col.; For Trade Enquiries: Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce.

GEEJAGANA GOODU, 1977:— Direction: T.S. Ranga; Players: Arathi Muddaiah, M.K. Shankar, Ramesh Bhat, Lakshmi Nataraj; For Trade Enquiries: Sreekanteswara Chitralaya, Care Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce.

KAKANKOTE, 1977:— Direction: C.R. Simha; Screenplay: Girish Karnad; Players: Rani, Krishnaraj, Lokesh. Col. For Trade Enquiries: Raja N. Raja Combine Care Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce.

For other trade enquiries contact the Directors, Care Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce, Bangalore.

MALAYALAM CINEMA

G. ARAVINDAN

UTTARAYANAM 1974 :—Direction: G. Aravindan; Screenplay: G. Aravindan and Chikkodyan; Camera: Ravi Varma; Music: Raghavan; Players: Dr. Mohandas; Adoor Bhasi, Premji, Balan Nair, Mallika. B & W. For Trade Enquires: Ganesh Movie Makers, Calicut, Kerala.

KANCHANA SITA (Golden Sita) 1977:— Screenplay & Direction: G. Aravindan; Camera: Shajee N. Karun; Music: Rajeev Taranath; Players: Ramdas, Venkateswaralu, Chinna Pulliah, Kesava Panicker, Krishnan, Pottiah, Rangiah. Col. For Trade Enquires: Ravi, General Pictures, Quilon, Kerala.

SWAPNADANAM (Journey through a Dream) 1977:—Direction: K. G. George; Screenplay: K.G. George & Pamman; Camera: Ramachandra Babu; Music: Bhaskar Chandavarkar; Players: Rani Chandra, Dr. Mohandas, Soman, Mallika. B & W. For Trade Enquires: T. Mohammed Babu, Care Kerala Film Chamber of Commerce, M.G. Road, Ernakulam, Kerala.

ADOOR GOPALAKRISHNAN

SWAYAMVARAM (One's Own Choice) 1972:—Screenplay & Direction : Adoor Gopalakrishnan; Camera: Ravi Varma; Music: M. B. Srinivas; Players: Madhu, Sharada. B & W. For Trade Enquires: Chitrallekha Film Co-operative, Trivandrum-695 017, Kerala. Phone: 8512/8619.

KODIYETTAM 1977:— Story Screenplay and Direction: Adoor Gopalakrishnan; Camera: Ravi Varma; Players: Gopi, Lalitha, Vilasini, Kaviyoor Ponamma, Thikurissi. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Kulathoor Bhaskaran Nair, Chitrallekha Film Co-operative, Trivandrum.

P. BACKER

OLLAVUM THEERAVUM (The Waves and the Shore) 1970:—Produced by P.A. Backer; Screenplay: M.T. Vasudeva Nair; Camera: M. Ravi Varma; Music: Baburaj; Players: Madhu, Jose Prakash, Bhaskaran, Usha Nandini. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: P.A. Backer, Care Kerala Film Chamber of Commerce, Ernakulam.

KABANI NADI CHUVANNAPOL, (When the Kabani River Turned Red) 1975:— Screenplay and Direction: P.A. Backer; Camera: Vipin Das; Music: C. Devarajan; Players: Shalini, Chandran. B & W. For Trade Enquires: Saga Movies, Care Kerala Film Chamber of Commerce, Ernakulam.

MANIMUZHAKKAM (The Tolling of Bells) 1977:— Screenplay and Direction: P.A. Backer; Camera: Vipin Das; Music: Devarajan; Players: Hari, Cyril, Veera, Johnson, Urmila, Charulata, Vani. B. & W. For Trade Enquiries: K.P. Thomas, Care Kerala Film Chamber of Commerce, Ernakulam.

MARATHI CINEMA

SAMNA (The Confrontation), 1975 :— Direction : Jabbar Patel; Screenplay : Vijay Tendulkar; Camera : S. Lavande; Music : Bhaskar Chandavarkar; Players : Shree Ram Lagoo, Nilu Phule. B & W. For Trade Enquiries : Ramdas Phutane, 24 Phanaswadi, Kalbadevi, Bombay 400 002.

JAIT RE JAIT (The Victory), 1977 :— Direction : Jabbar Patel; Screenplay : Satish Alekar & Anil Joglekar; Camera : Vinod Pradhan; Music : Hridaynath Mangeshkar. Players : Mohan Agashe, Smita Patil, Nilu Phule, Sulabha Deshpande, Chandrakant Kale, Shreeram Ranade, Narayan Pai. Col. For Trade Enquiries : Mahalaxmi Chitra, 101 Prabhu Kunj, Pedder Rd., Bombay-400 026. Phone : 367736.

TAMIL CINEMA

K. BALACHANDER

EDHIR NEECHAL :— 1968 : Screenplay & Direction : K. Balachander, Camera : N. Balakrishnan, Music : V. Kumar; Players : Nagesh, Sundararajan, Srikanth, R. Muthuraman, M. R. R. Vasu, Thengai Srinivasan, V. S. Raghavan, Sowcar Janaki, Jayanthi, Manorama, S. N. Lakshmi. B. & W. For Trade Enquiries: Kalakendra Productions, 1, C. V. Raman Road, Alwarpet. Madras - 600 018. Phone : 74525.

APOORVA RAGANGAL :— 1975 Screenplay & Direction : K. Balachander; Camera : B. S. Lokanathan; Music : M. S. Viswanathan; Players: Kamalahasan, Sundararajan, Nagesh, Rajnikanth, Sri Vidhya, Jaya Sudha, Kanaga Durka. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Kalakendra Productions, Madras.

MANMATHA LEELAI :—1976 : Screenplay and Direction : K. Balachander, Camera : B. S. Lokanathan, Music : M. S. Viswanathan. Players : Kamalahasan, Y. G. Mahendran, Y. G. Parthasarathy, M. R. R. Ravi, Harihara Subramanian; Halam, Y. Vijaya, Jayaprada, Jaivijaya, Hema Chowdry. For Trade Enquiries : Kalakendra Productions, Madras.

AVARGAL (Characters) 1977: Screenplay & Direction : K. Balachander, Camera: B. S. Lokanathan; Music: M. S. Viswanathan; Players: Kamalahasan, Rajnikanth, Ravikumar, Sujatha. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Kalakendra, 1, C. V. Raman : Road, Alwarpet, Madras-600 018. Phone : 74525.

(Between 1965/1977, K. Balachander has directed 28 films in Tamil, one Hindi and five in Telugu).

A. BHIMSINGH

SILA NERANGALIL SILA MANITHARGAL—1977 : Direction: A. Bhimsingh, Screenplay: D. Jayakanthan, Camera: G. Vittal Rao, Music: M. S. Viswanathan, Players: Srikanth, Nagesh, Y. G. Parthasarathy, Lakshmi, Raja Sulochana, Sundari Bai, Sukumari, For Trade Enquiries: ABS Productions 1, A, Mowbray's Gate Road Madras-600 018.

DEVARAJ & MOHAN

ANNAKILI: Direction: Devaraj & Mohan, Screenplay: Panju Arunachalam, Music: Ilaya Raja, Players: Sivakumar, Srikanth, S. V. Subbaiah, Srinivasan, Sujatha, Jayalakshmi, Manimala, M. N. Rajam, B & W. For Trade Enquiries: SPT Films, B 269, 10th Avenue, Ashok Nagar, Madras-600 083.

TELUGU CINEMA

CHILAKAMMA CHEPPINDI (The Parrot's Prediction), 1977:— Direction: Eranki Sarma; Screenplay: K. Balachander; Camera: B. S. Loknath; Music: M. S. Viswanathan; Players: Narayana Rao, Rajnikant Lakshmikanth, Sripriya; B & W; For Trade Enquiries: Gopikrishna International, 1, Kodambakkam High Road, Madras 600 024. Phone: 82428.

SINGITAM SRINIVASA RAO

DIKKATRA PARVATI (The Fatal Cart), 1972:— Screenplay & Direction: Singitam Srinivasa Rao; Camera: Ravi Varma; Music: Chitti Babu; Players: Lakshmi, Srikanth Y. G. Mahendra, B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Navtarang, 5D, Rajaram Film Directors Colony, Kodambakkam, Madras 600 024. Phone: 421434. (Sponsored by the Film Finance Corporation). In Tamil.

NEETHI NIJAITHI (Eight Chairs), 1972:— Screenplay & Direction: S. Srinivasa Rao; Camera: Kama Ghosh; Music: S. Rajeswar Rao; Players: Kanchana, Satish Arora, Gummadi, Krishnamraju, Nagabhushanam. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Sri Sanjeevi Movies, 5D, Rajaram Film Directors Colony, Kodambakkam, Madras 600 024. Phone: 421434.

AMERICAN AMMAI (The Girl from America), 1976:— Screenplay & Direction: S. Srinivasa Rao; Camera: Balu Mahendra; Music: G. K. Venkatesh; Players: Anne Shammotte (France), Sridhar, Ranganath, Deepa. Col. For Trade Enquiries: Navata Arts, 4, Raman St., T. Nagar, Madras 600 017.

ANDAME ANANDAM (A Thing of Beauty), 1977 :— Screenplay & Direction : S. Srinivasa Rao; Camera: Srikant; Music: Satyam; Players: Ranganath, Jayaprada, Deepa. Col. For Trade Enquiries : Srikant Pictures, 2, Lodhikhana St., T. Nagar, Madras 600 017.

PANTULAMMA (The Teacher), 1977 :— Screenplay & Direction : S. Srinivasa Rao; Camera: Balu Mahendra; Music: Rajan Nagendra; Players: Ranganath, Lakshmi, Deepa. Col. For Trade Enquiries : Navata Arts, Madras 600 017.

TARAM MARINDI (The Wind Must Change), 1977 :— Screenplay & Direction : S. Srinivasa Rao; Camera: Balu Mahendra Music: G. K. Venkatesh; Players: Sridhar, Pallavi, Shoba, Prasad Rao. B & W. For Trade Enquiries: Viswabharat. Movies, 5D, Rajaram Film Directors Colony, Kodambakkam, Madras 600 024
Phone: 421434.

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RITWIK GHATAK

NAGARIK (The Citizen) 1952 :—Screenplay and Direction : Ritwik Ghatak; Players: Kali Banerjee, Kajal, Sita Mukherji, Anil Chatterji, Satindra Bhattacharya; For Trade Enquires: Mohammad Zameer, M/s. Navataranga Chitra, 2/1, Bhukailash Road, Calcutta-700 023. Phone: 455433.

AJANTRIK (Pathetic Fallacy) 1958 :— Screenplay and Direction: Ritwik Ghatak; Camera: Dinan Gupta; Music: Ustad Ali Akbar Khan; Players: Kali Banerji, Kajal Chatterji, Sita Mukherji, Anil Chatterji, Satindra Bhattacharya, Gnanesh Mukherji, Keshito Mukherji. B & W.; For Trade Enquiries: Pramod Lahiri, Calcutta.

BARI THEKE PALIYE (The Runaway) 1959 :—Screenplay and Direction : Ritwik Ghatak; Camera: Dinan Gupta; Music: Salil Chowdhury; Players: Sriman Parambhattacharak. Kali Bannerji, Padma Devi, Gnanesh Mukherjee. B & W. For Trade enquiries : Pramod Lahiri, Calcutta.

MEGHE DHAKA TARA (The Cloud-Capped Star) 1960 :— Screenplay and Direction: Ritwik Ghatak; Camera: Dilip Ranjan Mukherjee; Players: Supriya Chaudhury, Anil Chatterji, Niranjan Roy Gita Ghatak, Dwiju Bhawal, Bijan Bhattacharya, Gita Dey. B & W.

KOMAL GANDHAR (The Soft Ga of the Sargam) 1961 :— Screenplay and Direction: Ritwik Ghatak; Camera: Dilip Ranjan Mukherjee; Music: Jyotirindra Moitra; Players: Supriya Chowdhury, and Abhinash Bannerji. B & W.

SUVARNAREKHA 1968 :— Screenplay and Direction: Ritwik Ghatak; Camera: Dilip Ranjan Mukherjee; Music: Bahadur Khan, Players: Madhabi Mukherjee, Abhi Battacharya, Bijen Bhattacharya, Satyendra Bhattacharya, Jahar Roy and Abhinosh Banerjee; B & W.

TITAS EKI NADIR NAAM (A River named Titas) 1973:—Made in Bangladesh.

JUKTI, TAKKO AAR GAPPO (Reason, Debate & a Tale) 1974:— Screenplay and Direction: Ritwik Ghatak; Players: Ritwik Ghatak, Tripti Mitra, Saonli Mitra. B & W. For Trade Enquiries Film Finance Corporation Limited, 1st floor, 13-16, Regent Chambers, Nariman Point, Bombay-400 021. Phones : 231861,/231832.

(For all other trade enquiries contact : Smt. R. Ghatak, Care Mahendra Kumar, P-20 Golf Club Rd., Calcutta 700 033. Phone 461493.
