



INDIAN DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL BHUBANESWAR

# IDFFB 22

ODISSI RESEARCH CENTRE  
OCTOBER 14-16







# CONTENTS

about FSB i  
curatorial note ii  
design note iv

## Films IDFFB 2022

10-45

## Watching Wastelands:

Some Notes on the Relevance of Observation

46-53

## "Ghode Ko Jalebi Khilane Le Ja Riya Hoon"

deals in bringing dreams alive

Interview with Anamika Haksar by Sneha Krishnan

54-64

index 66-68  
our patrons 68  
we thank 69  
festival team 70



## ABOUT FILM SOCIETY BHUBANESWAR

Film Society of Bhubaneswar (FSB) has been in existence since 2004. FSB has focused on creating cinema literacy among its members and has screened over 500 films from across the world and conducted master classes with leading visual artists nationally and internationally. It has organized 10 festivals over the last two decades covering World Cinema (2012), Asian & African Cinema (2007), Journeys and Migration (2010), Short films (2011). It has curated retrospectives on **World Cinema (2005), German Cinema (2007), Spanish Cinema (2008), Into the Darkness (2009), Yasujiro Ozu (2012), G. Aravindan (2018), Anand Patwardhan (2019), Indian Film Festival (2018, 2019, 2020)** and **Indian Documentary Festival (2018, 2019)**. It is planning a Children Film Festival.

Unlike the other major cities of India, Bhubaneswar does not have a proper film festival in the cultural calendar. Despite all obstacles, FSB has managed to organize 10 film festivals and 10 major retrospectives, masterclasses, talks with visual artists and film makers, with the continuing effort to take Cinema to newer audiences, cineastes and students.

## CURATORIAL NOTE

Coming out of a forced layoff due to the pandemic, it feels doubly difficult to get a team of volunteers together, to help, setup a film festival again.

Since September 2019 till September 2022 the world changed in unimaginable ways, one was the pandemic, before that there was the CAA NRC legislation, the nationwide protests by people across the country, leading to the Delhi Riots in February 2020, the horrors of the pandemic and the sufferings of people - the sudden lockdown led to crores of people walking back from cities to their villages - many perishing on the way, the sheer callousness of planning, to manufactured hysteria targeting minorities, creating false narratives, to the delta wave after the Kumbh Mela - the sheer horror of people collapsing around hospitals for lack of beds and Oxygen cylinders, the mismanagement of vaccination program, homologous shots vs

heterologous shots, the multiple changes of implementation goals and total lack of any serious debate on resuscitating the public health system, to fudging data on infections, nutrition, mid-may meals status, lost years of education, massive unemployment, destruction of demand across the country, to not sharing national data in global monitoring systems - creating a narrative of **sab changa si**. I wonder if there was IPL coverage during 2020 would we have seen what we saw in our newspapers and TV channels. I hope we wake up and create systems of health, education and nutrition that works for the people. After that maybe we can dream of public libraries and cultural centres!!

Amidst all the misery that one witnessed Cinema was a way to escape into another world and that was a challenge of curating this festival, what kind of films did we want to bring to our audience. As we started to look at the films for our festival

we were surprised by the strength of work coming from across the country - from migration, lockdowns, ecological problems, experimental works, personal stories that cut across dominant narratives of hate mongering and minority baiting. The films in the festival seem to be calling out to restore the constitutional values that are increasingly under attack.

The curatorial exercise was to pick out first time film makers, making work in difficult circumstances both political and personal - examine Muntahid Amin's work **Seige in the Air**. Shristi Lakhera's **Ek tha Gaon** examines rural distress in Garhwal while Madhulika Jalali takes a personal trip back to her home in Kashmir valley. Ehzaz Zaman's work **In a dissent Manner** examines state brutality at Aligarh muslim university after the passing of CAA NRC legislation, James Khangenbam's work **Meiram** looks at environmental challenges in his community in Manipur to

an interesting presentation on development by Architecture scholar NItin Bathla's work **Not Just Roads**.

We witnessed arguably the largest Migration during the summer of 2020 in post independent India - the largest number of workers walked back home - our legislators proved in the parliament no worker died while walking back home as there was no data on workers' deaths while walking back. The question of migration is looked at sensitively in Priya Thuvassery's work **City Girls**, the protagonists - young women moving from Banda, Uttar Pradesh to Delhi for work during the pandemic. **Sindhusthan** by Sapna Bhavnani takes a quirky look at the migration of Sindhi people from Pakistan to India during partition using Ink on her body, as she traces her roots in Sindh and the stories of migration.

Challenging the heteronormative stance is an engaging film **Gay India Matrimony** by Debolina Majumdar, exploring the life after gender

affirmation procedure tenderly is a work by Sankhojit's **Hriday Basot**, exploring the trans community of Kashmir with keen observation is Surbhi Dewan's new work **Trans Kashmir**. The question of sexual minorities become palpable after the supreme court's striking down of article 377 - a space in society to live a normal life.

Films having a patient look at the situation of crafts practitioners- like Backstage, which talks about different kinds of puppetry in Odisha, **Bela** concerning Chau in Bengal, and **Gosain** that shows us the scenario around the Kachari folk songs of the Bodo-Garo Tribe of Assam - gives us an understanding of the endangered modes of expression in our subcontinent.

There are experimental works as well, starting with Amit Dutta's **Wittgenstein Plays Chess with Duchamp: Or How Not to Do Philosophy**, Joshy Joseph's **Mizo Soundscapes**, and Kanika Gupta's **It**

**was in Spring** where the narrative is from a tree's perspective. A political analysis of Bengal from 1946 till 2021 is attempted in **Bid for Bengal** by Kasturi Basu and Dwaipayan Banerjee, exploring the roots of right-wing forces and the weakening of the Left and Centrist forces. The film clearly brings out the social outcomes that emanate from right-wing political power. And the injuries that are left behind have been shown in **Xenophobia** by Manjul Borah. The attack on Public Education spaces is brought out beautifully by Payal Kapadia's **A Night of Knowing Nothing**.

We have 33 films from across the country to show over three days. The curation portrays a contemporary picture of various issues that people are coping with in their own ways. We hope the films will initiate discussions and push the boundaries of our thinking; as we walk out of the screenings, may new friendships bloom with new conversations!

## DESIGN NOTE

One of the films at IDFFB 2022 **Wittgenstein Plays Chess With Marcel Duchamp: How Not to Do Philosophy** by Amit Dutta nudges us to reflect on the idea of **familiarity** of things as we see them. And it can also be thought of as an analogy for the COVID 19 virus and what it did to the world in terms of making things visible to us. I am not saying that the pandemic created a single condition that can be separated from the existing social and ecological condition but rather it reconfigured the extant conditions. The prevailing conditions were economic and social inequalities, communal hatred, casteism, violence against women and sexual minorities, environmental destruction etc. What lay before our eyes, all this while, suddenly became evident and all its familiarity perished, while some of the fortunate ones were locked inside their houses doubtlessly suffering losses.

The pandemic implicated 'global' in the broadest sense of the word. A world of living creatures interconnected in a delicate harmony sharing a common world. But I am not sure if this really is a common world. No matter how much we wish to dwell in a common world I am not sure we really do. The common has not yet been achieved rather we are moving even further away from it. Most of major resources of the world are not equitably shared, the global inequalities are increasing, evident during the pandemic. We can clearly distinguish between these many worlds or at least start acknowledging its existence. That some worlds are not part of the common world, that zones of life exist outside the commons, in enclaves. But often the dwellers of these zones are tied to each other through one category: labour. The question is whose labour and for whom? But they are still not of that world, if by **of it** we mean a

sense of belonging **to** that world.

The pandemic linked us in establishing our ties between **precarious** and **persistence**. The capitalistic metric dictates which lives are worth saving which are **not**. The utilitarian calculus tells us - some lives are dispensable. The vulnerable groups are considered dispensable to balance the hands of the **market**. The people in precarious life situations are the unavoidable sacrifices for the surplus of corporations and the political class.

The familiarity and acceptability of morbidity on the streets, asserts that certain mortality rates are always accepted in society.

In this light it is also necessary to rethink the phrase **essential worker**. Is it a word of praise attached to a class of people who were necessary for the society to function? And



the creation of this category has suddenly made creators seem compassionate. But this symbolic aggrandisement is the reflection of the darkside of liberal democracy which can be ruthless on its citizens while appearing compassionate. All it needs is showering of flowers from the air, banging of utensils from balconies and a few words of praise. This was also evident for those who could not work from home, in safe isolation but spent their day working in supermarkets, distribution depots, factories and on the streets, protected only by whatever safety measures their employers cared to offer them. Businesses, institutions, always try to deny these facts. But nothing like the Indian government , which refused to accept any death in the last two years - due to the sudden lockdown or the shortage of oxygen cylinders<sup>[1]</sup>.

This brings us back to the question

of how do we share our world and reclaim the commons that has degenerated as private? Pandemic laid bare the public health care system, public food distribution systems<sup>[2]</sup>, public education system<sup>[3]</sup>, inability of the system to generate employment<sup>[4]</sup>, the global distribution of vaccine<sup>[5]</sup> etc. So if we were to share which is not financial shares in firms but the common shares - that is the world. We have to admit that there is no equitable measure for distributing equal shares of the world. A share would be a form of participation and belonging that cannot be measured purely in accounting terms but doubtlessly demand measures beyond economic metrics. Because we are not just talking about the resources in a firm, but the sharing of the world, needs a sense of common, a sense of belonging **to** the world or **of** the world itself. This is not possible within the existing social coordinates and

categories but requires a fundamental transformation in understanding of **value**. As such it is the way of living, with the assumption that one's own life has value, a value beyond the market value and that the world will be structured in a way that will facilitate the material and spiritual needs not only of **oneself** but everyone else as well.

I strongly feel that documentary form can be a window for the initiation of this transformation. It is where the worlds collide and zones reclaim through telling each other their stories. Because essentially documentary works by making the unfamiliar into familiar and the familiar into common.

Sankalp Mohanty

---

[ 1 ] <https://frontline.thehindu.com/covid-19/central-government-rejects-whos-estimate-of-india-covid-deaths/article38491948.ece>

[ 2 ] <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/food-security-and-covid-19-why-indias-public>

[ 3 ] <https://thewire.in/education/india-education-policy-75-years-inequality>

[ 4 ] <https://frontline.thehindu.com/economy/unemployment-crisis-in-india-is-an-invisible-epidemic/article65674446.ece>

[ 5 ] <https://data.undp.org/vaccine-equity/>

OPENING FILM





## Backstage

The film portrays the lives and times of puppeteers of Odisha. The folk art form, which is vulnerable as its performers, mostly belonging to the lower strata of society in terms of caste and economy, is experiencing a silent death as only the last generation of practitioners remain. The filmmaker builds a personal narrative tracing a dying art form.



### Lipika Darai

Lipika is a filmmaker based in Odisha, India. She is an alumnus of the Film & Television Institute of India, where she specialised in film sound recording and designing. Her works have

been shown in various international and national film festivals. Her filmography includes **Some Stories Around Witches, The Waterfall**, both of which were screened at **Indian Film Festival Bhubaneswar-2018**.

### director's email

lipika.ftii@gmail.com

**Editor** Lipika Singh Darai

**DDP** Indraneel Lahiri

**Music** Alok Shanti Jha, Lipika Singh Darai

Year **2021** Duration **85 mins** Language **Odia**

Asolo Art Film Festival, Italy(2021), IFFI (2021), Chennai International Documentary and Short Film Festival (2022)



## A Night of Knowing Nothing



A university student in India, writes letters to her estranged lover, while he is away. Through these letters, we get a glimpse into the drastic changes taking place around her. Merging reality with fiction, dreams, memories, fantasies and anxieties, an amorphous narrative unfolds.



### Payal Kapadia

Born in Mumbai, Payal Kapadia has a master's in film direction from the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. Two of her films, **A Night of Knowing Nothing** and **Afternoon Clouds**, have gone to Cannes Film Festival. Her last film **A Night of Knowing Nothing** won the Golden Eye award for best documentary film at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival.

### director's email

payalskapadia@gmail.com

<b>Editor</b>	Ranabir Das
<b>DOP</b>	Ranabir Das
<b>Music</b>	Moinak Bose, Romain Ozanne

Year **2021**    Duration **97** mins    Language **Hindi**

Winner of Golden Eye at Cannes Film Festival  
Best Feature Film at Asia Pacific Screen Award





CLOSING FILM





## All that Breathes

All That Breathes, follows two brothers who run a bird hospital dedicated to rescuing injured black kites, a staple in the skies of New Delhi, India. As environmental toxicity and civil unrest escalate, the relationship between this family and the neglected kites forms a poetic chronicle of the city's collapsing ecology and deepening social fault lines.

Year **2022** Duration **91** mins Language **Hindi**

**Shaunak Sen** is a filmmaker and film scholar based in New Delhi, India. He was also a visiting scholar at Cambridge University (2018) and has published academic articles in Bioscope, Widescreen & other journals.



**director's email**

sen.shanak@gmail.com

**Editor** Charlotte Munch Bengtsen,  
Vedant Joshi

**DOP** Ben Bernhard, Riju Das,  
Saumyananda Sahi

**Music** Roger Goula

Sundance Winner, Cannes Golden Eye





## Trans Kashmir

Trans Kashmir is a film about the extreme hardships, resilience and beauty of Kashmir's transgender community and their growing movement for basic human rights.



**Surbhi Dewan** is an independent writer, director & producer. Her films connect personal portraits to larger socio-political landscapes. Among her notable works, **Daughter of Nepal** (2018) was screened at IDFFB 2019.



**S.A. Hanan** is a television producer, director and an educator. He has produced and directed about 300 hours of TV programs that include documentaries, short fiction films, PSAs, and talk show series for various television channels.

### director's email

[surbhi@paintedtreepictures.com](mailto:surbhi@paintedtreepictures.com)

**Editor** Tenzin Kunchok, Surbhi Dewan

**DOP** Faisal H. Bhat

**Music** Nazir Ganaie

Year **2022** Duration **62** mins Language **Kashmiri**

KASHISH Mumbai International Queer Film Festival







## Colours of Life

The director revisits the Ladakhi villages after five years of shooting a national award-winning feature film **Walking With The Wind** in which local villagers appeared. He meets and observes villagers' life, philosophy, ideas and invites them for a cinema experience, which some of them had for the first time.



### Praveen Morchhale

UNESCO-Gandhi Medal  
2018 Award winner and  
National Film Award 2018  
winner filmmaker Praveen  
Morchhale was born in  
Central India. After a few  
years of making short

films and theatre working as a director, Praveen Morchhale achieved recognition with his feature film **Widow of Silence**(2018) and **Walking With the Wind** (2017).

### director's email

praveen.morchhale@gmail.com

**Editor** Anthony Joseph  
**DOP** Praveen Morchhale  
**Sound** Arun Kumar

Year **2022** Duration **61** mins Language **Ladakhi**

IDSFFK 2022





## Bid for Bengal

Using fresh and archival footage with personal family history, 'A Bid for Bengal' lays bare historical fault lines and visits the workings of frontal organizations in the Hindu-nationalist network responsible for the recent political shift in West Bengal, in between witnessing two consecutive elections, from 2019 to 2021.

kasturi.basu@gmail.com

Year **2021** Duration **70 mins** Language **Bangla, English, Hindi**



**Kasturi Basu** is an independent documentary filmmaker, activist, writer and editor based in Kolkata. By training, she is a physicist, an alumnus of Jadavpur University, University of Cambridge, and Rutgers.

**Dwaipayan Banerjee** is an independent documentary

filmmaker, activist, writer and editor based in Kolkata. An alumnus of Presidency College and Calcutta University, he has formerly been a labour activist and labour history researcher.

Both of them are co-founder-members of the **People's Film Collective**, co-organiser of the **Kolkata People's Film Festival**, and co-editor of **Pratirodher Cinema**, a Bengali journal on documentary cinema and counterculture.

**Editor** Ritupurna Saha  
**DOP** Kasturi Basu, Ritam Sarkar  
 Kenneth Cyrus, Salkat Mallick  
**Music** Shameek Chatterjee.  
 Samrat Mukherjee  
**Sound** Sukanta Majumdar

IDSFFK 



## Not Just Roads

This film captures the story of a highway outside Delhi, from the perspective of human and non-human actors. It depicts a massive urban transformation underway in India.



### Nitin Bathla

Born in 1986 in India, Nitin Bathla is an architect, artist, and educator currently pursuing Doctoral Studies at ETH Zurich. His work focuses on labour migration, land ecology, and housing in the extended urban region of Delhi. Aside from academic writing, he works on films, community art projects, and social design projects.

### director's email

[bathla@arch.ethz.ch](mailto:bathla@arch.ethz.ch)

**Editor** Klearjos Eduardo Papanicolaou  
**DDP** Nitin Bathla  
**Music** Nitin Bathla

Year **2021** Duration **70 mins** Language **Hindi**

Architecture Film Festival London 2021  
 DocAviv Film Festival 2021, Architecture Film Festival  
 Rotterdam, Copenhagen Architecture Festival 2021





## Once Upon a Sky

The film follows the story of an Indian paraglider, Gurpreet Dhindsa and gazes upon this man's total commitment to flying and engages with the idea that adventure sports are closest to being most alive and we know that best when we come to injuries. Injuries are variable here, some are fears, most are obstacles and finally of course the ones which are external, which reveal as the film unfolds.

Year **2020** Duration **72** mins Language **Hindi, English**



### Barnali Ray Shukla

Barnali Ray Shukla is a writer, director and poet who made her directorial debut with Kucch Luv Jaisaa in 2011. She was an assistant director on Satya with Ram Gopal Varma, has worked on

script selections with Sudhir Mishra and has been in the writers' room with Ekta Kapoor.

### director's email

barnalirayshukla@gmail.com

**Editor** Ritajaya Banerjee

**DDP** Pinaki Sarkar

**Music** IP Singh

**Sound** Kunal Mehta  
Parikshit Lalvani

Tagore Film Festival 2020  
Eurasia Monthly Film Festival 2020





## Sindhusthan

The documentary includes many stories of the largest migration a culture had in history- the Sindhi migration, some from India and some from Sindh (now in Pakistan). Along with the director- illustrating her journey on her skin.

Year **2019** Duration **64 mins** Language **Sindhi, English**



### Sapna Moti Bhavnani

Actor, spoken word artist, hair stylist, writer, director, producer- Sapna embodies it all as a changemaker. After being a successful entrepreneur, writing multiple columns, authoring a self-help book, acting in award-winning plays, Sapna has been using filmmaking to give her activism a new voice.

### director's email

sapnabhavnani@gmail.com

**Editor** Kabeer Singh Chowdhry  
**DOP** Vishal Verma, Kunal Raj, Asif Ansari, Joe John, Kabir Choudhary, Wasit Khan, Shanker Raman  
**Music** Sumaie Zubairy

Winner -Docedge, NYIFF



FILM SOCIETY BHUBANESWAR





## Hridoy Bosot

An intimate portrayal of Suvana Sudeb, a transgender person, who undergoes Gender Affirmative Surgery in order to negotiate the conflict of body and mind.



### Sankhajit Biswas

Sankhajit Biswas (Sankha) has studied Editing in Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute and has participated in Berlin Talent Campus 2010.

### director's email

sankha2@gmail.com

### DDP

Sankha, Sourabh Kanti Dutta

### Music

Santajit Chatterjee

Year **2021** Duration **62** mins Language **Bangla**

IDSFFK 2022 



### **Debalina Majumder**

Debalina is a filmmaker and cameraperson. She studied Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University.

## **Gay India Matrimony**

This film revolves around three characters who are out exploring their same-gender marriage prospects with one of them documenting their travails. Shot over five years, this documentary captures the watershed moment of reading down Section 377.

### **director's email**

debalina.infos@gmail.com

**Editor** Abhro Banerjee  
**DDP** Debalina Majumdar  
**Music** Santajit Chatterjee

Year **2020** Duration **67** mins Language **Bangla**



## Karbala Memoirs

This film looks at Hussain's martyrdom from the perspective of an Indian who accidentally happens to be in the ancient land that has been ravaged by war, extremism and autocracy. The narrative merges his childhood memories with immensely disturbing contemporary realities. His eyes follow the pilgrims' progress, listening to their ballads or personal interpretations of history.



### Sourav Sarangi

Sourav studied film editing at Film and Television Institute of India. His filmography includes **Tusu Katha (The Tale of Tusu)**, **Bilal** and **Moddhikhane Char**.

### director's email

souravsarangi@gmail.com

**Editor** Sourav Sarangi

**DDP** Usama Tmimi

**Music** Shantajit Chatterjee

Year **2020** Duration **40 mins** Language **Bangla**

MIFF 2020, DMZ Korea, 2020, KIFF 2020, ISFF Market  
France 2021, (SASFF) India 2021, (BISSF) India, 2022







## Bela

In Bela (an indigenous village in eastern India), the men practice a traditional masked folk dance known as the Chhau, while the women frequent the nearby forest to gather dry leaves and firewood. In the local language, Bela means time. Shot over two years and edited as two consecutive days, the film is an intimate observation of the rhythms and rituals of art and labour, the feminine and the masculine, and the ambiguous thresholds between them.

Year **2021** Duration **59** mins Language **Bangla**



### Prantik Basu

Prantik BASU (1986, India) studied Film Directing at the Film and Television Institute of India, after finishing a degree in English Literature in Calcutta. He has been making short films and experimental documentaries since 2007.

### director's email

prantik.n.basu@gmail.com

**DDP** Prantik Basu

**Music** Riju Das

**Sound** Ananda Gupta

IFF Rotterdam - 2021



FILM SOCIETY BHUBANESWAR



## Wittgenstein Plays Chess With Duchamp: Or How Not To Do Philosophy

The project attempts to push the boundaries of cinema by juxtaposing it with ideas from philosophy, visual art, chess, mathematics, geometry, linguistics and psychology.

Year **2020** Duration **17** mins Language **English**



### Amit Dutta

Amit Dutta is an Indian experimental filmmaker and writer. He is considered to be one of the most significant contemporary practitioners of experimental cinema, known for his distinctive style

of filmmaking rooted in Indian aesthetic theories and personal symbolism resulting in images that are visually rich and acoustically stimulating. His works mostly deal with subjects of art history, ethno-anthropology and cultural inheritance through cinema, many times merging research and documentation with an open imagination.

### director's email

33amit@gmail.com

**Animation** Ayswarya S Dutta  
**Music** Kevin MacLeod, Chris Zabriskie  
**Sound** Amit Dutta, Ayswarya S Dutta

Oberhausen International  
 Short Film Festival 2016-Grand Prize (nominated)





## Ehraz A Zaman

Ehraz Asmaduz Zaman graduated from Aligarh Muslim University. This is his first documentary film.

## In a Dissent Manner

The campus of Aligarh Muslim University became a battleground on 15th December, 2019 when police and RAF forces entered the campus on the pretext of dispersing protestors, and inflicted, what can only be described as one of the worst cases of police brutality on the students. 'In A Dissent Manner' explores the events of that one single night and its horrific after-effects on many students.

### director's email

ehrazasmad@gmail.com

**Editor** Mohammad Salman  
**DOP** Md. Kaunain Raza,  
 Indranil Bagchi

Year **2022** Duration **62** mins Language **Hindi**

IDSFFK 2022





## Siege in the Air

This film lays focus on the recent communication blockade of 2019, post the Article 370 abrogation and what its impact was on mental health, mobility, education and desires of young women living there.



### Muntaha Amin

Muntaha Amin completed her Masters in Mass Communication from AJK, MCRC Jamia Millia Islamia. She has longed to tell everyday stories of existing, loving and resilience coming from living in the world's highest militarized zone. She identifies with the problems of Kashmiri Muslim Women.

### director's email

[muntahaamin2@gmail.com](mailto:muntahaamin2@gmail.com)

**Editor** Muntaha Amin  
**DDP** Ghania Siddique  
**Music** Reneesh Basheer,  
 Vimal Nazar

Year **2022** Duration **30 mins** Language **Urdu, Kashmiri**

IDSFFK 2022





## Small time Cinema

Small-Time Cinema is a documentary that follows two Youtube filmmaking groups, one living in Balochistan, Pakistan, and one, in Assam, India. The film follows these groups, as they make space for their complex history and cultures, beyond a blanket “Indian or Pakistani identity” only.



### Priya Naresh

Priya Naresh is a filmmaker from New Delhi. Her interests lie in experimental cinema which creates its own language to express the misery of existence. She has studied sociology and **Barsaati** is her first short fiction film.

### director's email

priya@chambalmedia.com

<b>Editor</b>	Rohan Diboru
<b>DDP</b>	Ghania Siddique, Habib Qasimi
<b>Music</b>	Mohammad Fabin
<b>Sound</b>	Priya Naresh, Ali Haider

Year **2022** Duration **30 mins** Language **Assamese, Hazargi**

IDSFFK 2022 





## Armature

Armature is a documentary about a Jiu-Jitsu athlete and his journey to make his amateur MMA debut.



### Joshua Quadros

Joshua Quadros is an independent film maker and graphic designer from Bengaluru.

### director's email

joshuaquadros94@gmail.com

**Editor** Joshua Quadros

**DDP** Joshua Quadros

**Music** Leslie Charles

**Sound** Mark Reddy

Year **2022** Duration **28** mins Language **English**

IDSFFK 2022 



## Cham( Meditation in Action)

Two parallel narratives are drawn from the lives of Lamas (Monks) of the Tawang Monastery and of the villagers living in the Mon region. This film is a visual installation of images through which it tries to narrate their life, spiritual journey and understanding of life philosophy. The film has plays and dances (pantomime) performed in the Torgya festival transiting through the dance rehearsals and sacred preparations.



### Abhijit Das

Abhijit Das is a Filmmaker, Visual artist, and Film educationist. He graduated in Fine Art (Applied) from Sir J.J. Institute of Applied Art, Mumbai, and has a Post-graduate diploma in Film making from Film and Television Institute of India, Pune.

### director's email

anowarhussain365@gmail.com

**Editor** Anowar Hussain Ahmed

**DDP** Prashant Deshmane,  
Anu Shersa

**Sound** Abhijit Das

Year **2022** Duration **40 mins** Language **Monpa**

IDSFFK 2022 



### Neelansh Mittra

Neelansh Mittra is a documentary filmmaker and sound designer based in New Delhi.

## Buwati Nodir Dore

The film shows the rapid cultural transformation in the Sonowal Kachari tribe after the recent exposure to the internet. It captures how traditional folk songs of the tribe are being remixed in a modern way in recording studios in the city leaving the members of the Kachari tribe in the village, worried about the future of their cultural identity.

### director's email

neelansh.mittra@gmail.com

**Editor** Biswajit Das

**DDP** Chinmoy Sonowal,  
Biswajit Das

**Sound** Neelansh Mittra

Year **2022** Duration **29** mins Language **Assamese**

IDSFFK 2022 





## Gosain: The Colours of Spring

The significance and traditions surrounding the Douh Purnima (Holi Festival), as well as the mythology of the discovery Narasimha Gosain by the Banka Kachari while excavating a pond serve as the foundation for this ethnographic film.



### Bishal Swargiary

Bishal hails from Assam. His filmography includes **Working Man** and **The Story of Budheswar**.

### director's email

swargiarycontact1998@gmail.com

**Editor** Dibakar Deury

**DDP** Chiranjit Ramchiary

**Music** Arnab Bashistha

Year **2022** Duration **28** mins Language **Bodo**

IDSFFK 2022





## Dukhu Majhi

This documentary is about an old man named 'Dukhu Majhi', who lives with his family in a remote village at the foothill of Ayodhya.



### Somnath Mondal

Somnath Mondal, a batch of 1992 FTII alumni with specialization in sound, is a sound recordist at Sunny Super Sounds, Mumbai and a former chief recordist at HMV studio in Kolkata.

**director's email**

somnath.film16@gmail.com

Year **2022** Duration **28** mins Language **Bangla**

Bengal International Short Film Festival (BISFF)  
South Asian Short Film Festival (SASFF), IDSFFK 2022





## Meiram - The Fireline

As season change, Langol, once a barren hilltop in the fringe of Imphal city, brings magic of the forest. The dream of Loiya, a young man, to cover the hill with lush green vegetation is taken up mutually by a young group of volunteers. The film gently touches the embracing colours of wild and slices of biodiversity.



### James Khangenbam

James Khangenbam is an independent documentary filmmaker based in Imphal, India. He served as General Secretary of Film Society - Television and Cine Foundation, Manipur.

### director's email

jameslaphoi@gmail.com

**Editor** Johni Meitei  
**DDP** James Khangenbam  
**Music** Mocha Kangjam

Year **2022** Duration **33** mins Language **Manipuri**

IDSFFK 2022 



## Xenophobia

The film is based on the much-reported story of 65-year-old Dulal Paul, who was declared a foreigner by a tribunal in 2017 and died while he was lodged in a detention camp.



### Monjul Baruah

Monjul Baruah's venture into film-making world began as an assistant director of several national award-winning films. As a film-maker, the inter-personal relations in changing paradigms of fragile

socioeconomic circumstances inspire creativity for Monjul Baruah.

### director's email

manjulbaruah@gmail.com

**Editor** Ghanashyam Kalita

**DOP** Prithivi Raj Dutta

**Music** Amrit Pritam

Year **2022** Duration **22** mins Language **Ahomiya**

IDSFFK 2022 



## Salt & Sugar

Salt and Sugar begins with a memory. A comment from her mother about her dark skin reveals to Hema the impossible gap between who she is and who society demands her to be. This intimate story speaks of the complexities of Indian culture, through classical Indian dance, contemporary movement and spoken word.

Year **2022** Duration **22** mins Language **English**



### JJ Abraham

J J Abraham is an independent filmmaker and editor. He is from Kerala, India, a graduate of Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata.

### director's email

abrahamjosejain@gmail.com

**Editor** JJ Abraham

**Choreography** Hemabharathy Palani

**Music** Jasmin Kent Rodgman

**Sound** Sethu Venugopal

IDSFFK 2022 





## New Classroom

In the capital city of India, a young boy navigates virtual schooling at home, while the pandemic ravages the country. The imagination of the outside world slowly builds within these four walls; sometimes when a relative calls to inform the death of a loved one, sometimes watching a bird soaring in the sky.



### Debankon Singh

Debankon is a filmmaker and graphic designer currently living in Andretta Artist Society, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. His films explore the inner world of the human psyche

searching for meaning contemplating life and the world outside that forms this inner world.

### director's email

debankon@gmail.com

**Editor** Debankon Singh Solanky

**DDP** Debankon Singh Solanky,  
Shuchi Prasad

**Music** Shuchi Prasad

Year **2022** Duration **28** mins Language **Bangla, English**

Best Short Documentary, IDSFFK 2022





### **Madhulika Jalali**

This is her Debut as a director. Madhulika was born in Kashmir brought up in Delhi, she did her Master's in Film making from London. She has been a line producer for films - Sherni, and A Death in the Gunj.

## **Ghar Ka Pata**

The film attempts to weave a narrative of the place and of time gone by, juxtaposing a string of short conversations, filmed impromptu through the streets of 'Rainawari', (a quaint suburb of Srinagar where the director's home used to be), with a series of anecdotal experiences with Jalali's family when her father took us back to Kashmir 24 years after they had to leave the valley of mist.

**director's email**

madhujalali@gmail.com

Year **2020** Duration **67** mins Language **Kashmiri, Hindi**

Special Mention IDSFFK 2022





## Ek Tha Gaon

In the Himalayan foothills, an 80 year old woman and a 19 year old girl are two of the seven remaining inhabitants of an abandoned village. The two women struggle with the choice to leave for an alienating city life or continue living in a lonely village.



### Shristi Lakhera

This is her first feature documentary. She has worked as a media trainer and produced films for international organisations and government bodies. She has worked with grassroots organisations across India on community film making workshops.

### director's email

srishtilakhera@gmail.com

**Editor** Bhamati Sivapalan

**DDP** Amith Surendran,  
Kai Tillman

Year **2021** Duration **61** mins Language **Garhwali, Hindi**

Special Mention IDSFFK 2022 





## City Girls

City Girls' is an intimate portrayal of two young girls from small towns of India now living in Delhi. The film attempts to deconstruct the image of "the city" and what it means for a young woman brought up in an 'elsewhere' she's longed to escape from all her life.



### Priya Thuvassery

An independent documentary filmmaker and television producer based in New Delhi. Priya's body of work has focused on women and gender, her stories windows into myriad experiences of the body, the environment, and the community, mapped from gender and feminist perspective.

### director's email

priya@chambalmedia.com

**Editor** Priya Thuvassery  
**DDP** Priya Thuvassery  
**Music** Vedi Sinha  
**Sound** Neethu Mohandas

Year **2021** Duration **28** mins Language **Hindi**

IDSFFK 2021, South Asian Feminist Film Festival 2021,  
 Calcutta International LGBTQIA Film Festival 2021





### Dr Kanika Gupta

Dr. Kanika Gupta is an art historian, a trained dancer and a filmmaker. She did her Masters in Art History and Ph.D. on the ancient Indian motif of the female and the tree.

## It was in Spring

A devastating change is becoming a trend, that of compromising all trees, plantation and garden spaces in exchange for multi-storey houses, which don't seem to need a garden anymore. This film is the story of one such house, which is destined to lose all its green cover and make way for cement and concrete.

### director's email

kanika.mandala@gmail.com

**Editor** Arghyadeep Roy

---

Year **2021** Duration **30** mins Language **Hindi, English**

Swedish International Film Festival  
13th IDSFFK, SIGNS Film Festival





## Testimony of Ana

An Adivasi elder, accused of witchcraft by her neighbours in rural India, uses faith and perseverance to survive several monstrous attacks. Living in an area beset by widespread logging, her refusal to be driven off the land sets up a conflict deeply rooted in patriarchy and capitalism waged on women's bodies- the witch hunt.



### Sachin Dheeraj Munigonda

Sachin is a filmmaker who studied at The University of Texas at Austin as part of their MFA program in Film & Media Production.

### director's email

msd1729@gmail.com

**Editor** Sachin Dheeraj

**DDP** Robin Raveendran Nair

Year **2021** Duration **24** mins Language **Dangi**

Best Short Documentary, IDSFFK 2022





## Hatibondhu

Hati Bondhu (friends of elephants), a voluntary organisation working for elephant welfare in the districts of Nowgaon & Golaghat districts of Assam. Wild elephant habitats are under stress due to developmental pressures. Hati Bondhu's intervention has resulted in reduced human-pachyderm conflicts.



### Kripal Kalita

Kripal Kalita is an Assamese filmmaker. His short film **Jaapi** was conferred the Best North East Film at the 2019 edition of the Chalachitram National Film Festival.

**director's email**

hatibondhu2022@gmail.com

Year **2021** Duration **53** mins Language **English**

IDSFFK 2022 



### **Joshy Joseph**

For the last fourteen years, Joshy Joseph has been working as Director in Films Division at Kolkata. He has scripted and directed several short and feature-length documentaries. He has won five National Awards.

## **Mizo Soundscapes**

Mizo Soundscapes is a visual - visceral -aural journey through a phase in Mizo History.

### **director's email**

[jjoshy@gmail.com](mailto:jjoshy@gmail.com)

**Editor** Atish Nandy

**DOP** Manesh Madhavan

**Music** Santajit

Year **2022** Duration **22** mins Language **English**

IDSFFK 2022 



COVID RELIEF







[Fig. 1]

## Watching Wastelands

### Some Notes on the Relevance of Observation

A bhinava Bhattacharya's **Jamnapaar (2017)** takes the water pollution in river Jamuna as its central theme. Halfway through the film, a voiceover is heard in the soundtrack: an elderly man who earns

his livelihood as a ragpicker says, "This is a camera. What gets captured in it becomes a reel and never goes away. You will only speak about what you have seen. What is unseen cannot be spoken about." He might be saying that what is captured by the camera

is partial, its access to the total reality limited. Why? Because in cinema the register of reality cannot be more than its visual (and aural) aspects. We know that for better or worse an audiovisual testimony is bound to work within a frame (both the quadrangular frame of the screen and the time-frame). That is why it cannot speak the whole truth; the truth eludes the frame very often.

The quoted speech of the ragpicker echoes a major controversy related to documentary filmmaking, where the latter's claim of being a truth-seeking medium has been time and again questioned and suspected. Here the bone of contention is the observational mode of documentary, traditionally called the Cinema Verité. This particular mode tries to reveal the material world in all its empirical details. In the last few decades, Cinema Verité has come to be disparaged almost unanimously as a quaint naturalist style of filmmaking. The distant mode of observational films simply fails to regard all the unseen factors operating below



[Fig. 2]

the surface of reality. That is why a number of practitioners and theoreticians are of the opinion that the observational mode has to be replaced with an artistic or fictive one. The documentary filmmaker has to shed her apprehensions regarding the techniques and devices of fiction films and experimental practices. According to them, without resorting to fiction and artifice one cannot get anywhere

through fabrication and imagination and stylization.”<sup>[1]</sup> In other words, reality’s contradictions and hyperboles are impossible to grasp by simply directing the camera’s look towards it. Observation and empiricism, according to Herzog’s critique, are no different than the touristic gaze which picks at the surface of reality. They are incapable of penetrating what

near the total reality. In the 1999 Minnesota Declaration, the German filmmaker Werner Herzog famously said, “There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only

lies beyond that level: “The so-called Cinema Verité is devoid of verité. It reaches a merely superficial truth, the truth of accountants.”

According to this critique, the oblique path to the ‘inherent truth’ has to be carved in two ways, first, by abandoning faith in the act of observing, and second, one has to make a fictional inroad below the surface and develop effective means to convey, if not the truth, the very knowledge of its inaccessibility. A number of documentary artists have professed this distrust of empiricism and expressed a penchant for narration and fabrication - contriving stories, manipulating the real course of events, staging interviews and performances - to grasp the kernel of the human condition.

Although the critique is well argued and partly correct, the relevance of the observational mode is not lost entirely. Increasing hostility to empirical facts

[1] Werner Herzog, “The Minnesota Declaration,” 1999, [designmanifestos.org](https://designmanifestos.org/werner-herzog-the-minnesota-declaration/), <https://designmanifestos.org/werner-herzog-the-minnesota-declaration/>

in contemporary times makes it all the more important to reconsider observational mode as a politically significant aesthetic. The ministries of fear that rule all over the world, have set out to denounce real-world facts and validate ahistorical myths in their places, only to thrive on the baseless paranoia that their mistruths induce. Simultaneously, the reality of impending climate disaster is being continuously sidelined, trivialized, and, at best, kept hidden from our view; even though its effects have already become part of our daily lives. So it is only reasonable that a documentary practice would grow sufficiently aware of its politics and respond to this assault by becoming more and more attentive to reality's tampered edges. However, such a renewal of the observational mode must not forgo the lessons of its criticisms.

Abhinava Bhattacharya's **Jamnapaar** is exemplary in this effort. Shorn of any overarching narrative, it plays with sequences shot on the riverbanks.

Words of three residents are heard in the soundtrack, whose lives or livelihoods are interspersed with the river. Instead of declaring the available statistical data on the pollution or interviewing experts and activists, the film assumes the position of an observer, locating the pollution within the images: the water is thick with sludge and throwaways (fig. 1). Bhattacharya juxtaposes these images with the voices of a ragpicker (whom we have already mentioned), his daughter, and a child whose face is never seen. In the course of the film, their voices - like water from a vessel - are separated from their bodies and spread across spaces that the image unveils. The causes of pollution come to the fore in the very first

sequence; the film begins with a shot of the riverbank, which is then interrupted by a series of rapid, short-lasting, but perceptible flickers (fig. 2). We eventually understand that these flickers are negative images of an industrial skyline. The apparatus drills holes into the serene image of quiet dawn on the riverbanks. The distortion or reversal of the image (into negative) is crucial for the aesthetics under concern. It harks back to a photochemical process that is no longer practiced during image-



[Fig. 3]



[Fig. 4]

making except in experimental ones. It hints at self-consciousness about the convergence of the two forms - documentary and experimental cinema - that the film enables so successfully.

The separation of voice and body is also a significant feature in Mehr Singh's **Toofaan (2021)**. Shot in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic, Singh's short documentary strings disconnected shots taken in various parts of Delhi and mixes them with

a series of telephonic conversations about the dismal state of affairs. People who have lost their near ones to the pandemic or have been part of the health service are heard in the soundtrack. The horrible experience of watching patients die without respiratory support, medicine, or even a hospital bed, is narrated by faceless voices, but it is something that Singh deliberately avoids visualizing. On the contrary, the images show places that, despite the tumultuous events, remain surprisingly unscathed. The



[Fig. 5]

people on screen do not betray any sign of anxiety, illness, or grief. The ambiguous negative space in the shots may portend a sense of irrecuperable loss but no visual narrative comes to confirm this notion (fig. 3, 4 & 5). So apparently the visual reality does not live up to the regular ambition of an observational documentary. It seems that such an approach fails to yield direct images of the calamity and subsequently folds into the mundane normalcy of everyday life. However, the director



[Fig. 6]

never intended to show the horrific images of death, disease, and grief in the first place. In the words of director Mehr Singh, “What we are hearing about is survival in a very extreme scenario, but this [the visuals] is the daily scenario, how vulnerable our population is, and how they are trying to survive on a daily basis.”<sup>[2]</sup> Shunning fiction, she deals with reality head-on and discovers an aspect that

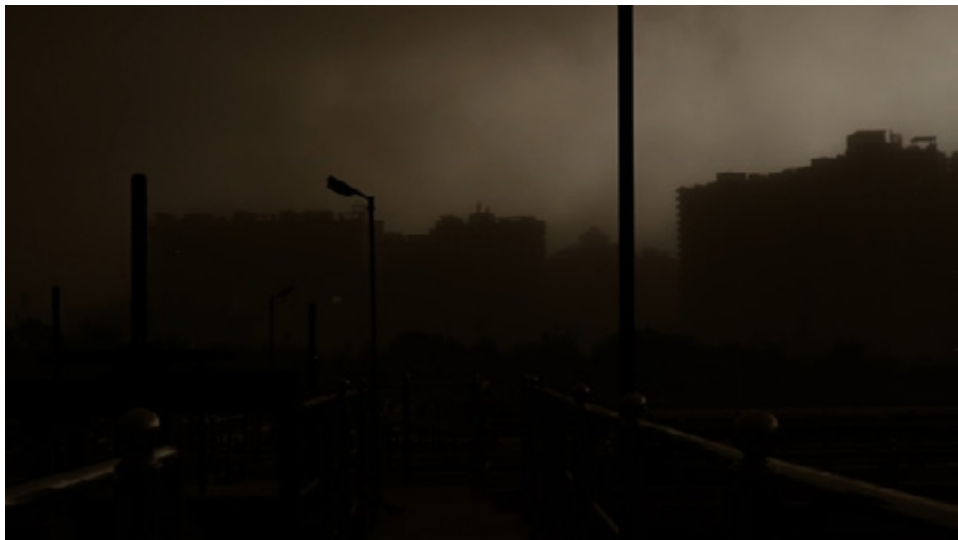
Bhande’s **Did You Do it? (2021)**. Like the other two films, the voice is not used here to explain the images shown; instead, it becomes more enigmatic. The documentary is set in a township that has popped up in what used to be rural farmlands. It focuses on the trajectory of wastes—how the consumption of food and other means of sustenance produce

is genuinely life-affirming. The images of quiet resilience of the people who still go about with their daily chores are no less moving than the harrowing events recounted in the soundtrack.

This voice-image nexus is also cunningly used in Aditi

garbage, and then they are disposed of, collected, and dumped in a nearby landfill (where it seeps into the soil) or into the river Hindan; the river water is then used in the farmland for producing crops and the vegetables grown in the farmland with polluted water are sent off to the market. This strange cycle of things from usable goods to garbage, from the source of vitality to abject excreta, and vice versa, is conveyed via a chain of images. The film puts various segments of this process in a sequence, often overlaid with words or intertitles. No guiding voice comes to rescue the film from the risk of falling into a void of meaninglessness; rather, the arrangement of shots itself becomes a guiding principle. Instead of imposing an arbitrary pattern on them, the director insisted on tracing out the internal logic of the shots, which in turn, is employed to arrange them.<sup>[3]</sup> Often it is a flow of affect across the shots - similarity of light and shadow, colour and tonality

[2] Anjani Chadha, “An account of adversity,” The New Indian Express, January 10, 2022, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/entertainment/hindi/2022/jan/10/an-account-of-adversity-2405068.html>



- which structures the sequences and gives them a sense of inner rhythm. Although the use of sound is quite stoic, a bird call comes back throughout the film like a motif - the voice of a red-wattled lapwing. It almost sounds like the film's title: 'Did

you do it?'

Each of the three films I discussed above finds a way to convey the total reality without resorting to fiction. But at the same time, the new observational aesthetic does not shy

away from stylization. A quiet and contemplative style is common to all of them and within its parameters the textures of image and sound develop deeply sensuous worlds. It renders the earth as a habitus, a place that is lived in. The wasteland, although filled up with all sorts of throwaways, revels with brilliant clusters of colours. At the same time, it is not a beauty we can relish or be pleased with. We cannot but be amazed and at the same time look at them with certain discomfort. This is more pertinent to certain scenes, where the image seems to preserve an awareness of foreseeable disaster in its composition: some shots in **Jamnapaar** consists solely of the reflection of riverside buildings in the water, while in the soundtrack a child is heard telling the stories of flood in the rainy season (fig. 8); the ominous opening (fig. 7) and ending shots of **Did You Do It?** show the township getting devoured by a giant dust storm; in **Toofaan** the silent vacuous

---

[3] iihschannel, "Urban Lens 2021| In Conversation with Aditi Bhande." December 9, 2021. Interview, 12:53. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8AEiZl74ZE&ab\\_channel=iihschannel](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8AEiZl74ZE&ab_channel=iihschannel)



spaces bereft of human beings look haunted - their sparseness goads us to look for traces of people who have passed away. These sequences carry inside them either mute warnings of a dreadful future or hauntings of the past calamity. They resort to neither fiction nor any statistical reference. On the contrary, these images grant their

spectator the power of imagination. Before her eyes, the documentary image gains its inherent truth from the dynamic between the images of reality and the imagined fate of the earth.



[Fig. 8]



Abhisek Roy Barman lives in Howrah, West Bengal. Presently he is in the first year of the Ph.D. programme at Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He likes to write about regional cinema, genres, experimental documentary and video art.



# "Ghode Ko Jalebi Khilane Le Ja Riya Hoon' deals in bringing dreams alive

Originally published in Frontline on Jun 12, 2022

INTERVIEW: Anamika Haksar by Sneha Krishnan

"I gather together the dreams, fantasies, experiences that preoccupied me as a girl, that stay with me and appear and reappear in different shapes and forms in all my work. Without telling everything that happened, they document all that remains most vivid."  
Bell Hooks

Dreams have so much meaning; and yet they hide so much. At the 11th Indian Film Festival in Bhubaneswar in January 2020, when I first saw **Ghode Ko Jalebi Khilane Le Ja Riya Hoon** directed by the veteran dramatist Anamika Haksar, I thought I was watching a social documentary but as the story unfolds weaving together strands of imagination, lived realities of genuine fictional characters and their hidden dreams, I was left wondering how the

film was conceptualized, created and found its way to an audience that is not used to being served everything on a platter. True to the struggles that the characters in the film face, the journey of this film itself has been tremendous. The film had its premiere at the Mumbai International Film Festival and was the only Indian film selected for the exclusive New Frontier section at Sundance Film Festival 2019. It was slated to release in 2020 but got pushed due

to the pandemic. After 3 odd years, the film will finally find a release across cinema theatres in India on 10th June 2022. This interview with the debutante filmmaker Anamika Haksar was held in two parts – once before the world as we knew was just about to be upturned in February 2020, and a follow up in June 2022 just as the film secured its release via distribution partners – Platoon One Films.



Anamika Haksar

Photo Credit: Udaya Shankar

The film, predominantly, traces four odd characters living in Purani Delhi, played by veteran theatre artists like Ravindra Sahu, Raghubir Yadav, Lokesh Jain and K Gopalan. Despite having elements of magical realism, it remains rooted in the realities, experiences, and aspirations of its main protagonists: Chadami is a sweet seller, Patru plays trumpet at weddings and moonlights as a pick-pocketeer, Lal Bihari is a labourer as well as an activist, and Akash Jain is a nostalgic tourist guide who

romanticizes the bygone eras that the Delhi of yore has witnessed. The film makes effective use of various artforms to represent the dreams of the underprivileged. We follow the day lives of these characters but then slip into their dreams as night engulfs this tired city. There are dreams everywhere – ragpickers dream of freely falling, women dream of extramarital love, while migrants dream of their lost homes and temples. The dreams are vivid and are depicted using interesting mosaics and layers of images; sounds of street and voices of people narrating their dreams gets entangled amongst each other; and surreal imageries with animated figures floats around the screen. A technical marvel, the film deserves more appreciation and acknowledgement of not only the makers' efforts but also of the people living in the underbelly of our cities. This interview is third in the series of interviews with talented filmmakers, both emerging and subaltern, belonging to different parts of India

and narrating stories which are set apart from the mainstream. This film is the brainchild of Anamika Haksar, an eminent theatre director in contemporary Indian theatre. Having trained first under Badal Sarcar and then B.V. Karanth at NSD, she was one of the few Indians to train at the State Institute of Theatre Arts, Moscow. These influences have led her down an uncompromising path of formal experimentation in theatre that has earned her a prominent place in the Indian Theatre Lexicon. She was awarded the Sanskruti award in 1995 for developing a new theatre language in India. She is one of the few theatre practitioners who was invited to the Kochi Biennale in 2016 to exhibit a theatre installation which was highly acclaimed. Now, having evolved a script of her love for the life and history of Shahjahanabad, Anamika seeks to bring her unique, tried and tested sensibility into the cinematic medium with a complex narrative about the old city.



**Sneha:** Anamika ji, please share your working process of **Ghode ko ..** with our readers?

**AH:** We did workshops with the (characters from Old Delhi), where we asked them very personal questions: At night, when you dream, what are the images that come to you? What makes you afraid? What makes you happy? If there

were specific characters, say the pickpocket, we asked the pickpocket where did you learn from, why did you choose this? If you had money, what would you do?

I had set up a very personal survey, which was translated by our local team members Lokesh and his wife, Chabi who interwove these narratives in their writing, based on

interviews in Old Delhi. There were no cameras used for recording these interviews. They just went and had conversations with the people in the city. Another friend of mine, Sarita Sahi, she was involved not only in Old Delhi, but also involved in a voluntary organization in Wazirpur with almost the same population groups, such as the migrant workers.

Over 2-3 years these relationships were built, and we drew from their narratives. Then, Chabi used to transcribe these interviews and send it to me. In my fiction, I would bring out these voices. That is how it was – more like a slicing of things. It could be like a fictional documentary or documentary fiction; so suppose we made a fictional character of a pickpocket he would often speak the dialogues by a real pickpocket. Then there were vendors who were speaking whom we hear through another character in the film. So, we took these responses and gave them as dialogues to our fictional characters so that you create a

fictional world that speaks of many voices and then there are many voices which come into a city – beggars, vendors, unorganized factory workers – all are occupying these spaces, and so all these multicultural voices are coming in and fitting together like a docu-fiction.

**S:** How was your process of writing? Clearly a lot of research went around the making of **Ghode ko..** How much of your work in theatre influenced your creative process?

**AH:** In theatre, nowadays there are lot of fancy words being bandied around. What I am saying is that improvisation and doing etudes, short compositions, have been my forte. I have been taught to work like this. At the same time, even in theatre there are a lot of research-based work, like we did something called **Raj Darpan**, which is on the Censorship Act in India by the British

during colonization.

There were Rati Bartholomew and Sumanta Banerjee, they had done extensive research: Rati had prepared the legal proceedings, Sumanta wrote some scenes and the rest we did the social history of Britain. Then, with the students

at National School of Drama, we improvised and developed this script, first of its kind called **Raj Darpan**.<sup>[1]</sup> Similarly, **Uchakka, Huriya** – all my work is based on research.

There is a wrongfully held notion that improvisation means it's all random. We do a lot of research,



[ 1 ] Raj Darpan is a play built around the Dramatic Performances Act of 1876. Theatre practitioners had to struggle against the oppressive Act promulgated by the British to thwart the voices of dissent that found expression in the performing arts. The play



In an innovative approach, the film visually weaves together strands of imagination and the lived realities of the fictional characters and their hidden dreams.

and we try and go for authenticity – either as a theatre-person, or as a filmmaker now – we believe that if we do something then we should really know what people are saying. Otherwise, it comes across as a middle-class approach to a subject. You have to be there, and you really

have to understand the context, and people's views. Even in theatres this has been the tradition – exploration of multiple layers. We had done another play called **Uchakka**, which was about pickpocketing, and **Huriya** was on anti-globalization. This was already being done in theatre, and

so I felt the film, as a medium was a culmination of these efforts on a larger canvas.

**S:** What would be your advice for someone who now wants to set out depicting life as it is in films? There are so many perspectives to consider and research itself takes a long time. How, according to you, visual medium adds value to social research?

**AH: Ghode ko** was 7 years in making, and post-production journey got extended by 2 more years. I think it is very important to understand the medium. Despite not knowing much about films, I had 35 years of experience of direction in theatre. That gives one vigorous discipline, without this to enter into a visual tradition, or an alternate medium, there is a danger of it remaining superficial. Whatever medium you enter, one has to know about it, train in it, that's the first thing. What I

---

incorporates scenes from the Marathi, Bengali, Telugu and English plays of that era that were considered subversive, and also includes a court scene that brings to the fore the national arguments against the Dramatic Performances Act.



feel is very helpful – which I learnt from my guru, teacher **B.V Karanth** in National School of Drama, by the Soviet School of Drama for six years, which adds to nine years of training – one should know the visual history and tradition of one's people. This could be paintings, tribal arts, and folk stories. You should know it – in order to know the medium, people use to communicate – it may give you one entry-point, a knowledge base to use many localized idioms and motifs. Lot of understanding of people is expressed idiomatically. You may do your research, but what language are people using to describe their lives. How would you visualize those idioms?

In the film, one of my character narrates his dreams: “**What I remember of my dreams, is about a chaupal, (a gathering place), near my home in my village, there is a white**

**temple which is flying in the air. People are sitting in the chaupal and gossiping. When I leave the chaupal, I walk on a pagdandi, (roadtrail), I reach an old home where people are actually lying dead on the floor. When I see them, I observe ants and then suddenly I realize that someone has died in my house.”**

That's his dream, so how do we depict this in a visual medium? One of our team members, Archana Shastri is a painter from Baroda School of Arts, she suggested use of the painted medium, and drew out those dreams in paintings. Then we thought when he enters this house, then cinema should take over – we created this old space, and dead bodies. That's how we arrived at various ways of depicting that one dream. There were several discussions amongst the cinematographer, animator, painter

and I. Understanding of the idioms is necessary, how we move from one to another, as well as the medium. It is also co-creation in many senses, theoretically and we were also coming from different mediums, my cinematographer is coming from cinema, I am coming from theatre, Archana is coming from painting, Ranade is coming from cinema and also he is from JJ School of Arts and he is the guy who is heading animation, you know, Gautham with the sound. Actors are also very important, they ought to be, because these are theatre actors, so you know, all of them have come through vigorous training of different kind, so they have gone through physical theatre, folk theatre, and realistic theatre, especially Lal Bihari and Patru have a very vigorous training of different kinds of theatre, Raghubhai<sup>[2]</sup>, was a folk artist and is very well-known, Lokesh is more of Alkazi<sup>[3]</sup>

[ 2 ] Raghuvir Yadav -

<https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/entertainment-news-raghubir-yadav-finds-his-mojo-after-30-years-in-industry/305010>

[ 3 ] Ebrahim Alkazi – legendary theatre practitioner, longest serving director of NSD

<https://thewire.in/the-arts/ebrahim-alkazi-modern-indian-theatre>

and theatre, more naturalistic, so it's more verbal and shayyari (poetic). So I am saying each person has come from a rigorous background and they also carry that, so I am just saying that there are many things, and no one thing that we need to know and, but idioms need to be known, and the more you know people you will find and the more you, yourself are knowledgeable about the form, the music and the idioms of this country, then you will also understand how to translate that into visual medium, so that is all that I can say.

**S:** Did you always know that a film would ultimately emerge from these engagements and interactions?

**AH:** No, no, nothing, film was never in the horizon, not at all, just that I kept going to Old Delhi and I have worked there over several years, and then it was getting very, very interesting, when I used to go into that area, I observed: how are people labouring, what are their muscles doing? How they take up these heavy loads? So

how do you translate that, how do you talk about that, you understand that this is very difficult to do in theatre, it is a medium and an idiom, no, I don't like pitying myself

Obviously, there is a stark comment, where there is a foreigner comes and asks something and she isn't interested in the story and then walks away, so that is a real commentary on whatever is happening here.

Yeah, all the audience who saw this film in the West got annoyed with that scene. Our audience in India, I have always found them non-cynical despite facing such terrible things as always, there are lot of images, positive dreams mostly. I have known this for a long time, and that has given me the strength to make the film, I also didn't want to show each poor person as a drug addict or a criminal, like all these guys show, half of the country die because people are actually honest and are living, trying to live an honest life, in the face of very dark circumstances, so

that has come from there.

**S:** What is your take on what role does arts play for today's generation and how do we keep them engaged or help them participate?

**AH:** I think of the situation of communalization, and the fact that there are lot of new films being inducted and used by the right wing parties and all these reactionary forces. I actually feel, now more than ever is the role of the arts and in all the art forms, it can be films. It is nice to see some of the theatre people who have the money, have created these nice little spaces near Versova (a Bombay neighbourhood), so there are only 50 people that can come, probably the hall is not that huge but there are many other people who created little, little spaces like Harkat studio, Veda Factory, etc. I have done some scene works there, we did some work on Macbeth recently, using this thing around violence to actually describe things that are happening now, the whole thing of

the dagger coming and the needing of this dagger and going to plunge it, so I made a dagger which is like a generic thing – what happens when the bar of violence, actually crosses and you can kill, so I made it all in crosses, it was quite an horrifying exercise for them. I made lines, like psychic lines and said that once you cross it you have to kill. What does that do to you? Some of them fell sick and vomited. How difficult is it to actually cross that line? We did this whole thing and we showed it, it was sort of live kind of exercise to the audience and I felt that it makes a huge difference. All of us if we don't constantly engage with the youth through theatre, music or films like your **Film Society of Bhubaneswar**. It might be just a workshop where painters are coming, young people are coming, telling stories, that would be an alternative culture then that would fill a huge vacuum and a lot

of very young people who are in the riots and you can't be stupid to think that this is going to substitute someone who doesn't have a job, who is economically challenged but I am saying that the vacuum which is there in smaller towns, where there is no accessibility to alternative culture, even there is a breakdown of the local folk theatre, let's say the culture is still there but it isn't relevant to a young person in his twenties, take Karnataka for example, many people used to come in and watch Yakshagana<sup>[4]</sup>. There are various forms of musical instruments like tumbaknadi<sup>[5]</sup>, and take krishna rasa<sup>[6]</sup> of which there are many, many forms there but unfortunately they are not appealing because lot of it has to do with mythology, so there is this huge cultural vacuum.

I wanted to create this cultural space in Old Delhi, because it becomes very

violent, between Hindu and Muslims, the divide is so stark. In fact when we went for the shoot, I remember one guy just running up to me and said this dialogue from Kabir Khan's Bajrangi Bhaijaan, "Kuch toh Karo, iss nafrat ko kamm karo". Do something, reduce this hatred. I asked him how can I do that? He said you do it through your films. He was just a youngster, and I was in tears. I said "film se nafrat toh kamm nai hongi, koshish toh jarur hogi" Through films maybe the hatred will not reduce, but atleast it will be a trial. It could require thousand films, thousand people dedicated to make these, and spaces to watch those films and follow up with a dialogue to make this happen. For instance, when you do a puppet show, I mean you will have to go to that village, and people will listen (you know), there are short films that can be made, which are telling, engaging, you can have

---

[ 4 ] A traditional folk dance

[ 5 ] An age old musical instrument native to Jammu and Kashmir, a simple drum made from baked clay has maintained its form and position since medieval ages, with its roots believed to stretch far back into Iran or Central Asia

[ 6 ] A traditional story of Krishna where he dances with Radha and her sakhis (Gopis).

stories, you can have puppet shows, you can have little performances which need no money. We had this venue where people came in and sang kirtans, we let them sing different kinds of songs of Kabir, the revolutionary. This space became a healing space. You could create a counterculture using Tik-tok, create something. All I am saying that - there is no point in who is doing what, but what are you doing apart from liking and disliking each other's post.

Today people are fed up, they want something from the youth. People need arts, and the forms as these are only going to humanize us.

## Part 2

**S:** Thank you so much for your time once again. You are right in the middle of interviews, meetings, and promotions for the film. How has this latter part of the journey been?

**AH:** It has been a lesson in perseverance to get a small film like ours on screens and theatres across India. The film continues to receive so much love and recognition in international film festival circuit. It is now invited to Smithsonian but our team wanted to secure a theatre release for the film, and then the pandemic happened. Currently, we are trying hard to ensure our distribution teams can secure screening slots in cities like Lucknow, Patna and so on. I must thank our distributors Platoon because what they have achieved is a feat in itself because we seem to be jostling for space with films like Samrat Prithviraj and Jurassic World.

We are trying to connect to NGOs so that they can bring general people to the theatres, who normally cannot afford Rs 300 to watch a film in cineplexes. We want to give out 20-30 tickets free for the labourers, rickshaw drivers and vendors who would watch the film and come have a dialogue with us. If all goes well, we

may also hold an experimental film screening in front of Red Fort for Rs. 50 or such because that is where the genesis of the film lies. An off-beat film like ours allows us to take such risks.

**S:** That sounds so interesting. How



Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar, Miss World 2017 & actress Manushi Chhillar, and film director Chandraprakash Dwivedi during a promotional event for their film 'Samrat Prithviraj'. Small films like Haksar's seem to be jostling for space with major productions

did your theatre experience prepare you with these things?

**AH:** Not at all for post-production. We get no training to deal with this at all. Distribution challenges for small film like ours is mighty. We are taking on these actors who have more clout. The big distributors can easily claim space, they exert huge influence on whether or not and how much space your film will get. However, we do not have big advertising budgets like them. We are literally calling people up, meeting NGOs and asking them to bring the general audience to come watch the film. This is where I think my theatre experience has trained me – to bring people together, to take artform to where it really matters and relying on a team of truly dedicated and the general goodwill of people, who want the best for this film.

As a woman filmmaker, how was your experience in the making and releasing of this film?

Luckily for me, I was able to bring together a very good team. Usually in the industry its all about one's ego, how much one knows or has worked in the past. However, my approach towards cinema was democratic. Even though my cinematographer Saumyananda Sahi, and editor Paresh Kamdar had so much experience than I did, they were always helpful and open to the creative vision that we had for the film. After all in this case, our struggle has been more as a small budget film against the monopolistic culture of big cinema in the theatres, and so I never felt that I was disadvantaged in any other way specifically.

**S:** Was it hard to resist the temptation to release the film on OTT platforms in these years? The pandemic saw a lot of films gaining recognition through these films.

**AH:** After all it was a big decision that we made not to opt for an OTT release, otherwise we did receive an

offer from MUBI but will the cinema reach its intended audience through OTT? We wouldn't even have made any financial gains through securing a digital release. We still want to screen the film in Delight and Ritz, a couple of the oldest theatres in Old Delhi. It continues to be a struggle to get screenings here. We are releasing this month, and yet we have no idea which theatres will we be screening in. The existing distribution system itself is inaccessible and monopolistic.

**S:** So much about **Ghode ko..** is about the team, and every department in the film shines – be it acting, editing, cinematography, visual effects. How much of this film is you, and how much do you credit it to your team?

**AH:** I seriously think we were able to pull it off because it was a team effort. Acknowledging individual efforts here is necessary, my part was to give the creative direction and to bring it all together and bring the film to its logical conclusion, which

I am still seeking now. Gautam Nair brought the wonderful soundscapes of Old Delhi to the film; Soumitra Ranade too believed in my vision and experimented with different art forms. The four actors, I feel are irreplaceable – nobody else could have played these parts. Lokesh and Raghuvir ji were stellar and commanded so much respect. Ravindra and K Gopalan held together the film so well. Even in advocating for the film we rely on so many of our well-wishers, I think from start to end the film is all about a team effort. We have met so many wonderful people in this journey who have accepted the film and made it their own. For instance, last month we went to Jama Masjid library through one of Lokesh's networks. They added a sticker to the poster in Urdu, showing that this film transcends any linguistic barriers as well.

**S:** That is so inspiring and lovely to hear, I am keen to know what are you planning to do next?

**AH:** I am going to rest. Once the film is released, if we have some money left we want to take it small cities and even unlooked corners of big cities. We have tied up with distributors to make the film affordable to these rightful audiences.

However, other than that I am keen to go back to theatre. Next year in January, I will start work on a theatre production to tell a story about what is happening to women these days. But more on that later. Right now, my wish is that **Ghode ko** is seen and loved by every Indian cinema-lover.

**S:** Inshallah, that's my wish too. Thanks so much for your time.



Sneha Krishnan is Associate Professor at Jindal School of Environment and Sustainability, OP Jindal Global University





cody22

## Index A

Abraham, JJ, 37  
Amin, Muntaha, 28  
Banerjee, Dwaipayan, 18  
Baruah, Monjul, 36  
Basu, Kasturi, 18  
Basu, Prantik, 25  
Bathla, Nitin, 19  
Bhavnani, Sapna Moti, 21  
Biswas, Sankhajit, 22  
Darai, Lipika Singh, 11  
Das, Abhijit, 31  
Dewan, Surbhi, 16  
Dutta, Amit, 26  
Gupta, Dr Kanika, 42  
Hanan, S.A, 16  
Jalali, Madhulika, 39  
Joseph, Joshy, 45  
Kalita, Kripal, 44

Kapadia, Payal, 13  
Khangenbam, James, 35  
Lakhera, Shristi, 40  
Majumdar, Debalina, 23  
Mittra, Neelansh, 32  
Mondal, Somnath, 34  
Morchhale, Praveen, 17  
Munigonda, Sachin Dheeraj, 43  
Naresh, Priya, 29  
Quadros, Joshua, 30  
Sarangi, Sourav, 24  
Sen, Shounak, 15  
Shukla, Barnali Ray, 20  
Singh, Debankon, 38  
Swargiary, Bishal, 33  
Thuvassery, Priya, 41  
Zaman, Ehraz A, 27

## Index B

All that Breathes, 15  
Armature, 30  
Backstage, 11  
Bela, 25  
Bid for Bengal, 18  
Buwati Nodir Dore, 32  
Cham( Meditation in Action), 31  
City Girls, 41  
Colours of Life, 17  
Dukhu Majhi, 34  
Ek Tha Gaon, 40  
Gay India Matrimony, 23  
Ghar Ka Pata, 39  
Gosain: The Colours of Spring, 33  
Hati Bondhu, 44  
Hridoy Bosot, 22  
In a Dissent Manner, 27

It was in Spring, 42  
Karbala Memoirs, 24  
Meiram - The Fireline, 35  
Mizo Soundscapes, 45  
new Classroom, 38  
Night of Knowing Nothing, 13  
Not Just Roads, 19  
Once Upon a Sky, 20  
Salt & Sugar, 37  
Siege in the Air, 28  
Sindhusthan, 21  
Small time Cinema, 29  
Testimony of Ana, 43  
Trans Kashmir, 16  
Wittgenstein Plays Chess With Duchamp: Or How  
Not To Do Philosophy, 26  
Xenophobia, 36

## **Index C**

Ahomiya, 36  
Bangla1 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 34, 38  
Bodo, 33  
Dangi 43  
English, 20, 21, 26, 30, 37, 38, 42, 44, 45  
Garhwali, 40  
Hazargi, 29  
Hindi, 15, 18, 19, 20, 27, 39, 40, 41, 42

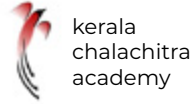
Kashmiri, 28, 39  
Ladakhi, 17  
Manipuri, 35  
Monpa, 31  
Odia, 11  
Sindhi, 21  
Urdu, 28

## **Our Patrons**

Anita pedinti  
Anindya pal  
Subhasis Beura  
Mansi kohli  
Mainak Das  
Sudhir

in association with

---



Over 20 Years  
of Celebrating  
the Arts



India  
Foundation  
for the Arts

ticketing partner



memento partner



radio partner



print partner



# Festival Team

## **Festival convenor**

Sivapada Swain

## **Festival coordinator**

Subrata Beura

## **Curatorial team**

Subrata Beura

Satyajit Puan

Sankalp Mohanty

Subha Sudharshan Nayak

## **Films sourced from**

Kerala Chalachitra Academy

India Foundation for Arts

Vikalp

## **Festival book**

Sankalp Mohanty

Jayshreeram Dash

Rashi Saxena

## **Guest relations**

Dr. Yannam Deepak

Ashis Sahu

## **Design team**

Sankalp Mohanty

Tapaswini Sahoo

Hrudayanath Tarei

## **Social media team**

Subha Sudarshan Nayak

Tapaswini Sahoo

Sonia Chand

Manisha Nanda

## **Festival Production team**

Subha Sudarsan Nayak

Jayshreeram Dash

Sonia Chand

## **Documentation Team**

Lipika Singh Darai

Debasis Beura

Hrudayanath Tarei

Bibek Panda

Hitesh Kumar Gochhayat

Mohammad Faisal Noor

## **Art Exhibition**

Debasis Beura

Friends from

Film Society of Ravenshaw

Friends from Collective Craft

Friends from BK Art College

## **Printing Unit**

Print-Tech Offset pvt.ltd

Pradhan Graphics

## **Festival Outreach**

Sanchita Dwivedi

## **Festival Intern**

Sonia Chand

## **Event management team**

Saurav Mohanty

Creatrix



A person wearing a dark coat stands in the center of the frame, surrounded by a thick, misty atmosphere. The entire scene is bathed in a deep red or magenta light, creating a surreal and ethereal mood. The person's features are indistinct due to the low light and fog.

Film Society Bhubaneswar

**write to us at** [filmsocietybbs@gmail.com](mailto:filmsocietybbs@gmail.com)

rashi'22

