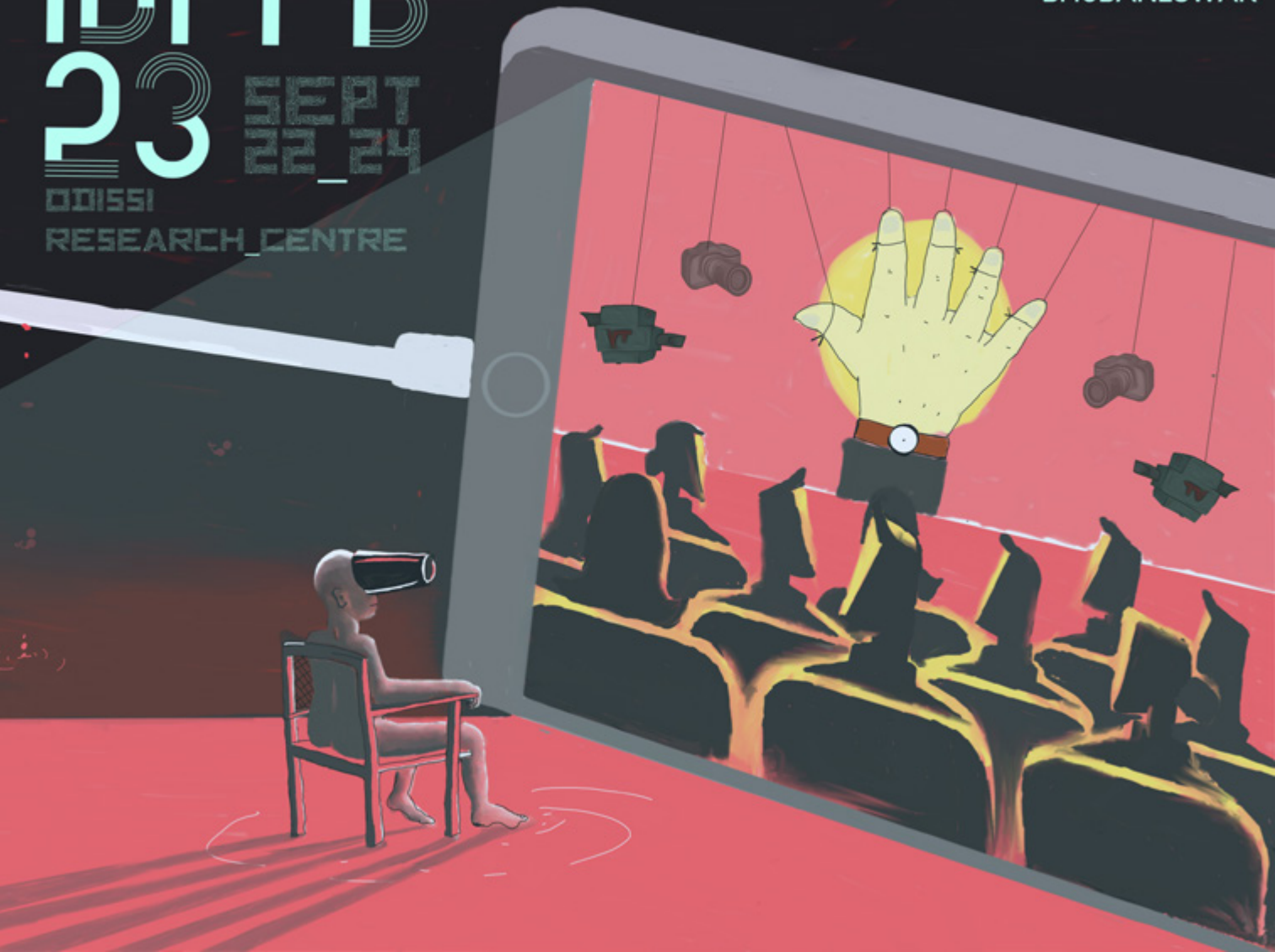
# IDFFB 23

SEPT 22_24

ODISSI RESEARCH_CENTRE

4TH_INDIAN DOCUMENTARY FILM_FESTIVAL BHUBANESWAR



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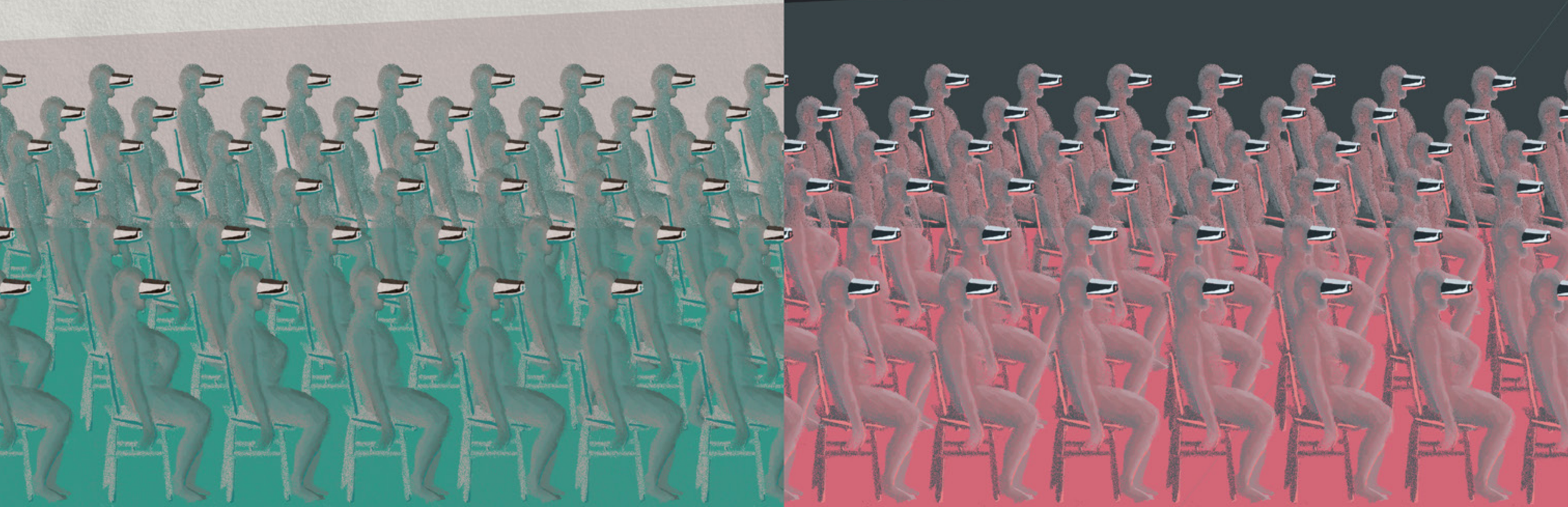
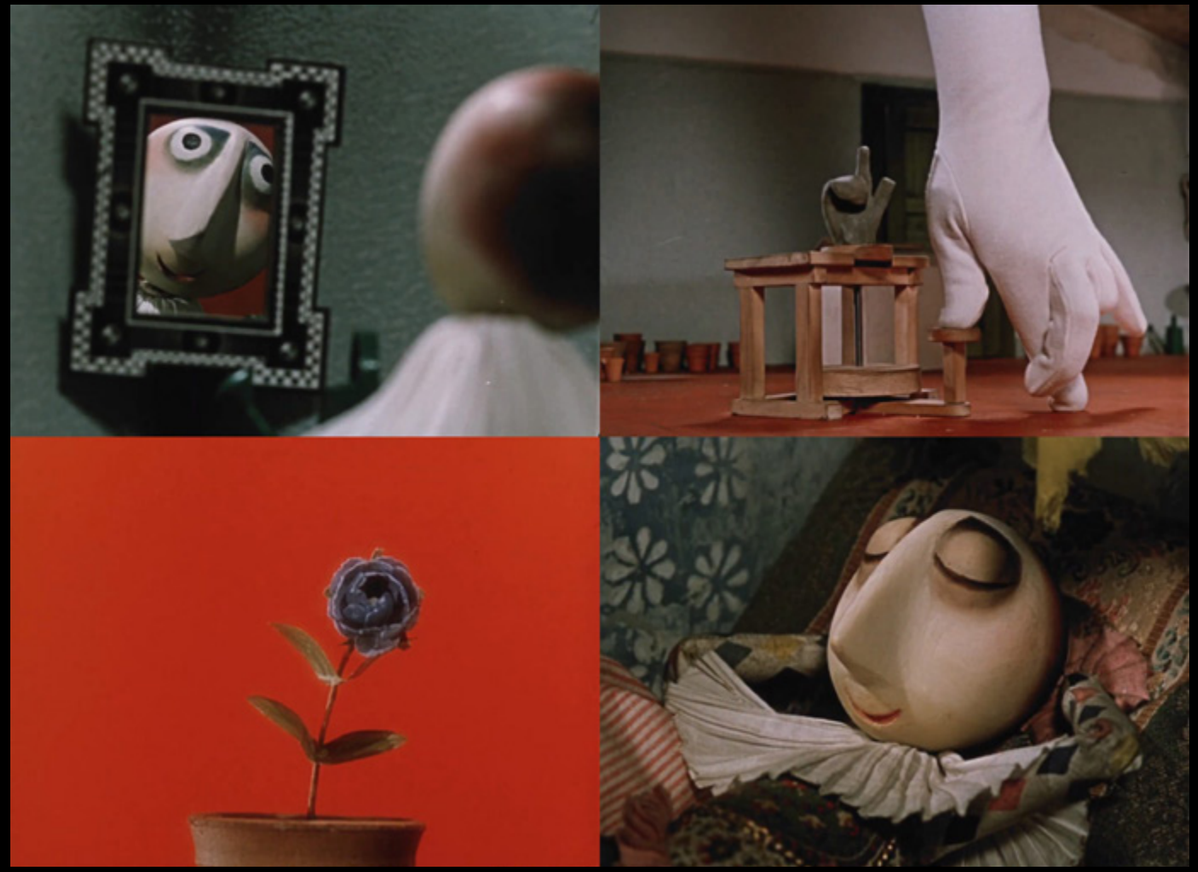




FILM STILL(S) FROM THE HAND (1965) BY JIRI TRINKA

# CONTENTS

# About FSB

Film Society of Bhubaneswar (FSB) has been in existence since 2004, as a non-profit organisation registered with the Societies Act of India (1860) and the Federation for Film Societies in India (FFSI). 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 film 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), Anand Patwardhan (2019), Mrinal Sen (2020), Satyajit Ray Restrospective (2023). The now reworked festival calendar of the Society covers two annual events, the Indian Film Festival Bhubaneswar (2018, 2019, 2020, 2023) and the Indian Documentary Film Festival Bhubaneswar (2018, 2019, 2022, 2023). Both these festivals showcase contemporary Indian regional cinema, in fiction and non-fiction respectively. FSB organized its first Children Film Festival this year.

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, conversations with visual artists and filmmakers, with the continuing effort to take Cinema to newer audiences, cineastes and students.



# Message from the Festival Coordinator

The Reuters Institute's *(2023 Digital News Report)* finds that news consumers in India are turning away from traditional media and websites to search engines and mobile *aggregators*. And the majority favour watching or listening over reading. In India, only 38% of people trust news sources, a rate that's among the lowest in the Asia-Pacific region. Also, in India, news is mainly delivered through aggregators, not through social media platforms, as is widely believed. Data from India is biased towards English speaking, predominantly younger population. India's rank on world press freedom index is 161/180 *(160 countries are better than India)*. My conversations with University students reveal that they access news through apps like *ScoopWhoop, InShorts, Dailyhunt* – news aggregators. The University students believe that the political regime at the centre is right and the one ruling over two decades in our province is left.

The dominant narrative sways our understanding of who we are - the month of September commemorates the 9/11 twin towers attacks and rightly so. But what is not revealed is the original 9/11 imposed on Chile in 1973, it was the fiftieth anniversary of the killing of democratically elected Salvador Allende by the US secret services supported coup led by Gen. Pinochet. The Chilean coup unleashed a military dictatorship that lasted till 1990, the forced disappearance of thousands of students, political dissidents, creation of sites of torture and the dismantling of the socialist state apparatus and building of the neo-liberal model under the supervision of Milton Friedman – free market reforms through shock therapy. All of this came out in conversations after our screenings of *The Battle of Chile* – Patricio Guzman's film. Patricio Guzman has spent his lifetime chronicling his country's fate between authoritarian forces and those dreaming to build a just society – his major works (*The Battle of Chilte, The Pearl Button, Nostalgia for the Light*) have been screened at the Film Society.

*Fahrenheit 9/11* – Michael Moore's dismantling of the inner workings of the American establishment demonstrated the disastrous handling of the homeland security apparatus under the Bush Jr. regime. The ignition was provided to the military industrial complex post the twin tower destruction starting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In a sense, the wars were a deflection strategy of the American political class to manage domestic public opinion. From the post screening conversations at our screenings, the students were inspired to screen Michael Moore's films in their campus at Ravenshaw.

The conversations veered to Indian documentaries and we landed on Anand Patwardhan's works, starting with *Pita, Putra aur Dharmayudha* landing on *Raam Ke Naam.* The conversations raised questions about our notions of religion, religiosity, governance and state structures – shaping our daily realities. Patwardhan's *Reason* was screened at the Indian Film Festival of Bhubaneswar (IFFB 2019) as the closing film. The film brought out the

severe strain that was being applied post 2014 on students' voices (Rohit Vemula, attack on students at JNU) rationalists (killings of Pansare, Dabholkar, Kalburgi & Gauri Lankesh) and the general pressure being created on religious minorities under various garbs. Today the everyday violence perpetrated on religious minorities does not evoke much public response. Student elections at our public institutions in Odisha have been put on hold for more than six years – leading to funny notions of democracy within young people. The students at the Ravenshaw film society were incredulous about – the internet blockade in Kashmir (after watching Muntaha Amin's *Seige in the Air*), the existence of AFSPA - in Kashmir, in the North-East. A film from Manipur could not be part of our festival because of internet blockade till yesterday. The situation in Manipur became national news - three months' after the eruption – during June this year and we are still trying to understand the reasons. The questions remain. In a conversation with family, my cousin remarked that I should keep quiet as one person knows what is best for the country and he is solving them!

So, all of these got us thinking about contemporary documentary practices that we wanted to bring to our audience – specially to the question, what is happening in Indian Documentary scene? Who after Anand Patwardhan, where are our Guzman's, our Moore's – most of the films in our festival are by young film makers, they have a journey to make, but the promise is there. The questions of farmers, women, muslims, sexual minorities, repressed histories, folk beliefs are explored in some of the films at the festival. There are 25 films made in the languages of *Hindustani, Mizo, Bangla, Odia, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Gondi, Madiya, Urdu and Pahari.* 13 women directors' films bring about unique perspectives from diverse parts of India.

The farmers protest against the controversial farm laws enacted in 2020 are covered in Prateek Shekher's *Chardi Kala* and Varrun Sukhraj's *Too Much Democracy*. The common women of Shaheen Bagh who peacefully protested against the discriminatory CAA-NRC laws enacted during December 2019 is the subject of Nausheen Khan's *Land of my Dreams*. A remarkable 3000 km walk along the banks of Ganga by Siddharth Agarwal, observes the situation of the riparian communities is the subject of Sridhar Sudhir's *Moving Upstream: Ganga*. The contested territories of 'refugee', 'migrant' is explored in Priyanka Chabbra's *Iqraarnama*, the Nellie massacre of 1983 is covered in Subasri Krishnan's *What the Fields Remember*. Debalina Majumder's new film B*eyond the Blues* explores the journey of Neel's transition from his birth assigned gender. No Cut Film Collective's *A Rifle and a Bag* explores the life Somi and her husband, former Naxalites, as they try to integrate into society. Miriam C Menacherry's *From the Shadows* explores the challenges of women imaginatively resisting sex trafficking and her other film *The Leopard's Tribe* unfolds the challenges of conservation in Mumbai through the Bhoir family's struggle.

Local Histories of Bhubaneswar is explored in Nikhil Bhai's work (Srujanika) through Subhashish Panigrahi's *The Volunteer Archivists*, the villages of Satabhaya in Himanshu Khatua's *Sea and Seven Villages*, from Kashmir we have a film by Nundrisha Wakhloo's *Brair Kani*. The work of Nirad Mahapatra is explored by Joshy Joseph's *With Quietude.. To Nirad* and the work of "*Aribam Syam Sharma*" from Manipur. Nirad babu was associated with the film society movement throughout his life, he was involved at FSB's screenings and festivals, his association with our film society educated many of us.

There are experimental works in Mrinmoy Nandi's *Somoyer Janalaguli* made during the bleak times of Covid using the window as a frame from 23 different people, Shilpika Bordoloi's fresh short *The Spirit Dreams of Cheraw* explores the folk beliefs around bamboo in Mizo society. *Raat* by Third Eye learning lab explores the nights on camera in small towns by women. An imaginative exploration of AJ Shahi's debut work *Letter Unwritten to Naiyer Masud* is our Closing Film.

Amit Mahanti & Ruchika Negi's Polish work *Two Autumns in Wyszogrod* raises questions about memories, particularly in societies where fascists try to control all aspects of human life.

Our sense of self is tied to the past we remember, to everyone and everything we have known. Formally, film mimics memory: bringing up before our eyes scenes that happened—that were enacted before the camera—some time ago, documentaries become very powerful, as you see history happening before you. Documentaries can enable resisting Social Amnesia.

I believe some conversations will begin with these films, before that I leave you with Nibha Shah's poem from Nepal on persistence of birds. And see you at the festival!

*People only saw the tree fall.*
*Who saw the nest of the little bird fall?*
*Poor thing!*
*A home she built one twig at a time.*
*Who saw the tears in her eyes?*
*Even if they saw her tears, who understood her pain?*

*The bird didn't give up,*
*didn't stop hoping,*
*didn't stop flying.*
*Rather, she left her old home*
*to create a new one, collecting again*
*one twig, another twig.*
*She is building her nest in a redwood.*
*She is guarding her eggs.*

*The bird didn't know how to lose.*

*She spreads flight into new skies.*
*She spreads flight into new skies.*

*-Nibha Shah*

*Film still from Videodrome(1983)*

# A Ghost in the Computer

*A sufficiently developed technology is no less than divinity*

*-Arthur C Clarke*

Recently in a conversation with one of my friends, she mentioned the presence of a Ghost in her computer. It was not a computer virus that she was talking about. It was something only she could sense. The presence of an entity while using her computer. Occurrences like the missing of a folder, changing file locations and extensions, the presence of a file transfer portal that could send data without her permission, and multiplication of data logs without ever using the respective software program (all stating the same data over and over again.) etc. were some of the instances that she narrated to me. These instances were not only limited to the aberrations in her computer, it was present in every digital device that she used. It was almost like somebody who knew her inside out, all her secrets and desires and it kept a note of it.

In cyberspace, which was initially designed as a tool that would seamlessly reduce the world's size, the dream to create a techno-utopia where everybody and everything will be connected, and embedded in each other. Almost like an extension of the sensorium of the human species. But here the case was completely different because the person who was supposed to be in control was in reality, being manipulated by this Ghost. The Ghost would always listen to her words and was omnipresent, and omniscient. Even when my friend did not use her computer or other electronic devices it would still be lurking in her shadows, in the real world.

But how real was the Ghost? What she sensed of the Ghost was impossible for her to explain to me. The qualities of this Ghost were incommensurable. Unprovenance were essential to the existence of this Ghost. Since the author believed he had a knack for rationality, therefore before incommensurability, incomprehensibility was something that he felt. He just could not make head or tail of the story and tried every computer wizardry that he knew. Nothing made sense to him. Ghost? In a computer?

In science fiction, ghosts in machines always appear as malfunctions, glitches, and interruptions in the normal flow of things. Something unexpected appears seemingly out of nothing and from nowhere. Through a malfunction, a glitch, a fleeting glimpse of an alien intelligence at work. It was like she was narrating to me the story of David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (1983). The more she tried to unearth the Ghost's origins the farther it sent her on a hallucinatory journey into a shadow world of right-wing conspiracies, sadomasochistic sex games, constant search for nostalgia and other places in cyberspace. She was in a panic-reactive state most of the time. Was this all due to Ghost, we will never know. Or can we?

In the book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985) Neil Postman compares two sci-fi novels, George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. One is an authoritarian surveillance state which oppresses the citizen and the other is where the state encourages the citizen to medicate (*soma*) themselves into bliss, thereby voluntarily giving up their rights. Postman compares the drug *soma* with the television's entertainment value. The same can be

also said of cyberspace, with the unending and often undifferentiated, eternal textual procession of information and the physiological effect it has on the user. At the surface level, it is especially true when we look at the design interfaces of social media apps. These addictive scroller coasters are designed with the particular ideas of utility and data gathering, making it impossible to keep them away.

At birth of the end of history, there was also another monozygotic twins that came into being. *Techno-utopias*. Promises of a better world with more connectivity for individuals and communities, and spaces for dialogue, and democratization of information and solutions to all problems. All we need is to have faith in technology and techno-messiahs who will resolve the unequal distribution of wealth and resources. If not, then one needs to have some patience because the messiahs are working on it. The divinity of the technocracy and its prophets in turtlenecks and casual T-Shirts have created the new world order. The ability to change governments, ownership of natural resources for the production and sustenance of the techno-empires by any means, ownership of all forms of human capital, the commodification of information, and users' emotional and psychological needs(choice), etc. are a few things that lie in the shadow of these powerful beings. This a world that is starting to look more like Orwell and Huxley's prophetic visions have combined to form an indifferent world with no truths.

A world where there is no objectivity and loss of all belief in grand narratives and ideologies. Where there is no sense of history neither personal nor communal. Just the present. There are gaps in the collective and personal memory and an individual will never be able to grasp such a problem on his own. The ability to look back at our own histories both individual and civilizational with the eye of a Ghost hunter will need some sort of conversation with the idea of truth. The documentary form, bereft of the school of thought, is fundamentally always in the pursuit of the truth. The truth of events and subjectivity of experiences. Translating these two categories into sounds and images poses a challenge that all filmmakers working in the form have to deal with. The problem of language.

In his seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Thomas Kuhn argued that science proceeds in two modes. "Normal" science consists of "puzzle-solving", and finding answers to questions that remain within a certain overarching theory, or "paradigm". But at certain points, anomalies pile up and a revolution occurs, replacing the previous theory or paradigm with a new one, as when Newtonian mechanics was overthrown by Einsteinian relativity. That is a paradigm shift. And, according to Kuhn, it's usually messier and less objective than people had previously assumed. In particular, he argued, the criterion for the acceptance of a new paradigm is not some kind of provably superior fidelity to objective truth, but simply its consensus adoption by the community of human beings engaged in scientific practice.

"This is all terribly dangerous." Errol Morris said, a documentary filmmaker, also a student of Kuhn. He continues "Kuhn's ideas promote a denial of truth," and if we can't rely on objective truth in science then we may as well all become parliamentarians in the New Parliament. (I am paraphrasing slightly.)[1] The inventor of the term "paradigm shift" threw an ashtray in exasperation at a young graduate student, and soon afterward ejected him from the university. The result was the book, *The Ashtray (Or the man who denied Reality)*. In the book Morris' aim, was to refute this "postmodernist bible". To do so, somewhat eccentrically, he spends a lot of time on the picture of language advanced in the 1960s by the philosopher Saul Kripke, because he takes this to imply that the meaning of words is fundamentally connected to reality in a reliable way, so that scientific language, too, can point to the world unproblematically. There are also some entertaining interviews, laid out documentary-script-wise, with such luminaries as Noam Chomsky, the philosopher Hilary Putnam and Kripke himself, and Morris races off on tangents about Jorge Luis Borges, Pythagorean mathematics and armadillos, and down some deep Wittgensteinian rabbit holes (or duck-rabbit holes) about rules and language. You can read the interview with Noam Chomsky called '*The Furniture of the World*' in this book. This is followed by an interview with Errol Morris, about a device he invented when he films interviews called, *Interretron*. It which allows Morris and his subject to talk to each other through the camera lens itself. He explains the device as follows:

*Teleprompters are used to project an image on a two-way mirror. Politicians and newscasters use them so that they can read text and look into the lens of the camera at the same time. What interests me is that nobody thought of using them for anything other than to display text: read a speech or read the news and look into the lens of the camera. I changed that. I put my face on the Teleprompter or, strictly speaking, my live video image. For the first time, I could be talking to someone, and they could be talking to me and at the same time looking directly into the lens of the camera. Now, there was no looking off slightly to the side. No more faux first person. This was*

**1. Poole,Steven The Ashtray by Errol Morris review – revenge against Thomas Kuhn**

*the true* **first person**.[2]

The other essay in this book is '*What is to be like a Bat?*' (1974) by the philosopher of science, Thomas Nagel. It is dominated by the concern over how to reconcile the personal, subjective, first-person view we have of events, the world, of what is valuable and important, and the impersonal, objective, impartial view we have of these things, a view which is ordinarily thought of as more likely to be true, just because impartial, untainted by local or personal concerns and horizons. In the essay, he contends that all materialist and functionalist theories of mind and consciousness omit the central fact of mentality (dualism; functionalism) - that there is something it feels like to be in a certain material or functional state. In this case, we see a contradiction between the lived experience intimate to the individual subject and the generalizing theoretical account which seem to provide the best overall explanations. The essay fundamentally deals with the category of subjectivity and objectivity which might produce certain questions about language and truth, when read along with the Morris-Chomsky interview.

How does it all add up in the Ghost story? I think, for my friend it was a process of excavation of history of her paracosm without consciously knowing it. The process was so destructive she was later clinically diagnosed with bipolar disorder and Schizophrenia. The paracosm where she sought spatial and temporal refuge in fact, affected her mental health severely with a burden of other social factors. It took professional therapy, medication, and rehabilitation to deal with it. These sorts of stories are alarming to the extent that the reader shares in a larger cultural understanding that cyberspace and its cousins are, paradoxically, completely familiar in their seemingly fundamental uncanniness, so much so that we rarely question the often-fantastic conventions through which we conceptualize and engage with this media. A whole new series of vivid fantasies involving cyberspace and virtual reality exists and its weirdness needs more understanding. We can say nothing of the Ghost, but that, if it exists it has been already commodified.

-***Sankalp Mohanty, 2023***

**2. Rothman, William, ed. (2009). Three Documentary Filmmakers: Errol Morris, Ross McElwee, Jean Rouch. Albany: SUNY Press. pp. 3–4.**

# FILMS IN IDFFB 2023

# OPENING FILM

# With Quietude... To Nirad

**2015 51mins English**

With Quietude— To Nirad is a chamber drama in its form and an encounter of two souls discussing cinema and life.

DOP K.S Shridhar
Editor Atish Nandy
Sound B. Sureshkumar

***Joshy Joseph*** was born in Kochi, Kerala. He assisted Adoor Gopalakrishnan in the making of Kathapurushan. He has scripted and directed several short and feature-length documentaries and has won five National Awards for his films and writing on Cinema.

**contact jjoshy@gmail.com**

# Night & Fear

**2023 28mins Odia**

The residuals of recorded material generated by the filmmaker over a decade of filmmaking practice, with time, have acquired new meaning. Having a twofold interior, Night and Fear is a personal essay addressed to the filmmaker's grand aunt, but also a reflection on the impact of making films—on the filmmaker herself and society.

DOP Indraneel Lahiri
Editor Lipika Singh Darai
Music Lipika Singh Darai

**International Film Festival Rotterdam**

***Lipika Singh Darai*** is a film director and editor based in Odisha, India. She studied filmmaking at the Film Television Institute of India and specializes in sound recording and design.

contact lipika.ftii@gmail.com

# Ripples Under the Skin

**2022 29mins Hindi, Surjapuri**

Ripples Under the Skin depicts the relationship between the city and a Bhisti (traditional water carriers). Nazim, who is one of the last Bhisti, comes back to the city again and again despite knowing the hardships of survival of a dying profession in the present world.

DOP Kumar Tapas Ranjan
Editor Farha Khatun
Sound Sabyasachi Pal
Music Santajit Chatterjee

***Farha Khatun*** is a filmmaker, editor from India. In her films she engages with stories of marginalised people whose stories would otherwise get lost in a world where mostly power speaks.

contact farha.edit@gmail.com

# Ruuposh

**2021 32mins Urdu/Hindi/Hindustani**

Ruuposh explores the struggles of a Muslim family separated by the partition of India as they try to reconnect despite years of pain, estrangement, and political turmoil.

DOP Al Ameen, Md Althaf
Editor Zeeshan Amir Khan
Sound Aqdas Sami
Music Sayed Inseramul Haque

**Dharamshala International Film Festival, Kolkata Peoples Film Festival, IDSFFK**

***Mohd Fehmeed*** (left) is a film graduate from AJK-MCRC Jamia Millia Islamia, Theatre Worker, and New Media Enthusiast, capturing stories from rural India about dreams, aspirations, and hurdles.

***Zeeshan Amir Khan*** completed his masters from AJK-MCRC Jamia Millia Islamia in Mass Communications. His interest lies in making cinema that corresponds to stories around identity, gender and politics.

contact fehmeedahmad99@gmail.com

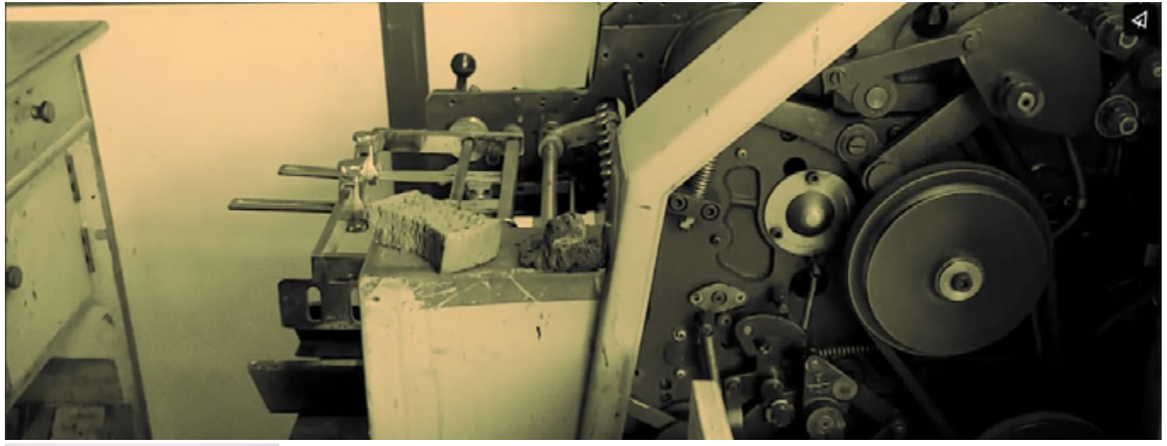


# The Volunteer Archivists

**2022 18mins Odia, English**

Collective negligence threatens two centuries of printed publications in Odia, one of India's official languages. Volunteer Archivists struggle to digitize crumbling books against all odds, including legal battles.

DOP Editor Music
Subhashish Panigrahi



***Subhashish Panigrahi*** is an Open Culture Advocate, documentary filmmaker, researcher, and civil society leader from India. He has directed nine nonfiction films and was awarded the 2019 Digital Identity Fellowship by Yoti and the 2017 National Geographic Explorer award.

contact subhashish@theofdn.org

# Raat: Night in Small Town India

**2023 35mins Hindustani**

What is that you can see at night? What is allowed, and what is not? What do you become a witness to? Camera in hand, some women and men from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand venture out to record the experience of nights in small-town India. Who is watching, and who is being watched? Are nights crafted in silence? Is there still movement or labour that is invisibilised? Who has access to the night? Who hides inside?

**Editor** Abhinava Bhattacharya
**Sound** Abhishek Mathur

**IDSFFK 2023**

**Directors**

***Arti Ahirwar, Ashraf Hussain, Rajkumari Ahirwar, Vikas Khatri, Tabassum Ansari, Kulsum Khatoon,Khushi Bano, Parmeshwar Mandrawaliya, Santra Chaurthiya, Rajkumar Prajapati, Manisha Chanda,Anita Sen, Rani Devi, Ajfarul Shaikh***

The Third Eye's Learning Lab, an arts-based pedagogical platform, is mentored by documentary filmmakers, storytellers/ podcasters, feminist researchers, and activists. Its Digital Educators come from an intersection of identities from districts in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand. Rooted in community-based organizations, the DEs bring tremendous diversity and depth of experience.

**contact** ruchikanegi1@gmail.com



# Cities of Sleep

**2015 75mins Hindi**

The film trails the lives of two individuals, Shakeel and Ranjeet. Shakeel, a renegade homeless sleeper has for the last 7 years slept in a diverse range of improvised places like subways, under park benches, parking lots, abandoned cars and lately, at areas controlled by the sleep mafia. The film follows his attempts to secure a safe sleeping space just around the time the infamous winter rains of Delhi are due. Ranjeet runs the 'sleep-cinema' community in Loha Pul in Delhi, a huge double-story iron bridge straddling the banks of the river Yamuna.

**DOP** Salim Khan & Shaunak Sen
**Editor** Sreya Chatterjee & Shaunak Sen
**Sound** Aman Mann, Sahil Dhingra
**Music** Ritwik De

**DOK Leipzig, NYIFF**

***Shaunak Sen*** is a filmmaker and film scholar based in New Delhi, India. Cities of Sleep (2016) was his first feature-length documentary.

**contact** airborne2628@protonmail.com

# Brair Kani

**2023 25mins Kashmiri**

Brair Kani explores an ancestral house located in Srinagar, Kashmir. The film uses the attic as a site of reflection and navigates the relationship between space, belonging, and personal history. The house spirits inhabiting the confines of the attic exist simultaneously as carriers of collective memory and as manifestations of the emotional landscape.

DOP Daksh Punj & Nundrisha Wakhloo
Editor Daksh Punj
Sound Daksh Punj

**IDSFFK, 2023**

***Nundrisha Wakhloo*** is an independent documentary filmmaker based in New Delhi, India. Her work captures forms of reminiscing in spaces and by people, driven by her sense of belongingness to her culture.

contact **nundrisha92@gmail.com**



# The Spirit Dreams of Cheraw

**2023 8mins Mizo**

Mau: The Spirit Dreams of Cheraw is a documentary film from Mizoram, through Cheraw (Bamboo dance) and ritual folklore, revealing the forgotten memory of the story of the mother who dies during childbirth. The film shows a re-imagined dance of the mother spirit.

DOP Sumedha Bhattacharyya
Editor Sagarika Debnath
Sound Padmanabhan J
Music C. Lalbuatsaiha, Lalramdina, Hmingthazuali, Lalhminghlua

**IDSFFK 2023**

***Shilpika Bordoloi*** is a filmmaker, performing artist, educator, and curator. She is the founder and Artistic Director of the Brahmaputra Cultural Foundation (BCF). She is a visiting faculty member at various national institutes.

contact **shilppika.bordoloi@gmail.com**

# Chardi Kala - An Ode To Resilience

**2023 96mins Punjabi, Hindi**

Amidst the indescribable spirit of eternal optimism, the many acts of selfless service, and articulate criticism, there is a memorable tale of everyday resilience and the solemn triumph of India's farmers as they protested for more than a year against the Indian government's unjust farm laws.

DOP Prateek Shekhar
Editor Prateek Shekhar
Music Nipun Bhatnagar

**IDSFFK**

After completing his Bachelor in Sociology from Delhi University, ***Prateek Shekhar*** did his Masters in Media and Cultural Studies from Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai. Prateek's debut short documentary film, Chai Darbari (2019) won the best film at IDSFFK, and was screened at IDFFB 2019.

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# The Leopard's Tribe

**2022 40mins Hindi, Marathi, English**

An indigenous family find they are at the centre of an imaginative battle to preserve the green lungs of India's commercial capital and the leopard the tribe worships.

DOP Solanki Chakraborty
Editor Anuja Thakar
Sound Mohammed Fibin
Music Swadesi, Parvati Baul

**IDSFFK, Wildlife Conservation Film Festival USA, Indian Film Festival of Stuttgart Germany**

With a background in filmmaking and journalism, ***Miriam Chandy Menacherry***'s brand of socially conscious film intersects with popular culture. Her films premiered at IDFA Amsterdam and were nominated for the Alliance of Women Film Journalists' EDA Awards.

contact **miriamchandy@yahoo.com**

# What the Fields Remember

**2023 52mins Bangla, English**

In the aftermath of the Nellie massacre of 1983, where close to 3,000-4,000 people were killed in Assam. It led to the Assam Accord and the disbanding of anti-foreigner agitation by AASU (All Assam Students' Union) - the families of victims still await justice.

DOP Amit Mahanti
Editor Sameera Jain
Sound Julius L. Basaiawmoit

***Subasri Krishnan*** is a filmmaker whose work deals with questions of citizenship through the lens of memory, migration, and an interrogation of official identity documents.

**Kolkatta People's Film Festival, International Film Festival of India (IFFI), Colombo International Film Festival**

contact subasrik@gmail.com



# Beyond the Blues

**2023 63mins Bangla**

What does it mean to break binaries and queer them too? When Neel decides to transition from his assigned gender at birth, he is rendered homeless, having to leave his parental home. But does he find the expected/promised shelter in his affirmed gender? Does he find familiarity in his chosen life? Beyond the Blues is the story of Neel and Shamu in their individual and collective journeys of breaking and unmaking binaries, never settling down in the comfort of borders and categorisations.

DOP Debalina Majumder
Editor Swarnava Chakraborty
Sound Sabyasachi Pal
Music Anindya Sundar Chakraborti

**IDSFFK**


***Debalina Majumder*** is an independent filmmaker, cameraperson, and photographer based in Kolkata, India. In a career spanning more than a quarter of a century, Debalina has worked in various entertainment and news industry segments.

contact debalinainfos@gmail.com

# Land of My Dreams

**2023 74mins Hindi, English**

The Government of India passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (2019), making religion a criterion for citizenship and intended to exclude Muslims. Working-class women gathered in Shaheen Bagh, Delhi, and began a nonviolent sit-in protest against this discriminatory practice. Land of My Dreams is a recollection of what followed.

DOP Nausheen Khan
Editor Nausheen Khan
Sound Lohit Bhalla at Depot Records
Music Kush Asher

**Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, IDSFFK**

***Nausheen Khan*** is an independent filmmaker working on gender perspectives amid conflict and political unrest in contemporary times. Land of My Dreams is her first self-funded feature-length documentary film, which won Best Long Documentary at the 2023 International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala.

contact **nausheenkhanfilms@gmail.com**

# Two Autumns in Wyszogrod

**2020 60mins English**

An object buried underwater for more than 70 years resurfaces. Scraps of twisted metal, fragments left over from a war. What are the memories that come alive? What are the questions that revive?

DOP Amit Mahanti
Editor Amit Mahanti
Sound Amit Mahanti
Music Anuvrat Choudhary

***Amit Mahanti*** is a filmmaker, cinematographer and editor based in New Delhi.

***Ruchika Negi*** is a filmmaker, educator, and visual artist with an interest in arts-based pedagogical practices.

contact **amit.mahanti@gmail.com**
**ruchikanegi1@gmail.com**

# A Rifle and a Bag

**2020 90mins Gondi, Madia, Hindi**

Somi and her husband are striving to forge a new identity after fighting alongside the Naxalites, a communist guerrilla group waging war on the Indian State since the ‘60s. After a decade of armed struggle for the rights of their tribal communities, the couple deserted the movement and surrendered to the police. They have been trying to educate their son and reconcile their violent past with the desire to integrate into Indian society.

DOP Cristina Hanes, Arya Rothe

Editor Yael Bitton, Cristina Hanes, Isabella Rinaldi, Arya Rothe

Sound Ioan Filip, Dan-Stefan Rucareanu

**IFFR**

(from left) ***Arya Rothe*** is an independent filmmaker based in Pune, India. She graduated from the DocNomads Master Course in 2016.

***Cristina Hanes*** is a Romanian filmmaker based in Oradea, Romania.

***Isabella Rinaldi*** is an independent filmmaker based in Rome. She graduated from the DocNomads Master Course after getting her BA in Film Studies at Sapienza University in Rome.

**contact nocutfilms.com**



# Iqraarnaama

**2022 55mins Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi**

In the grand narrative of the Partition of Punjab in 1947, Iqraarnaama is a film about the ‘refugee’, ‘migrant’, and ‘displaced person’ as the protagonist of their own story told through a collection of documents from the personal archive of Charandas Bangia, a Partition refugee from Lyallpur, Pakistan who finally settled in Amritsar, India. The film decenters historical narratives from the state to the citizen, from state archives to personal archives, looking at history from the perspective of those who experience it.


DOP Priyanka Chhabra

Editor Priyanka Chhabra

Sound Suvani Suri, Abhishek Mathur

**Film South Asia, Liberation Docfest Dhaka, IDSFFK**

***Priyanka Chhabra*** works as a film director and editor, exploring themes of memory, landscape, and people’s relationships to places. She articulates her practice as an archaeology of silences, digging at sites characterised by trauma, physical and emotional.

**contact homeworks.priyanka@gmail.com**

# Moving Upstream: Ganga

**2022 105mins Hindustani/ Pahari/ Bangla**

This documentary, filmed on a 3000km walk along the River Ganga by Siddharth Agarwal, is part of Veditum India Foundation's Moving Upstream project. The walk occurred between June 2016 and April 2017, starting from Ganga Sagar in West Bengal and finishing at Gangotri in Uttarakhand. Initially intended to document the river and life of the riparian community of River Ganga, the project attempts to amplify the voices and concerns of the river people, woven together through the walk.

DOP Ayan Sil, Siddharth Agarwal, Shridhar Sudhir

Editor Arbab Ahmad,Shridhar Sudhir

Sound A Bhaskar Rao

Music A Bhaskar Rao

**Kolkata Peoples Film Festival, IDSFFK, Signs**

***Sridhar Sudhir*** is a film-maker based out of Bir, Himachal Pradesh.

contact **asid@veditum.org**



# Holy Rights

**2020 53mins Urdu**

Driven by her belief that Muslim women are denied equality and justice in the community because of the patriarchal mindset of the interpreters of Sharia. Safia, a religious Muslim woman from Bhopal in Central India, joins a program that trains women as Qazis (Muslim clerics who interpret and administer the personal law), traditionally a male preserve. The film documents her struggles as she negotiates through hitherto uncharted territory, exploring the tensions that arise when women try to change the status quo and take control of narratives that deeply affect their lives.

DOP Debalina, Priyanka Biswas

Editor Sankha

Sound Sabyasachi Pal

Music Santajit Chatterjee

***Farha Khatun*** is a filmmaker-editor from India. She is a two-time recipient of the President's National Film Award for Best Film on Social Issues for her directorial debut, I am Bonnie, and Holy Rights is her first feature-length film.

contact **farha.edit@gmail.com**

# From the Shadows

**2022 76mins Bangla**

An artist relentlessly sprays silhouettes on public walls tagged #missing. An activist accompanies rescued girls across international borders. Parallel narratives intersect to reveal a sliver of hope when women imaginatively challenge a powerful trafficking nexus operating in a country where, every 8 minutes, a child goes missing.

DOP Ranu Ghosh
Editor Irene Dhar Mallik
Sound Fibin Mohammed
Music Parvathy Baul

**Toronto International Women's Film Festival, IDSFFK,**

With a background in filmmaking and journalism, ***Miriam Chandy Menacherry***'s brand of socially conscious film intersects with popular culture. Her films premiered at IDFA Amsterdam and were nominated for the Alliance of Women Film Journalists' EDA Awards.

contact miriamchandy@yahoo.com



# Too Much Democracy

**2023 90mins Hindi/ Punjabi**

In November 2020, Indian farmers marched towards Delhi to mark their protest against the Indian Government's new Farm Bills. When stopped by the security forces from entering the city, they did the unthinkable; they decided to stay on the roads to the capital indefinitely. Lakhs of farmers and their families resided on those roads for a year. The maker seeks to answer a straightforward question: Does Gandhi's values still mean something in new India?

DOP Animesh Kshatriya, Mandodar Pardhi, Purushottam Desai, Vighnesh Jain, Anil Dhaygude
Editor Purushottam Desai, Arvind Gajanan Joshi
Sound Siddharth Hajare
Music Siddharth Hajare

**IDSFFK 2023**

***Varrun Sukhraj*** has worked in film and advertisement at various levels. His documentary Too Much Democracy on the unprecedented farmers' movement in India in 2020 is garnering praise in India and worldwide. His filmography includes Kal Ki Umid and Naammatra.

contact office.varrun@gmail.com

# The Sea and Seven Villages

**2023 56mins Odia**

Sea level rise along the Bay of Bengal, coastal erosion, frequent cyclones, and mismanagement of coastal land have destroyed homes, agricultural lands, and the entire settlement of Seven Villages of Kendrapara district of Odisha, and people suffered from forced migration. The film depicts stories of the displaced coastal communities of Satabhaya Villages.

DOP Manas Ranjan Rath
Editor Ramaraman Dash
Sound Peeyus Pradhan

**IDSFFK 2023**

***Himanshu Khatua*** is the Director of SRFTI Kolkata. The debut feature film, Shunya Swaroopa, won the National Award for Best Oriya Film at the 44th National Film Festival.

contact himansu_k@hotmail.com



# Somoyer Janalaguli

**2021 76mins Bangla**

The filmmaker approached many unknown people residing in different parts of Bengal and eastern India in the first lockdown period in 2020 to participate in the “documentation of lockdown” programme, and eventually, most of them responded very spontaneously with their available digital devices. Twenty-three people (i.e., 23 cameras) shot this film.

Editor Mrinmoy Nandi
Sound Partha Pratim Barman
DOP Sandhi Basu, Prasanta Kumar Roy, Nabin Kumar Mahapatra, Tapas Kumar Paul, Udayan Majumder, Srijayee Bhattacharjee, Arunabha Saha, Biplab Mazumder, Sayanika Dey, Siladitya Sanyal, Snigdhendu Ghosal, Mrinmoy Nandi, Amritendu Mukherjee, Suchandra Kundu, Aniket Dev, Rishav Dutta, Ajan Nandi, Sourav Gupta, Animesh Mondal, Shubhra Roy

***Mrinmoy Nandi***, a director, cinematographer of Indian cinema, and a documentation artist, completed post-graduation in cinematography from Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute (SRFTI), India, with a National Award for his diploma film.

**IDSFFK, Film Southasia, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2022, SiGNS Film Festival 2023**

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# Aribam Syam Sharma

**2022 62mins English**

Joshy Joseph's Aribam Syam Sharma-Laparoscopic Cinemascapes featuring the veteran Aribam Syam Sharma – now in his late 80s – is an intimate encounter with the rich and complex dimensions of an oral culture, Manipuri to be specific, and a wise, enlightened soul nourished and nurtured by it emotionally, intellectually and spiritually.

DOP KS Shridhar and Maipak
Editor Atish Nandy
Sound B.Suresh Kumar
Music Tomba

***Joshy Joseph*** was born in Kochi, Kerala. He assisted Adoor Gopalakrishnan in the making of Kathapurushan. He has scripted and directed several short and feature-length documentaries. He has won five National Awards for his films and writing on Cinema.

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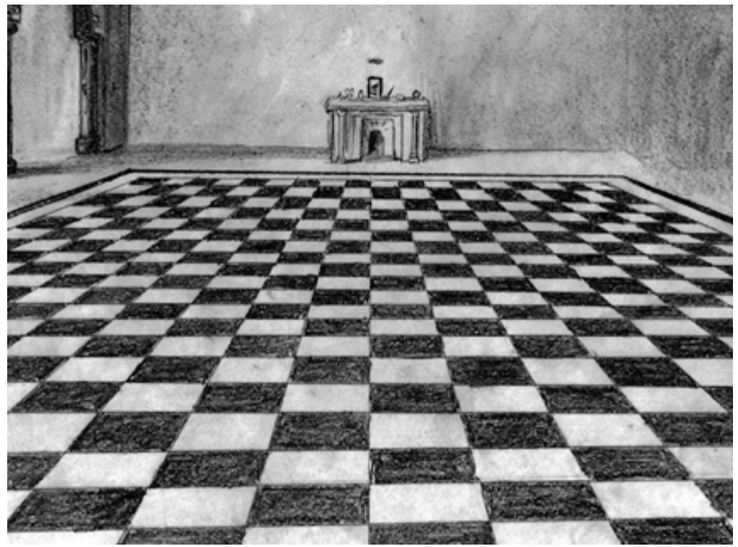
# CLOSING FILM

# Letter Unwritten to Naiyer Masud

**2023 63mins Hindi/ Urdu/ English**

A group of readers pilgrimage to a writer's ancestral house nested in the heart of a city that haunts all of his stories. This turns into an exploration of the city, an exercise in mapmaking, and a hallucinatory encounter with the real. Told through the eyes of a stranger, a newcomer, walking through a modern bustling city, blanketed by a dream made of ancient lore, stories, and signs, the film tries to explore the alchemical process behind the art of storytelling that transmutes the 'real' that inspired it. And the impossible mirages a body of work can create in an obsessive reader's mind compels him to chase it.



DOP Ashwin Ameri
Editor Anandu K Rameshan
Sound Dawn K V
Music Dawn K V

**International Film Festival of Rotterdam**

Born and brought up in Quilon, India, ***Shahi A.J.*** is an alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India, specializing in script writing and direction. He teaches filmmaking at LV Prasad Film Institute and St Joseph College.

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# THE FURNITURE OF THE WORLD

*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,*
*Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;*
*But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,*
*When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!*

*—Rudyard Kipling,*
*"The Ballad of East and West"*

In fifth grade I got into an argument. I was ten years old. I bet this kid a dollar that Reno, Nevada, is west of Los Angeles, California. He refused to believe me, so I got out an atlas and showed him that it was. But he wouldn't pay up.

**39° 31' 38" N, 119° 49' 19" W**
**Reno, Nevada**

**34° 03' 00" N, 118° 15' 00" W Los Angeles, California**

Instead, he argued that lines of longitude don't cross the ocean. That's right—that's what he said. Well, the longitude of Reno (119° 49' 19" W) intersects the California coastline somewhere around Santa Barbara, and the longitude of Los Angeles (118° 15' 00" W) passes somewhere around Lovelock, Nevada, a hundred miles (more or less) *east* of Reno. There doesn't seem to be much room for argument, but as we all know, that never stopped anyone. But what is his argument? Is he arguing that it depends on what "west" means? Perhaps "west" means "anything on the western *coast* of the United States." That anything on the west coast is farther west than anything that isn't on the west coast. In that sense, Los Angeles would be farther west than Reno. But what sense is that? It's like *quus*. Except this time it's *qwest*. (One of the directions on a *qwompass*?) We are reduced to the "babble of disagreement" Kripke found in Wittgenstein. You say this, I say that. Let's call the whole thing off. The insane, the pugilistic, and the dumb will resist all entreaties. If the kid is allowed to redefine "west," all bets are off, literally. Haven't we all heard that argument—It depends what you mean by "west"?


OK. We can't communicate if we do not have a common understanding of what "west" means. The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us, somewhat circumspectly, that west "is 90 degrees clockwise from the south point." But the answer to the question, Which is farther west? hinges on something more than mere agreement. It hinges on the world—the crust of the earth and the location of cities on it. It hinges on the truth or falsity of the claim. As Philip K. Dick expressed it, "Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away."[1]

1. Dick, "How to Build a Universe that Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later," p. 261.

∂

Noam Chomsky hardly needs an introduction. He is one of the world's leading public intellectuals, a renowned linguist, cognitive scientist, philosopher, and also historian. I studied his *Syntactic Structures* and *Cartesian Linguistics* while still an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin. The first included his now famous sentence "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously"; the second was an exploration of the Port-Royal School as a precursor to Chomsky's ideas about universal grammar. And then in the 1970s—I had graduated from college and was on to one graduate school or another—two essays gripped me with their remarkable intellectual power: Chomsky's criticism of the behaviorist theory of language in "A Review of B. F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior" and Kripke's *Naming and Necessity*. The essays were devastating. B. F. Skinner's theories of language acquisition and description theories of reference were essentially put to rest. Although many have tried to resuscitate them, they absorbed devastating body punches.[2]

I felt Chomsky would be an ideal person to consult about scientific change, and Kuhn, as well as reference and truth. (Both had taught at MIT after Kuhn left Princeton.) Chomsky's ideas are often—at least for me—difficult to understand. And I hoped by talking with him, I could come to a deeper understanding of some of his philosophical positions and his thoughts about Kuhn and history of science. For example, on scientific revolutions. For Chomsky, it's "revolution" in the singular. There is only one. *The* Scientific Revolution—the revolution from pre-Galilean narratives to a post-Galilean mathematical world picture. Chomsky has gone on record saying that even his own "revolution" in linguistics (his rejection of Skinner and the behaviorist school) was no revolution at all.[3] He wrote to me, "There's no criterion to determine whether some change is a scientific revolution. It's a matter of judgment."[4] (Hear, hear. I myself would argue that many scientific revolutions never occurred but were *imagined* long after the fact, just as the neo-Platonists in the fourth and fifth centuries CE *imagined* the murder of Hippasus over his supposed proof of the irrationality of √2.)

So no scientific revolutions. What about reference? Chomsky sent me a chapter, "Notes on Denotation and Denoting," in which he argues that there are "acts of referring" but no reference per se. But if Kuhn argues that there is no reference in science, Chomsky believes that there may be no reference *except* in science: possible reference in scientific language; none in ordinary language. For example, Chomsky's determination of whether the sentence "Water is H2O" is true hinges on the language system in use:

**It is not the "language of chemistry," which does not have the term *water* (though it is used informally). It is not the natural language English, which does not have the term H2O. . . . If we consider the mixed system in which the expression appears, its status will depend on whether *water* is used in the sense of normal English (in which case the expression is false) or in the sense of of chemistry (in which case it is true by definition . . .).[5]**

I would call Chomsky a reluctant realist, a realist about scientific terms but not about terms in ordinary language. "In the sciences, one goal is to adhere as closely as possible to the referentialist doctrine. Thus in devising technical notions like *electron* or *phoneme*, researchers *hope* to be identifying entities that exist in the world, and seek to adhere to the referentialist doctrine in using these notions."[6]

The phrase "referentialist doctrine" is a fancy way of describing the idea that there are things (entities) in the world to which we can unambiguously refer. In ordinary language, Chomsky argues, the doctrine fails. If reference is a mind-world relation—a relation between some specific thing in the mind (or brain) and some specific thing in the world—our attempts fall short. We are archers hoping to hit targets when, properly speaking, we can't even say the targets exist, let alone, whether we hit them.

**In the elementary case, a name like *Pavarotti* "refers to or denotes its bearer (the popular singer)"; and generally, "from a denotational point of view, symbols stand for objects." This core notion—the *referentialist doctrine*—is standard, as**

**2. I have often wondered about the political right and the left. Whether metaphysical theories are in any way related to politics. While this is hardly the place to weigh in on these themes—wouldn't it take a book in and of itself?—the belief in a *real* world, in truth and in reference, does seem to speak to the left; the denial of the real world, of truth and reference, to the right.**

**3. Chomsky, Gary A. Olson, and Lester Faigley, "Language, Politics, and Composition" (1991), p. 2.**

**4. Email to author, August 4, 2014.**

**5. Chomsky, "Notes on Denotation and Denoting," pp. 42–43.**

**6. "Notes on Denotation," p. 42. The italics on "hope" are mine. It is a peculiar word here. Hence, it is given a quasi-religious significance. (Like transubstantiation.)**

**indicated even in the titles of some of the founding works on these topics in the early days of contemporary linguistic semantics over half a century ago:** *Words and Things* **(Brown 1958) and** *Word and Object* **(Quine 1960). And of course the referentialist doctrine has much deeper roots. . . . [Some] argue that it should serve a dual function, leading to explanation of the two fundamental questions of semantics: the link between symbols and their information content, the "aboutness of language," its connection to the external world; and "language as a social activity."**[7]

Chomsky believes we are making some kind of leap when we imagine that we have referred to anything outside of our conceptual schemes. But still, for Chomsky there is no incommensurability. (That is, there can be an absence of metaphysical certainty without the gobbledegook of Kuhnian paradigms.) There is our common human conceptual scheme and no other. He dismisses the issue with a rhetorical question: "Can you think of cases where apparent incommensurability has remained as a barrier to scientific progress?"

NOAM CHOMSKY: As far as I can see, there's too much commonality of cognitive capacities for there to be anything like incommensurability. We should always be able to find some level of agreement from which a discussion can begin. And then we'll either find insistence on doctrine independent of fact, at which point, of course, you can't debate anymore, or else we'll find a rational resolution. So, for example, if you're debating evolution with a confirmed evangelical Christian who's committed to a belief in the literal truth of the Bible, you reach a point where you can't carry out a discussion anymore. But there's nothing profound about that. That's just insistence on doctrine independent of evidence.

ERROL MORRIS: Dogmatism.

CHOMSKY: Yes. But if you don't have that kind of irrational factor, it's hard for me to believe that there's no way to move from some shared set of assumptions to a serious interaction—It's *not* that you can't understand one another.

MORRIS: Indeed, it happens all the time.

CHOMSKY: Yes, of course.

MORRIS: Even in the case of the Bible-thumping evangelist and, say, Richard Dawkins, there still is a discussion.

CHOMSKY: Exactly. They understand one another, and they have their beliefs that are unshakable no matter what the facts are.

MORRIS: It's inflexibility and intractability—not incommensurability.

CHOMSKY: I've never been convinced by the various historical arguments about incommensurability. It seems to me the arguments were always on grounds that began with a common basis but different interpretations of the evidence.

I returned to history. Chomsky told me that if given a second life, he would devote himself to intellectual history. But is history, as my wife often describes it, just mythology with numbers?

MORRIS: Don't we, not unreasonably, believe that we are referring to things in history?

CHOMSKY: We *are*. I agree with that. But referring—

MORRIS: For you, referring without reference—

CHOMSKY: Yes. Referring is an action. And it certainly takes place. The two of us could be referring to Robert S. McNamara [secretary of defense for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson]. But the question—the serious philosophical, linguistic, psychological question—is, Is there a relation of reference or denotation in the technical sense between the symbol "McNamara" that you and I are using when we refer, and some extra-mental entity that a physicist could identify? And I think there is not.

MORRIS: Don't you think that's a little perverse?

CHOMSKY: It sounds perverse, but I think it's true. There is a kind of dogma. It seems intuitively clear that I say the Charles River happens to flow outside the apartment where I live. [The

Charles River separates Cambridge, Massachusetts, from Boston.] It's there; I see it. But do I identify it as a river in terms of extra-mental characteristics that a physicist could identify? The evidence is that I don't. And, in fact, this goes back to the Greeks. It's nothing new.

MORRIS: But what if you are talking about entities where it's really hard to pinpoint reference?

CHOMSKY: Person is an easy case. Locke wrote about it. Hume wrote about it. They all recognized that we individuate persons on the basis of properties that cannot be physically detected. Like for example, psychic continuity. Infants understand this. Take the fairy tale where the wicked witch turns the handsome prince into a frog, and he has all the physical characteristics of a frog, until the beautiful princess kisses the frog and he turns back into the handsome prince. Every child understands this. But that means he was the prince all along. It didn't

7. "Notes on Denotation," p. 38.

matter what his physical characteristics were.[8] But take rivers—for example, the Charles River. Thomas

Hobbes argued that a river is individuated by its point of origin.[9] So what makes it the same river is that its origin is in the same place. But that can't be true. Take the Amazon or the Nile. They have many different points of origin. Furthermore, if the flow of the river was reversed, it would still be the same river. You can think of innumerable radical changes that would still keep it the same river. On the other hand, there are trivial changes which will change it so that it isn't a river at all. If you put walls along the side and start using it for moving freight, it's a canal, it's not a river. If you harden the surface somehow and paint a line through the middle of it, then people start using it to commute to Boston. It's a highway, not a river. It might have been a minuscule phase change that hardened the surface to something glasslike. And if you continue with this, you see that what determines that it's a river is a set of mental operations which are well beyond anything that's detectable in the physical world.

For me, there is a difference between entities like the Charles River, which are vague, and the frog that the beautiful princess kisses. I can believe that the frog is a prince, but that doesn't mean that he (or she) is one.

MORRIS: But does this mean there are no entities out there?

CHOMSKY: Oh, there are. But I'm talking about ordinary language and ordinary thought here. In the sciences, you depart from that and

**8. I understand psychic continuity, but is this not conflating imaginability and possibility? Can a prince be a frog? No. Can a child imagine a frog is a prince, and vice versa? Yes. When we talk about something being possible, we're saying something very specific in the Kripkean sense.**

**9. Hobbes,** *Elements of Philosophy The First Section, Concerning Body (1656)***, p. 101: "Also if the Name be given for such Form as is the beginning of Motion, then as long as that Motion remains it will be the same Individual thing; as that Man will be alwayes the same, whose Actions and Thoughts proceed all from the same beginning of Motion, namely, that which was in his generation; and that will be the same River, which flows from one and the same Fountain, whether the same Water, or other Water, or something else than Water flow from thence."**



you start trying to develop systems in which there really is reference. Take the question—is water H2O? Scientists will say water is H2O. But they're not using the word "water" with its meaning in natural language. So, for example, let's take water. Suppose that I have a cup of pure H2O in front of me and somebody puts a teabag into it. Then it's not water anymore, it's tea. Suppose that there's a tannic acid filter in the water supply upstream. When I turn on the sink it's chemically identical to the substance that was created by putting a teabag into water. Then it's water. But it's chemically identical to what isn't water, namely tea. That's the way language and thought work. Scientists, of course, don't want that. They want their terms to really pick out some mentally independent entity in the outside world. That's naïve realism, which we all intuitively accept even if there are arguments about it. We say water is H2O, but it's true by science.

MORRIS: If there are things in our world—the furniture of our world, so to speak—wouldn't our cognitive abilities evolve in such a way as to recognize that fact: the need to know that there's a caveman with a spear that's going to kill us or a carnivore with extremely large teeth that's going to eat us?

CHOMSKY: Oh, sure. But that doesn't mean that we need to introduce the notion of reference. For example, there's pretty strong evidence that apes can't even develop the concept of a name. If you take a look at the books about Nim Chimpsky, supposedly it was all a fantastic success. Until finally, when they got to the point where they had to terminate the experiment—one of the graduate students was doing a frame-by-frame analysis of the whole process. They were very careful experimenters. They knew what they were doing, and they kept very good records; the protocols were excellent. He went through the frames and he found out that nothing was happening. They were deceiving themselves. It was like Clever Hans.[10] They were hinting unconsciously in ways that the ape could pick up on and then react to. The other part was they were deluding themselves in their interpretations of the signs that he was producing. Nim, with all the training, was never able to grasp the concept that there's a word, say "banana," that picks out the fruit. He would use the symbol that the experimenters called "banana," but nothing ever like our concept of a name. So evolution didn't do it for them and there's no reason to think it should do it for us.

MORRIS: We can easily become delusional about the world. Self- deception is ubiquitous. Clever Hans's trainer really believed that Hans was computing arithmetic sums. And Nim Chimpsky's trainer really believed that Nim was referring to

**10. One of the ultimate stories of self-deception. Clever Hans's trainer believed he had taught his horse to count. But the horse was reacting to unconscious cues from his trainer.**

a banana. You're telling me that there is a fact of the matter— Clever Hans doesn't know arithmetic, and Nim Chimpsky doesn't and can't refer. But does that mean we can't either?

CHOMSKY: What evolution did for apes you can investigate, but what it did for humans is create a symbolic system which has no counterpart in the animal world. We don't produce the word "apple" every time we see something associated with an apple. A lot of people who believe in tiny steps and who believe in evolution caused by natural selection don't like to believe this, but that's just what seems to be the case. There's a famous paragraph in *The Origin of Species* which everyone quotes all the time where Darwin says that unless what's evolved has evolved by very small, almost imperceptible steps—unless by natural selection, unless that's true—my whole theory collapses.[11] Now it's known not to be true. There are very small mutations or even changes in the way regulatory mechanisms work that lead to very large phenotypical differences. That's been known for thirty years. Modern biology doesn't find that surprising any longer. In the case of humans, it's a total mystery. We have no idea how human symbolic systems evolved with their special characteristics.

MORRIS: Do you find it, after all of these years, even more mysterious than you did initially?

CHOMSKY: Yes. The more we learn, the more mysterious it gets. But, that's true of the sciences generally. Take physics—the star science. The more they learn, the more they discover that they can't even find 90 percent of the mass-energy in the universe. That's pretty mysterious.

MORRIS: But they find they can understand many things that they didn't understand before—

CHOMSKY: They can understand a lot of things, but more mysteries keep showing up—and deeper

**11. "As natural selection acts solely by accumulating slight, successive, favourable variations, it can produce no great or sudden modification; it can act only by very short and slow steps." Darwin, On the Origin of Species, p. 492.**



ones. Physicists are playing around with the idea of multiverses where other universes have different physical laws and so on and so forth. All of this is sheer mystery.

MORRIS: I was surprised to read that you are in sympathy with the mysterians—

CHOMSKY: Not only in sympathy, I'm the original one.

MORRIS: The original mysterian? From your article about problems and mysteries?

CHOMSKY: That was the first one, but that's forty years ago. This is in the December issue [2013] of the *Journal of Philosophy*—the Dewey lectures at Columbia.[12] And the second of these lectures reviews the history of so-called mysterianism, where I'm regarded as the main culprit, and traces it back to its origin, which is Isaac Newton. Newton concluded that the truth about the world is incomprehensible. It's known to historians of science. I don't think philosophers of science have assimilated it. But you have to recall that modern science, the Galilean Revolution, was based on a principle. The principle was what they called "the mechanical philosophy"—that the world is a machine. For Galileo and Leibniz, Huygens, Newton, and so on, unless you could produce a *mechanical* explanation of something, you had *no* explanation. It was just a mystery. And mechanical meant what we intuitively mean by "mechanical": gears and levers and so on. No interaction without contact. That was crucial. Newton showed it's just not true. He described this conclusion as an absurdity that no person with any scientific understanding could possibly accept. Actually, Locke and Hume and the classical philosophers understood this very well. David Hume wrote a history of England, and there's a chapter on Newton, in which he praises Newton as the greatest genius who ever existed. And he said one of his great achievements was not to unveil some of the mysteries of nature, but to demonstrate that there are other mysteries of nature which we will never comprehend. He was referring to action at a distance.[13]

The sciences just lowered their sights. From Galileo through Newton, they were really trying to explain things in terms that are coherent to us. By the time Newton's discoveries just became assimilated into scientific common sense, what science sought was something much more limited. The world is indeed incomprehensible, it's a mystery, but we can at least construct intelligible theories. That's a much weaker goal, and people like Bertrand Russell understood

**12. Chomsky, "The Dewey Lectures 2013: What Kind of Creatures Are We?"**

**13. "While Newton seemed to draw off the veil from some of the mysteries of nature, he showed at the same time the imperfections of the mechanical philosophy, and thereby restored her ultimate secrets to that obscurity in which they ever did and ever will remain." Hume, The History of England, p. 381.**

this. Alexandre Koyré and others understood it, but philosophers of science don't. So that's mysterianism, really deep mysterianism. And I have a different take on it it reduces to the fact that we're organisms and not angels. If we're organisms, our cognitive capacities are like all biological capacities. They have scope and limits. There are some things that are simply beyond our limits—like the nature of the world.

And yet science is endlessly conjuring with the nature of the world.

And attempts to penetrate to the nature of things. When we ask, What is water? or What is gold?, we are asking about the essence of a thing, about necessary properties, about things that could not be otherwise. Science often deals with such properties. Indeed, the very idea of a scientific *law* suggests that there are necessary (or essential) properties. But necessary properties are anathema to Chomsky (and many philosophers), at least in ordinary language—the language we use in everyday life.[14]

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Chomsky disputed Kripke's essentialist picture of reference early on. He writes in his landmark 1975 book *Reflections on Language*:

**Kripke (1972) suggests that there could be no situation in which Queen Elizabeth II of England, this very woman, might have had different parents; it is a necessary truth that she had the particular parents she had (though again, we do not know**

**14. Kripke writes, "Something about the periodic table gave a description of elements as metals in terms of their valency properties. This may make some people think right away that there are really two concepts of metal operating here, a phenomenological one and a scientific one which then replaces it. This I reject"(Naming and Necessity, pp. 117–18). For Chomsky, on the other hand, there are at least two concepts of metal (or of water)—the phenomenological and the scientific.**



**it *a priori*). His conclusion is that "anything coming from a different origin would not be this object."**

**My own intuitions differ about the example. Thus, it does not seem that a logical[15] problem would arise if Queen Elizabeth II were to write a fictionalized autobiography in which she, this very person, had different parents; we might, I think, take this as a description of this person in a different "possible world," a description of a possible state of this world with the very objects that appear in it.[16]**

But Kripke is not asking whether we could *imagine* that Elizabeth II could have different parents. Or if we could write a fictionalized biography in which Elizabeth II has different parents. My intuition is, yes, we could *imagine* such things. There are imaginable worlds and imaginary worlds. (An imaginable world could turn out to be a real world, where an imaginary world could not.) Kripke is asking a different question—is it *possible* that Elizabeth II, *that person*, could have different parents or a different set of chromosomes or different DNA and still be Elizabeth II?[17] (Or could Elizabeth II have a different genetic provenance?) Ask yourself, Could I be an aardvark and still be me?[18] Remember, you're *not* asking yourself the question, Could I imagine myself to be an aardvark? You're asking yourself the question,

**15. The word "logical" muddies the waters. At least, it confuses me. Do I agree with Chomsky that "it does not seem that a logical problem would arise." Yes. But what is Chomsky saying? Does a logical problem arise in a fictionalized autobiography of Queen Elizabeth II in which n = 3. No. The fictionalized autobiography has expressed something that is not possible, not illogical. (After all, it is fiction.)**

**16. Chomsky, "The Object of Inquiry," in Reflections on Language (1975), pp. 48–49.**

**17. The problem is exacerbated by the name "Elizabeth II." It creates confusion. Couldn't some other person be Elizabeth II? For example, if Edward VIII had not abdicated the throne and had had a daughter named "Elizabeth," mightn't she be Elizabeth II? But Elizabeth II, that woman, sitting on the throne of England, could not have had different parents (nor could she be an aardvark). Kripke writes, "One can imagine, given the woman, that various things in her life could have changed: that she should have become a pauper; that her royal blood should have been unknown, and so on. One is given, let's say, a previous history of the world up to a certain time, and from that time it diverges from the actual course. This seems to be possible. And so it's possible that even though she was born of these parents she never became queen. Even though she was born of these parents, like Mark Twain's character, she was switched off with another girl. . . . It seems to me that anything coming from a different origin would not be this object." Naming and Necessity, p. 113**

**18. Kafka, of course, asks, Could I be a dung- beetle and still be me? Kafka notwithstanding, the answer is still no. Gregor Samsa could be a fictive dung- beetle who believes that he is a dung- beetle. He could believe that he is a dung- beetle. He just can't be a dung- beetle and be a human being in our world.**

Could I still be me *and* be an aardvark? The answer, for me, is, No.[19]

Questions of identity and individuality are bound up now with biological science—in this instance, genetics: the twenty-three chromosomes a child gets from her mother and the twenty-three chromosomes she gets from her father. (For Kripke in 1972, this takes a slightly different form. The structure of DNA had been announced only twenty years earlier.) Could Queen Elizabeth have a different set of chromosomes and still be Queen Elizabeth?[20]

Clearly, for Chomsky the very act of referring is filled with ambiguities. How do we refer to a thing when we don't really know what a "thing" is? Or even whether there *are* things? Chomsky invokes the Ship of Theseus—the ship Theseus took to Crete to slay the Minotaur.[21] In an account given by Plutarch, the Ship of Theseus is dismantled and then reconstructed

**19. Imagining myself to be an aardvark, mercifully, doesn't require me to construct a world in which I must provide an aardvark-like version of myself.**

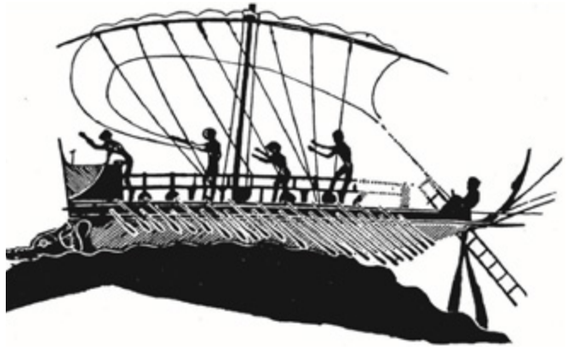
**20. Hilary Putnam pointed out to me that we could imagine the sperm and egg coming from different physically possible individuals. Hopefully, making this about chromosomes resolves this difficulty.**

**21. Chomsky, Of Minds and Language, pp. 381–82.**



with different materials.[22] Is it still the Ship of Theseus? Thomas Hobbes provides a further wrinkle.[23] The Ship of Theseus is dismantled, reconstructed with different materials, and the original boards, nails and other fittings are used to construct another ship. Which of the two is the real Ship of Theseus?

Questions of this kind come down to "It depends on what you mean by 'x'." Neither? Both? And to questions of provenance rather than identity. The cells in my body are replaced every seven years—or so they say. Does this mean I'm the Ship of Theseus in human form? Actually, the seven years is an old wives' tale; the cells of the human body are replaced at different rates. Among the fastest are the lungs. Cells on the surface of the lung are replaced every couple



of weeks.[24] Should I refer to my lungs as the Lungs of Theseus?

Should the conclusion be that there is no reference?

**22. "The ship on which Theseus sailed with the youths and returned in safety, the thirty-oared galley, was preserved by the Athenians down to the time of Demetrius Phalereus. They took away the old timbers from time to time, and put new and sound ones in their places, so that the vessel became a standing illustration for the philosophers in the mooted question of growth, some declaring that it remained the same, others that it was not the same vessel." Plutarch, Lives, vol. 1, p. 49.**

**Clearly, the Ship of Theseus also involves museum science. In the effort by the Athenians to preserve the ship, boards were replaced. Possible worlds and provenance are hopelessly confused here. Let me explain. Are there possible worlds in which various boards are replaced and it still remains the Ship of Theseus? Maybe. But are we talking about the essence of the Ship of Theseus or its provenance? To my way of thinking the ship may have no essence. No essential properties. But it does have a provenance. As long the ship is causally or historically linked to the original, it is the Ship of Theseus.**

**23. Hobbes, Elements of Philosophy The First Section, Concerning Body, p. 100.**

**24. "The cells in the lungs constantly renew themselves, explains Dr. Keith Prowse, vice-president of the British Lung Foundation. However, the lungs contain different cells that renew at different rates. The alveoli or air sac cells—needed for the exchange of oxygen and gases—deep in the lungs have a steady progress of regeneration that takes about a year. Meanwhile, the cells on the lung's surface have to renew every two or three weeks. 'These are the lungs' first line of defense, so have to be able to renew quickly,' says Dr. Prowse." Angela Epstein, "Believe It or Not, Your Lungs Are Six Weeks Old," Daily Mail, October 13, 2009.**

No Ship of Theseus? I don't think so.

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In 1953, as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis—that our conception of the world is determined by the languages we use—started attracting a lot of attention in the academic world, an unusual article appeared in *Astounding Science Fiction*: G. R. Shipman's "How to Talk to a Martian." Clearly influenced by Benjamin Lee Whorf, it provides a blueprint for the possible limitations of communication with aliens. Shipman's crisp explanation captures the essence of the problem. It is another example of the inversion of the conditional discussed by Kripke (We do not accept the law of contradiction because it is a necessary truth; it is a necessary truth because we accept it—by convention, and so on and so forth):

**The Seventeenth Century philosophers used to speculate about "general grammar." All languages—so they reasoned—are attempts to *translate* the "reality" of the universe; a single logic underlies all of them. Our increased knowledge makes it seem more likely that the opposite is true. Languages do not depend on universal logic; logic depends on the structure of languages.**[25]

*Language does not depend on logic; logic depends on the structure of language.* Shipman goes on to debunk the very possibility of universal translation, advocating some sort of literary cosmophagic justice—in this instance, eating alive science-fiction characters.[26] He writes, "Of all the stock characters in science fiction that I wish the BEM's would eat alive, number one on my list is the Telepathic Martian. You know the one I mean." (BEM's? I had to look it up. It's an acronym for *bug-eyed monster*.)

**His spaceship lands in an Iowa cornfield one hot July day. The nation panics; a frantic Defense Department throws a cordon around the farm; the yokels take to the woods; reporters and TV cameramen trample on inquisitive scientists; the *Chicago Tribune* gets out an extra to warn us that the whole thing is probably a Fair Deal plot. Then, as the world and his wife sit with their ears glued to the radio, the hatches of the spaceship open and the Martian emerges to tell us he wishes us well and only wants to save our civilization from self-destruction.**

**In American English, no less. By some miracle the authors never explain, this visitor from outer space cannot only project his thoughts into human brains, but can force them to rearrange his extraterrestrial ideas into the patterns of American speech. . . . But I have yet to see a science-fiction opus that meets this problem of communication across cultural boundaries head-on and tries to solve it by extrapolating from our present techniques.**[27]

"For any human being," Shipman tells us, " 'reality' is the sum total of the abstracts his *language* can make from observed events." In other words, reality is an artifact of language and not the other way around. It is pure Sapir-Whorf:

**Now Hopi has no imaginary plurals. For a Hopi Indian, the idea "ten days is longer than nine days" becomes "the tenth day is later than the ninth." He does not conceive of "ten days" as a length of time. . . . No Hopi Einstein, uninfluenced by European ideas, would ever evolve the notion of a four-dimensional space-time continuum. His mathematical picture of the universe would have no more in common with ours than a Greek painting has with a canvas by Picasso.**

**Now, perhaps, you begin to understand why I want to feed the Telepathic Martian and his universal translating machine to the BEM's. [A rather uncharitable thought.] If human languages can be so different as English and Nootka, the grammatical categories of Martian must be something completely outside**

**25. Shipman, "How to Talk to a Martian," p. 119.**

**26. Hmm. If I eat Gregor Samsa, should I be labeled a cannibal or an insectivore? Neither? It happens all the time in fiction, e.g., Morlocks eating the Eloi. Fictional characters eating other fictional characters, fictional characters eating real people. Clearly, we can imagine a fictional character eating a real person, and vice versa, but such a thing is not physically possible.**

**27. "How to Talk to a Martian," pp. 112–13.**

**our experience. The Telepathic Martian's thought-waves would have to be so powerful that they could make our brain cells aware of logical and grammatical relationships that have no equivalent whatever in our language.**

**Imagine, for the sake of the argument, that a telepathic English-speaking American and a telepathic Nootka-speaking American sit down for a chat. . . . But how does the white man translate into pictures: "I paid off the mortgage on my house last year"? How do you visualize a mortgage to an Indian who barely understands money? Is the mortgage "on" the house the same way the shingles are on it? How do you picture the past-tense notion in "paid" and the concept "last year"?**

**See what I mean? When the Martians land, we'll have to learn their language in the same laborious way we have learned Nootka and Salish and all the rest. Though there won't be any informants on their spaceship, we can teach them a limited amount of English by the time-honored process of ostensive definition. This means pointing at a chair and saying "chair," or dropping a brick and remarking "I have just dropped a brick." Simple verbs can be acted out, like eat, wash, shave, die, scratch, draw, write. For more complicated ideas, we might begin by verbalizing arithmetical or mathematical statements, like "two and two make four" or "The square of the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides." Presumably the Martians could teach us some of their language in the same way. It would be slow, but not impossible.**[28]

We could introduce the Martians to our language games. "Although there won't be any informants on their spaceship, we can teach them a limited amount of English. . . ."

But I am confused. Shipman tells us, "[The Martians'] mathematical picture of the universe would have no more in common with ours than a Greek painting has with a canvas by Picasso." Of course, much of Picasso's work is heavily influenced by Greek mythology and painting (Minotaurs, etc.). Still, I think I understand. Or do I? Is Shipman telling me that *their mathematics* is completely different from ours. Different in what way? Is their logic different? No negation, no law of the excluded middle, no *modus tollens*, no *modus ponens* (basic logical operations)? How could we hope to communicate? How could they hope to communicate even with themselves?

If the Martians have a conceptual scheme, how different is it from our own? How different is their mathematics, their logic? Shipman tells us that their mathematics and ours are as different as the painting on a Greek vase and a Picasso. But we should remember: *both* are paintings.[29] More recently, the film *Arrival* (2016) used the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and its famous example of different perceptions of time, as a pivotal plot point.[30] But do differences in perception mean that time itself is different? Imagine the world in the Cambrian Period, 600 million years ago. Trilobites are scuttling about. There is no language, but *time* still progresses. There is still a *before* and an *after*, even though there is no language to express that fact. And yet, the fantasy of hidden realities still has a powerful appeal. It's wonderful to imagine that if we could comprehend the voice of God (or aliens), the universe would open itself up to us that we might see it more clearly or truly. Fans of the Old Testament would surely concur. (Isn't this part of the romance of the Tower of Babel—the magical promise of a unitary worldview uniting us in a common project?) But the leading theories of language do not and cannot support such a fantasy. It could be argued that our notions of time, say, the notions of *before* and *after*, need to be modified. Fine. Time could be different from what we imagine it to be, but that doesn't mean time is dependent on the structure of our brains or the structure of language.

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Chomsky's universal grammar—the idea that the syntax of language is hard-wired into our brains—is thought to be the antithesis of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (linguistic relativity). But to me, it could be just a variant. Whorf tell us that there are insuperable *mental* constraints

**28. "How to Talk to a Martian," pp. 119–20.**

**29. Someone I know says, "It's like comparing apples and refrigerators," rather than apples and oranges. Apples and oranges? Aren't they both fruit?**

**30. Though it is only explicitly mentioned in passing (IAN: Look, I did some research and there's this idea that immersing yourself in a foreign language can rewire your brain— LOUISE: The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, yes. The theory that the language you speak determines how you think), the eventual revelation of what the alien visitors are offering humanity confirms the centrality of Sapir-Whorf (LOUISE: Wait—I figured out the gift! . . . It's their language. They gave it all to us. . . . When you learn it, truly learn it, you perceive time the way they do).**

imposed by language. In Whorf's—false, as it turns out— analysis of the Hopi language, there are no tenses that differentiate between past, present, and future. Language constrains how we see the world. Our metaphysics is *relative* to language. Chomsky, on the other hand, tells us that there are mental constraints imposed by our biology. That our metaphysics is *relative* to our biology:

**Either we're angels or we're organic creatures. If we're organic creatures, every capacity is going to have its scope and limits. . . . [Charles] Peirce, for example, thought that truth is just the limit science reaches. That's not a good definition of truth. If our cognitive capacities are organic entities, which I take for granted they are, there is some limit they'll reach; but we have no confidence that that's the truth about the world. It may be part of the truth; but maybe some Martian with different cognitive capacities is laughing at us and asking why we're going off in this false direction all the time. And the Martian might be right.**[31]

There is some *limit*. Some *cognitive* limit. But what is that limit? For Chomsky, there are problems and there are mysteries. As he claims, "problems are things that we can solve." We can work hard and find solutions—the missing word in an acrostic, the proof of Fermat's Last Theorem, the unknown ingredients in KFC's formula for fried chicken. (The CEO of KFC told me that even he isn't allowed to know the ingredients.) In principle, problems are epistemic. We *can* know the answer to a problem, even though we (currently) don't. Mysteries are different. Solutions will never be forthcoming. We are barred, because of how we are constituted (call it the hard-wiring of our brains or our DNA), from ever knowing these things—possibly the origins of consciousness or the solution to the P-NP problem.

Again the analogy—an analogy I don't much care for: dogs (and rats) are to humans as humans are to some superior being. A rat, supposedly, with good maze-solving abilities, is stopped in its tracks by a maze based on prime numbers—2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23—numbers that can only be divided by themselves and one. (Would this also hold true for a rat designed by a human, e.g., Theseus, the electronic mouse designed by Claude Shannon, the father of information theory?) Presumably their brain capacity is too small—they can never understand the concept of "prime number," no matter how hard or how long they might try. They can never understand the concept "turn left at 3, 5, 7 and 11." They have reached *the fur ceiling*.

Imagine two worlds. Creton, the planet of the super-dumb, and Smarton, the planet of the super-gifted. The small-brained inhabitants of Creton are unable to escape from a prime-number maze—and as a result, get eaten by the Minotaur. (They are like the Athenian hero Theseus in the labyrinth without the benefit of Ariadne's thread.) The large-brained inhabitants of Smarton run the maze with ease and the Minotaur goes hungry (save for the small bird trapped under its paw). But will even the Smartonians be able to prove all of the true statements in arithmetic? And will they be able to prove that Gödel's First Incompleteness Theorem is false? Unlikely.

Some people may be more capable than a run-of-the-mill Cretonian—but they are essentially no better or worse than Smartonians. Once we have access to mathematical truth, to necessary truth, there may be mysteries. But they are the same for all of us—for Smartonians, Super-Smartonians, Super-Duper Smartonians, and so on.

Newton wrote, **"***Hypotheses non fingo"* (I do not feign hypotheses), and agonized over his

abandonment of a mechanical worldview. He could never make sense of action at a distance. How does the gravity of the sun reach out across millions of miles of empty space and commandeer the earth into orbit? It created in him a profound unease.

This unease is echoed a century and a half later in Darwin's famous letter to Asa Gray**:**

**There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot**

31. Chomsky, The Science of Language, p. 133

**persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the [parasitic wasps] with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of Caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice. Not believing this, I see no necessity in the belief that the eye was expressly designed. On the other hand, I cannot anyhow be contented to view this wonderful universe, and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force. I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance. Not that this notion *at all* satisfies me. I feel most deeply that the whole subject is too profound for the human intellect. A dog might as well speculate on the mind of Newton. Let each man hope and believe what he can.**[32]

Both Darwin *and* Newton expressed this view.[33] For me, what is striking is their sense of awe. A dog might as well speculate on the mind of Newton? That hardly seems out of the question. At least one eighteenth-century dog *did* just that. Newton's beloved dog Diamond was supposedly credited by his master with the discovery of a number of mathematical theorems. And accused of having started a fire that destroyed much of Newton's work, plunging his master into years of severe depression.[34] We do not know whether Diamond's actions were the result of inadvertence, carelessness, or even malice—jealous that his master had come up with a theory of universal gravitation.

Why imagine limits when there is little proof there are any?[35] Untranslatable languages, incommensurabilities, innate cognitive impediments—epistemological constraints of one kind or another. Isn't bare bones epistemology enough? The almost certain knowledge that we can be (and often are) wrong about everything? But being wrong doesn't mean we are barred from being right.

Darwin and Newton were *not* writing about the unknowable. They were trying to express the ineffable. (Unsuccessfully. After all is said and done, the ineffable is inexpressible.) Newton knew that his inverse-square law accounts for planetary motion; Darwin, that natural selection accounts for the diversity and complexity of life on earth.

But there remains a mystery—the mystery of *why* it should be so.

**32. Darwin, "Letter to Asa Gray" (1860)**

**33. As did others. John Locke: "He that will not set himself proudly at the top of all things, but will consider the immensity of this fabric [the world], and the great variety that is to be found in this little and inconsiderable part of it, which he has to do with, may be apt to think, that in other mansions of it, there may be other and different intelligent beings, of whose faculties he has as little knowledge or apprehension, as a worm shut up in one drawer of a cabinet hath of the senses or understanding of a man; such variety and excellency being suitable to the wisdom and power of the Maker." An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1836), p. 64.**

**(Dog, worm . . . I have always been fascinated by the possibility of mentally challenged creatures from outer space. Replace the insufferable Close Encounters line, "Einstein was right," with "My God, they're stupider than we are." When extraterrestrials are involved, why are we always the cognitively impaired?) And James Clerk Maxwell: "Man has indeed but little knowledge of the simplest of God's creatures, the nature of a drop of water has in it mysteries within mysteries utterly unknown to us at present, but what we do know we know distinctly; and we see before us distinct physical truths to be discovered and we are confident that these mysteries are an inheritance of knowledge, not revealed at once, lest we should become proud in knowledge, and despite patient inquiry, but so arranged that, as each new truth is unravelled it becomes a clear, well-established addition to science, quite free from the mystery which must still remain, to show that every atom of creation is unfathomable in its perfection." "Inaugural Lecture at Marischal College" (1856)," in Scientific Letters and Papers, vol. 1, p. 427.**

**34. " 'My dog Diamond knows some mathematics. Today he proved two theorems before lunch,' said Newton. 'Your dog must be a genius,' replied [mathetician John] Wallis. 'Oh I wouldn't go that far,' said Newton. 'The first theorem had an error and the second had a pathological exception.' " Bibek Debroy, Sarama and Her Children: The Dog in Indian Myth, p. 50. See also J. Edleston, ed., Correspondence of Sir Isaac Newton and Professor Cotes, p. lxiii.**

**35. A limit is quite different from an impossibility proof. To say that it is impossible to express √2 as a rational fraction is not to say that it represents a limit to human intelligence.**

# What Is It Like to Be a Bat?

CONSCIOUSNESS is what makes the mind-body problem really intractable. Perhaps that is why current discussions of the problem give it little attention or get it obviously wrong.The recent wave of reductionist euphoria has produced several analyses of mental phenomena and mental concepts designed to explain the possibility of some variety of materialism, psychophysical identification, or reduction.[1] But the problems dealt with are those common to this type of reduction and other types, and what makes the mind-body problem unique, and unlike the water-H20 problem or the Turing machine-IBM machine problem or the lightning-electrical discharge problem or the gene-DNA problem or the oak tree-hydrocarbon problem, is ignored.

Every reductionist has his favorite analogy from modern science. It is most unlikely that any of these unrelated examples of successful reduction will shed light on the relation of mind to brain. But philosophers share the general human weakness for explanations of what is incomprehensible in terms suited for what is familiar and well understood, though entirely different. This has led to the acceptance of implausible accounts of the mental largely because they would permit familiar kinds of reduction. I shall try to explain why the usual examples do not help us to understand the relation between mind and body-why, indeed, we have at present no conception of what an explanation of the physical nature of a mental phenomenon would be. Without consciousness the mind-body problem would be much less interesting. With consciousness it seems hopeless. The most important and characteristic feature of conscious mental phenomena is very poorly understood. Most reductionist theories do not even try to explain it. And careful examination will show that no currently available concept of reduction is applicable to it.

Perhaps a new theoretical form can be devised for the purpose, but such a solution, if it exists, lies in the distant intellectual future.

Conscious experience is a widespread phenomenon. It occurs at many levels of animal life, though we cannot be sure of its presence in the simpler organisms, and it is very difficult to say in general what provides evidence of it. (Some extremists have been prepared to deny it even of mammals other than man.) No doubt it occurs in countless forms totally unimaginable to us, on other planets in other solar systems throughout the universe. But no matter how the form may vary, the fact that an organism has conscious experience at all means, basically, that there is something it is like to be that organism. There may be further implications about the form of the experience; there may even (though I doubt it) be implications about the behavior of the organism. But fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to be that organism-something it is like for the organism.

We may call this the subjective character of experience. It is not captured by any of the familiar, recently devised reductive analyses of the mental, for all of them are logically compatible with its absence. It is not analyzable in terms of any explanatory system of functional states, or intentional states, since these could be ascribed to robots or automata that behaved like people though they experienced nothing.[2] It is not analyzable in terms of the causal role of experiences in relation to typical human behavior-for similar reasons.[3] I do not deny that conscious mental states and events cause behavior, nor that they may be given functional characterizations. I deny only that this kind of thing exhausts their analysis. Any reductionist program has to to be based on an analysis of what is to be reduced. If the analysis leaves something out, the problem will be falsely posed. It is useless to base the defense of materialism on any analysis of mental phenomena that. fails to deal explicitly with their subjective character. For there is no reason to suppose that a reduction which seems plausible when no attempt is made to account for consciousness can be extended to include consciousness. Without some idea, therefore of what the subjective character of experience

**1. Examples are J. J. C. Smart,** *Philosophy and Scientific Realism* **(London, i963); David K. Lewis, "An Argument for the Identity Theory,"** *Journal of Philosophy,* **LXIII (i966), reprinted with addenda in David M. Rosenthal,** *Materialism & the Mind-Body Problem* **(Englewood Cliffs, N. J., I971); Hilary Putnam, "Psychological Predicates" in Capitan and Merrill,** *Art, Mind, & Religion* **(Pittsburgh, i967), reprinted in Rosenthal,** *op. cit.*, **as "The Nature of Mental States"; D. M. Armstrong,** *A Materialist Theory of the Mind* **(London, i968); D. C. Dennett,** *Content and Consciousness* **(London, I969). I have expressed earlier doubts in "Armstrong on the Mind,"** *Philosophical Review*, **LXXIX (1970), 394-403; "Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness,"** *Synthese,* **22 (I97I); and a review of Dennett,** *Journal of Philosophy*, **LXIX (1972). See also Saul Kripke, "Naming and Necessity" in Davidson and Harman,** *Semantics of Natural Language* **(Dordrecht, I972), esp. pp. 334-342; and M. T. Thornton, "Ostensive Terms and Materialism,"** *The Monist*, **56 (1972).**

**2. Perhaps there could not actually be such robots. Perhaps anything complex enough to behave like a person would have experiences. But that, if true, is a fact which cannot be discovered merely by analyzing the concept of experience.**

**3 It is not equivalent to that about which we are incorrigible, both because we are not incorrigible about experience and because experience is present in animals lacking language and thought, who have no beliefs at all about their experiences.**

is, we cannot; know what is required of a physicalist theory.

While an account of the physical basis of mind must explain many things, this appears to be the most difficult. It is impossible to exclude the phenomenological features of experience from a, reduction in the same way that one excludes the phenomenal features of an ordinary substance from a physical or chemical reduction of it-namely, by explaining them as effects on the minds of human observers.[4] If physicalism is to be defended, the phenomenological features must themselves be given a physical account. But when we examine their subjective character it: seems that such a result is impossible. The reason is that every subjective phenomenon is essentially connected with a single point of view, and it seems inevitable that an objective, physical theory will abandon that point of view.

Let me first try to state the issue somewhat more fully than by referring to the relation between the subjective and the objective, or between the *pour-soi* and the *en-soi*. This is far from easy. Facts about what it is like to be an X are very peculiar, so peculiar that some may be inclined to doubt their reality, or the significance of claims about them. To illustrate the connection between subjectivity and a point of view, and to make evident the importance of subjective features, it will help to explore the matter in relation to an example that brings out clearly the divergence between the two types of conception, subjective and objective.

I assume we all believe that bats have experience. After all, they are mammals, and there is no more doubt that they have experience than that mice or pigeons or whales have experience. I have chosen bats instead of wasps or flounders because if one travels too far down the phylogenetic tree, people gradually shed their faith that there is experience there at all. Bats, although more closely related to us than those other species, nevertheless present a range of activity and a sensory apparatus so different from ours that the problem I want to pose is exceptionally vivid (though it certainly could be raised with other species). Even without the benefit of philosophical reflection, anyone who has spent some time in an enclosed space with an excited bat knows what it is to encounter a fundamentally *alien* form of life.

I have said that the essence of the belief that bats have experience is that there is something that it is like to be a bat. Now we know that most bats (the microchiroptera, to be precise) perceive the external world primarily by sonar, or echolocation, detecting the reflections, from objects within range, of their own rapid, subtly modulated, high-frequency shrieks. Their brains are designed to correlate the outgoing

**4. Cf. Richard Rorty, "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy, and Categories,"** *The Review of Metaphysics,* **XIX (i965), esp. 37-38.**



impulses with the subsequent echoes, and the information thus acquired enables bats to make precise discriminations of distance, size, shape, motion, and texture comparable to those we make by vision. But bat sonar, though clearly a form of perception, is not similar in its operation to any sense that we possess, and there is no reason to suppose that it is subjectively like anything we can experience or imagine. This appears to create difficulties for the notion of what it is like to be a bat. We must consider whether any method will permit us to extrapolate to the inner life of the bat from our own case,[5] and if not, what alternative methods there may be for understanding the notion.

Our own experience provides the basic material for our imagination, whose range is therefore limited. It will not help to try to imagine that one has webbing on one's arms, which enables one to fly around at dusk and dawn catching insects in one's mouth; that one has very poor vision, and perceives the surrounding world by a system of reflected high-frequency sound signals; and that one spends the day hanging upside down by one's feet in an attic. In so far as I can imagine this (which is not very far), it tells me only what it would be like for me to behave as a bat behaves. But that is not the question. I want to know what it is like for a bat to be a bat. Yet if I try to imagine this, I am restricted to the resources of my own mind, and those re sources are inadequate to the task. I cannot perform it either by imagining additions to my present experience, or by imagining segments gradually subtracted from it, or by imagining some combination of additions, subtractions, and modifications.

To the extent that I could look and behave like a wasp or a bat without changing my fundamental structure, my experiences would not be anything like the experiences of those animals. On the other hand, it is doubtful that any meaning can be attached to the supposition that I should possess the internal neurophysiological constitution of a bat. Even if I could by gradual degrees be transformed into a bat, nothing in my present constitution enables me to imagine what the experiences of such a future stage of myself thus metamorphosed would be like. The best evidence would come from the experiences of bats, if we only knew what they were like.

So if extrapolation from our own case is involved in the idea of what it is like to be a bat, the extrapolation must be incompletable. We cannot form more than a schematic conception of what it is like. For example, we may ascribe general types of experience on the basis of the animal's structure and behavior. Thus we describe bat sonar as a form of three-

**5. By "our own case" I do not mean just "my own case," but rather the mentalistic ideas that we apply unproblematically to ourselves and other human beings.**

dimensional forward perception; we believe that bats feel some versions of pain, fear, hunger, and lust, and that they have other, more familiar types of perception besides sonar. But we believe that these experiences also have in each case a specific subjective character, which it is beyond our ability to conceive. And if there is conscious life else where in the universe, it is likely that some of it will not be describable even in the most general experiential terms available to us.[6] (The problem is not confined to exotic cases, however, for it exists between one person and another. The subjective character of the experience of a person deaf and blind from birth is not accessible to me, for example, nor presumably is mine to him. This does not prevent us each from believing that the other's experience has such a subjective character.)

If anyone is inclined to deny that we can believe in the existence of facts like this whose exact nature we cannot possibly conceive, he should reflect that in contemplating the bats we are in much the same position that intelligent bats or Martians[7] would occupy if they tried to form a conception of what it was like to be us. The structure of their own minds might make it impossible for them to succeed, but we know they would be wrong to conclude that there is not anything precise that it is like to be us: that only certain general types of mental state could be, ascribed to us (perhaps perception and appetite would be concepts common to us both; perhaps not). We know they would be wrong to draw such a skeptical conclusion because we know what it is like to be us. And we know that while it includes an enormous amount of variation and complexity, and while we do not possess the vocabulary to describe it adequately, its subjective charater is highly specific, and in some respects describable in terms that can be understood only by creatures like us. The fact that we cannot expect ever to accommodate in our language a detailed description of Martian or bat phenomenology should not lead us to dismiss as meaningless the claim that bats and Martians have experiences fully comparable in richness of detail to our own. It would be fine if someone were to develop concepts and a theory that enabled us to think about those things; but such an understanding may be permanently denied to us by the limits of our nature. And to deny the reality or logical significance of what we can never describe or understand is the crudest form of cognitive dissonance.

This brings us to the edge of a topic that requires much more discussion than I can give it here: namely, the relation between facts on the one hand and conceptual schemes or systems of

**6. Therefore the analogical form of the English expression "**what it is *like"* **is misleading. It does not mean "what (in our experience) it** *resembles,"* **but rather "how it is for the subject himself."**

**7. Any intelligent extraterrestrial beings totally different from us.**



representation on the other. My realism about the subjective domain in all its forms implies a belief in the existence of facts beyond the reach of human concepts. Certainly it is possible for a human being to believe that there are facts which humans never will possess the requisite concepts to represent or comprehend. Indeed, it would be foolish to doubt this, given the finiteness of humanity's expectations. After all, there would have been transfinite numbers even if everyone had been wiped out by the Black Death before Cantor discovered them. But one might also believe that there are facts which could not ever be represented or comprehended by human beings, even if the species lasted forever-simply because our structure does not permit us to operate with concepts of the requisite type. This impossibility might even be observed by other beings, but it is not clear that the existence of such beings, or the possibility of their existence, is a precondition of the significance of the hypothesis that there are humanly inaccessible facts. (After all, the nature of beings with access to humanly inaccessible facts is presumably itself a humanly inaccessible fact.) Reflection on what it is like to be a bat seems to lead us, therefore, to the conclusion that there are facts that do not consist in the truth of propositions expressible in a human language. We can be compelled to recognize the existence of such facts without being able to state or comprehend them.

I shall not pursue this subject, however. Its bearing on the topic before us (namely, the mind-body problem) is that it enables us to make a general observation about the subjective character of experience. Whatever may be the status of facts about what it is like to be a human being, or a bat, or a Martian, these appear to be facts that embody a particular point of view.

I am not adverting here to the alleged privacy of experience to its possessor. The point of view in question is not one accessible only to a single individual. Rather it is a type. It is often possible to take up a point of view other than one's own, so the comprehension of such facts is not limited to one's own case. There is a sense in which phenomenological facts are perfectly objective: one person can know or say of another what the quality of the other's experience is. They are subjective, however, in the sense that even this objective ascription of experience is possible only for someone sufficiently similar to the object of ascription to be able to adopt his point of view-to understand the ascription in the first person as well as in the third, so to speak. The more different from oneself the other experiencer is, the less success one can expect with this enterprise. In our own case we occupy the relevant point of view, but we will have as much difficulty understanding our own experience properly if we approach it from another point of view as we would if we tried to understand the

experience of another species without taking up *its* point of view.[8]

This bears directly on the mind-body problem. For if the facts of experience-facts about what it is like *for* the experiencing organism-are accessible only from one point of view, then it is a mystery how the true character of experiences could be revealed in the physical operation of that organism. The latter is a domain of objective facts *par excellence*-the kind that can be observed and understood from many points of view and by individuals with differing perceptual systems. There are no comparable imaginative obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge about bat neurophysiology by human scientists, and intelligent bats or Martians might learn more about the human brain than we ever will.

This is not by itself an argument against reduction. A Martian scientist with no understanding of visual perception could under stand the rainbow, or lightning, or clouds as physical phenomena, though he would never be able to understand the human concepts of rainbow, lightning, or cloud, or the place these things occupy in our phenomenal world. The objective nature of the things picked out by these concepts could be apprehended by him because, although the concepts themselves are connected with a particular point of view and a particular visual phenomenology, the things apprehended from that point of view are not: they are observable from the point of view but external to it; hence they can be comprehended from other points of view also, either by the same organisms or by others. Lightning has an objective character that is not exhausted by its visual appearance, and this can be investigated by a Martian without vision. To be precise, it has a *more* objective character than is revealed in its visual appearance. In speaking of the move from subjective to objective characterization, I wish to remain noncommittal about the existence of an end point, the completely objective intrinsic nature of the thing, which one might or might

**8. It may be easier than I suppose to transcend inter-species barriers with the aid of the imagination. For example, blind people are able to detect objects near them by a form of sonar, using vocal clicks or taps of a cane. Perhaps if one knew what that was like, one could by extension imagine roughly what it was like to possess the much more refined sonar of a bat. The distance between oneself and other persons and other species can fall anywhere on a continuum. Even for other persons the understanding of what it is like to be them is only partial, and when one moves to species very different from oneself, a lesser degree of partial understanding may still be available. The imagination is remarkably flexible. My point, however, is not that we cannot *know* what it is like to be a bat. I am not raising that epistemological problem. My point is rather that even to form a conception of what it is like to be a bat (and a fortiori to know what it is like to be a bat) one must take up the bat's point of view. If one can take it up roughly, or partially, then one's *conception* will also be rough or partial. Or so it seems in our present state of understanding.**



not be able to reach. It may be more accurate to think of objectivity as a direction in which the understanding can travel. And in understanding a phenomenon like lightning, it is legitimate to go as far away as one can from a strictly human viewpoint.[9]

In the case of experience, on the other hand, the connection with a particular point of view seems much closer. It is difficult to understand what could be meant by the *objective* character of an experience, apart from the particular point of view from which its subject apprehends it. After all, what would be left of what it was like to be a bat if one removed the viewpoint of the bat? But if experience does not have, in addition to its subjective character, an objective nature that can be apprehended from many different points of view, then how can it be supposed that a Martian investigating my brain might be observing physical processes which were my mental processes (as he might observe physical processes which were bolts of lightning), only from a different point of view? How, for that matter, could a human physiologist observe them from another point of view?[10]

We appear to be faced with a general difficulty about psychophysical reduction. In other areas the process of reduction is a move in the direction of greater objectivity, toward a more accurate view of the real nature of things. This is accomplished by reducing our dependence on individual or species-specific points of view toward the object of investigation. We describe it not in terms of the impressions it makes on our senses, but in terms of its more general effects and of properties detectable by means other than the human senses. The less it depends on a specifically human viewpoint, the more objective is our description. It is possible to follow this path because although the concepts and ideas we employ in thinking about the external world are initially applied from a point of view that involves our perceptual apparatus, they are used by us to refer to things beyond themselves toward which we have the phenomenal point of view. Therefore we can abandon it in favor of another, and still be thinking about the same things.

Experience itself, however, does not seem to fit the pattern. The idea of moving from appearance to reality seems to make no sense here. What is the analogue in this case to pursuing a more objective understanding of the same phenomena

**9. The problem I am going to raise can therefore be posed even if the distinc tion between more subjective and more objective descriptions or viewpoints can itself be made only within a larger human point of view. I do not accept this kind of conceptual relativism, but it need not be refuted to make the point that psychophysical reduction cannot be accommodated by the subjective-to- objective model familiar from other cases.**

**10 The problem is not just that when I look at the "Mona Lisa," my visual experience has a certain quality, no trace of which is to be found by someone looking into my brain. For even if he did observe there a tiny image of the "Mona Lisa," he would have no reason to identify it with the experience.**

by abandoning the initial subjective viewpoint toward them in favor of another that is more objective but concerns the same thing? Certainly it appears unlikely that we will get closer to the real nature of human experience by leaving behind the particularity of our human point of view and striving for a description in terms accessible to beings that could not imagine what it was like to be us. If the subjective character of experience is fully comprehensible only from one point of view, then any shift to greater objectivity -that is, less attachment to a specific viewpoint-does not take us nearer to the real nature of the phenomenon: it takes us farther away from it.

In a sense, the seeds of this objection to the reducibility of experience are already detectable in successful cases of reduction; for in discovering sound to be, in reality, a wave phenomenon in air or other media, we leave behind one viewpoint to take up another, and the auditory, human or animal viewpoint that we leave behind remains unreduced. Members of radically different species may both understand the same physical events in objective terms, and this does not require that they understand the phenomenal forms in which those events appear to the senses of members of the other species. Thus it is a condition of their referring to a common reality that their more particular viewpoints are not part of the common reality that they both apprehend. The reduction can succeed only if the species-specific viewpoint is omitted from what is to be reduced.

But while we are right to leave this point of view aside in seeking a fuller understanding of the external world, we cannot ignore it permanently, since it is the essence of the internal world, and not merely a point of view on it. Most of the neobehaviorism of recent philosophical psychology results from the effort to substitute an objective concept of mind for the real thing, in order to have nothing left over which cannot be reduced. If we acknowledge that a physical theory of mind must account for the subjective character of experience, we must admit that no presently available conception gives us a clue how this could be done. The problem is unique. If mental processes are indeed physical processes, then there is something it is like, intrinsically,[11] to undergo certain physical processes. What it is for such a thing to be the

**11. The relation would therefore not be a contingent one, like that of a cause and its distinct effect. It would be necessarily true that a certain physical state felt a certain way. Saul Kripke** *(op. cit.)* **argues that causal behaviorist and related analyses of the mental fail because they construe, e.g., "pain" as a merely contingent name of pains. The subjective character of an experience ("its immediate phenomenological quality" Kripke calls it [p. 340]) is the essential property left out by such analyses, and the one in virtue of which it is, necessarily, the experience it is. My view is closely related to his. Like Kripke, I find the hypothesis that a certain brain state should** *necessarily* **have a certain subjective character incomprehensible without further explanation. No such explanation emerges from theories which view the mind-brain relation as contingent, but perhaps there are other alternatives, not yet discovered.**

**A theory that explained how the mind-brain relation was necessary would still leave us with Kripke's problem of explaining why it nevertheless appears contingent. That difficulty seems to me surmountable, in the following way. We may imagine something by representing it to ourselves either perceptually, sympathetically, or symbolically. I shall not try to say how symbolic imagination works, but part of what happens in the other two cases is this. To imagine something perceptually, we put ourselves in a conscious state resembling the state we would be in if we perceived it. To imagine something sympathetically, we put ourselves in a conscious state resembling the thing itself. (This method can be used only to imagine mental events and states-our own or another's.) When we try to imagine a mental state occurring without its associated brain state, we first sympathetically imagine the occurrence of the mental state: that is, we put ourselves into a state that resembles it mentally. At the same time, we attempt to perceptually imagine the non-occurrence of the associated physical state, by putting ourselves into another state unconnected with the first: one resembling that which we would be in if we perceived the non-occurrence of the physical state. Where the imagination of physical features is perceptual and the imagination of mental features is sympathetic, it appears to us that we can imagine any experience occurring without its associated brain state, and vice versa. The relation between them will appear contingent even if it is necessary, because of the independence of the disparate types of imagination.**

**(Solipsism, incidentally, results if one misinterprets sympathetic imagination as if it worked like perceptual imagination: it then seems impossible to imagine any experience that is not one's own.)**



case remains a mystery.

What moral should be drawn from these reflections, and what should be done next? It would be a mistake to conclude that physicalism must be false. Nothing is proved by the inadequacy of physicalist hypotheses that assume a faulty objective analysis of mind. It would be truer to say that physicalism is a position we cannot understand because we do not at present have any conception of how it might be true. Perhaps it will be thought unreasonable to require such a conception as a condition of understanding. After all, it might be said, the meaning of physicalism is clear enough: mental states are states of the body; mental events are physical events. We do not know *which* physical states and events they are, but that should not prevent us from understanding the hypothesis. What could be clearer than the words "is" and "are"?

But I believe it is precisely this apparent clarity of the word "is" that is deceptive. Usually, when we are told that *X* is *r* we know *how* it is supposed to be true, but that depends on a conceptual or theoretical background and is not conveyed by the "is" alone. We know how both *"X"* and *"r"* refer, and the kinds of things to which they refer, and we have a rough idea how the two referential paths might converge on a single thing, be it an object, a person, a process, an event, or whatever. But when the two terms of the identification are very disparate it may not be so clear how it could be true. We may not have even a rough idea of

how the two referential paths could converge, or what kind of things they might converge on, and a theoretical framework may have to be supplied to enable us to understand this. Without the framework, an air of mysticism surrounds the identification.

This explains the magical flavor of popular presentations of fundamental scientific discoveries, given out as propositions to which one must subscribe without really understanding them. For example, people are now told at an early age that all matter is really energy. But despite the fact that they know what "is" means, most of them never form a conception of what makes this claim true, because they lack the theoretical background.

At the present time the status of physicalism is similar to that which the hypothesis that matter is energy would have had if uttered by a pre-Socratic philosopher. We do not have the beginnings of a conception of how it might be true. In order to understand the hypothesis that a mental event is a physical event, we require more than an understanding of the word "is." The idea of how a mental and a physical term might refer to the same thing is lacking, and the usual analogies with theoretical identification in other fields fail to supply it. They fail because if we construe the reference of mental terms to physical events on the usual model, we either get a reappearance of separate subjective events as the effects through which mental reference to physical events is secured, or else we get a false account of how mental terms refer (for example, a causal behaviorist one).

Strangely enough, we may have evidence for the truth of something we cannot really understand. Suppose a caterpillar is locked in a sterile safe by someone unfamiliar with insect metamorphosis, and weeks later the safe is reopened, revealing a butterfly. If the person knows that the safe has been shut the whole time, he has reason to believe that the butterfly is or was once the caterpillar, without having any idea in what sense this might be so. (One possibility is that the caterpillar contained a tiny winged parasite that devoured it and grew into the butterfly.)

It is conceivable that we are in such a position with regard to physicalism. Donald Davidson has argued that if mental events have physical causes and effects, they must have physical descriptions. He holds that we have reason to believe this even though we do not-and in fact *could* not-have a general psychophysical theory.[12] His argument applies to intentional

**12. See "Mental Events" in Foster and Swanson,** *Experience and Theory* **(Amherst, 1970); though I don't understand the argument against psychophysical laws.**



mental events, but I think we also have some reason to believe that sensations are physical processes, without being in a position to understand how. Davidson's position is that certain physical events have irreducibly mental properties, and perhaps some view describable in this way is correct. But nothing of which we can now form a conception corresponds to it; nor have we any idea what a theory would be like that enabled us to conceive of it.[13]

Very little work has been done on the basic question (from which mention of the brain can be entirely omitted) whether any sense can be made of experiences' having an objective character at all. Does it make sense, in other words, to ask what my experiences are really like, as opposed to how they appear to me? We cannot genuinely understand the hypothesis that their nature is captured in a physical description unless we understand the more fundamental idea that they have an objective nature (or that objective processes can have a subjective nature).[14]

I should like to close with a speculative proposal. It may be possible to approach the gap between subjective and objective from another direction. Setting aside temporarily the relation between the mind and the brain, we can pursue a more objective understanding of the mental in its own right. At present we are completely unequipped to think about the subjective character of experience without relying on the imagination-without taking up the point of view of the experiential subject. This should be regarded as a challenge to form new concepts and devise a new method-an objective phenomenology not dependent on empathy or the imagination. Though presumably it would not capture everything, its goal would be to describe, at least in part, the subjective character of experiences in a form comprehensible to beings incapable of having those experiences.

We would have to develop such a phenomenology to describe the sonar experiences of bats; but it would also be possible to begin with humans. One might try, for example, to develop concepts that could be used to explain to a person blind from birth what it was like to see. One would reach a blank wall eventually, but it should be possible to devise a method of expressing in objective terms much more than we can

**13. Similar remarks apply to my paper** "Physicalism,**"** *Philosophical Review* **LXXIV (i965), 339-356, reprinted with postscript in John O'Connor,** *Modern Materialism (***New York, I969).**

**14. This question also lies at the heart of the problem of other minds, whose close connection with the mind-body problem is often overlooked. If one understood how subjective experience could have an objective nature, one would understand the existence of subjects other than oneself.**

at present, and with much greater precision. The loose intermodal analogies-for example, "Red is like the sound of a trumpet"-which crop up in discussions of this subject are of little use. That should be clear to anyone who has both heard a trumpet and seen red. But structural features of perception might be more accessible to objective description, even though something would be left out. And concepts alternative to those we learn in the first person may enable us to arrive at a kind of understanding even of our own experience which is denied us by the very ease of description and lack of distance that subjective concepts afford.

Apart from its own interest, a phenomenology that is in this sense objective may permit questions about the physical[15] basis of experience to assume a more intelligible form. Aspects of subjective experience that admitted this kind of objective description might be better candidates for objective explanations of a more familiar sort. But whether or not this guess is correct, it seems unlikely that any physical theory of mind can be contemplated until more thought has been given to the general problem of subjective and objective. Otherwise we cannot even pose the mind-body problem without sidestepping it.[16]

***Thomas Nagel, 1974***

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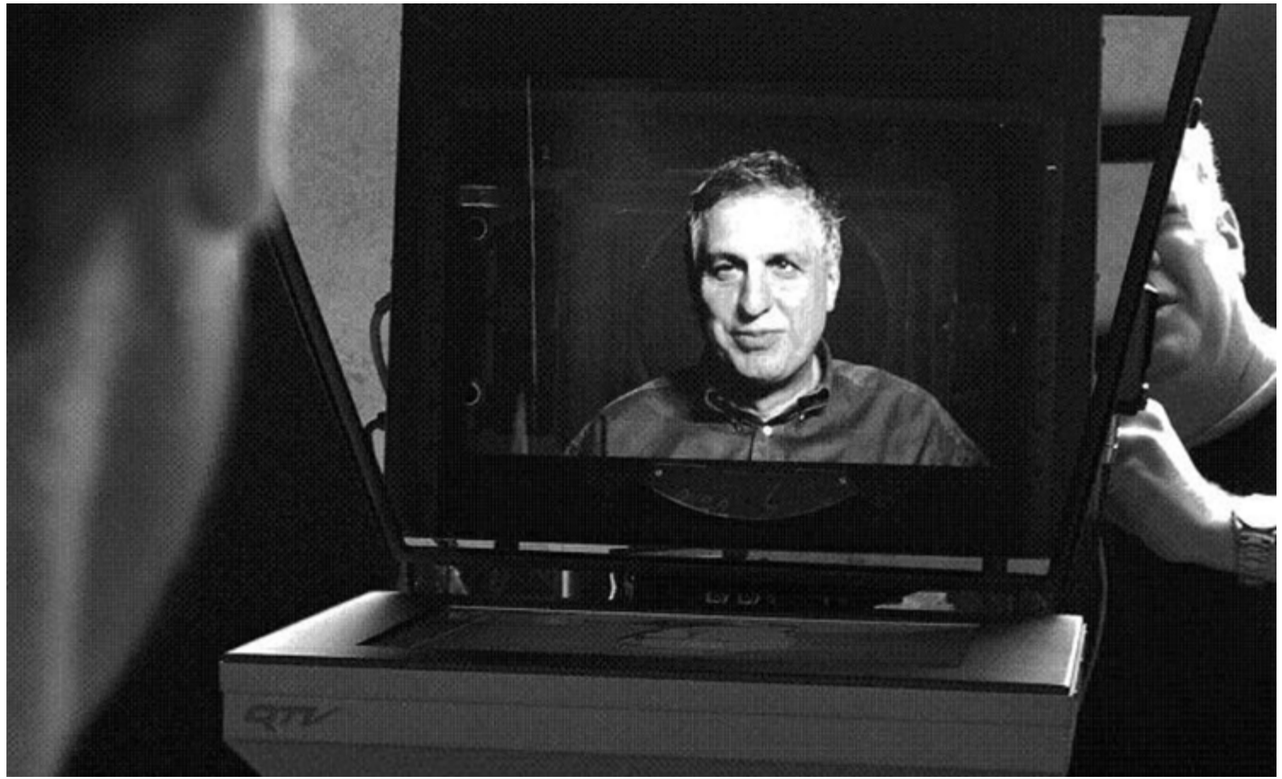
**15. I have not defined the term "physical." Obviously it does not apply just to what can be described by the concepts of contemporary physics, since we expect further developments. Some may think there is nothing to prevent mental phenomena from eventually being recognized as physical in their own right. But whatever else may be said of the physical, it has to be objective. So if our idea of the physical ever expands to include mental phenomena, it will have to assign them an objective character-whether or not this is done by analyzing them in terms of other phenomena already regarded as physical. It seems to me more likely, however, that mental-physical relations will eventually be expressed in a theory whose fundamental terms cannot be placed clearly in either category.**

**16. I have read versions of this paper to a number of audiences, and am indebted to many people for their comments**



# INTERROTRON

## *13 Questions and Answers on Filmmaking of Errol Morris by Errol Morris*

Q: Is it true that you interview people using a machine?

A: Yes, the (patent pending) Interrotron. It's a machine that uses existing technology in a new and novel way. When I made my first film, Gates of Heaven, I interviewed people by putting my head right up against the lens of the camera. It seemed as though they were looking directly into the lens of the camera, but not really. Almost, but not quite. Of course, they were looking a little bit off to the side.

Q: What's wrong with that? What were you trying to achieve?

A: The first person. When someone watches my films, it is as though the characters are talking to directly to them... There is no third party. On television we're used to seeing people interviewed sixty-minutes-style. There is Mike Wallace or Larry King, and the camera is off to the side. Hence, we, the audience, are also off to the side. We're the fly-on-the-wall, so to speak, watching two people talking. But we've lost something.

Q: What?

A: Direct eye contact.

Q: Eye contact?

A: Yup. We all know when someone makes eye contact with us. It is a moment of drama. Perhaps it's a serial killer telling us that he's about to kill us; or a loved one acknowledging a moment of affection. Regardless, it's a moment with dramatic value. We know when people make eye contact with us, look away and then make eye contact again. It's an essential part of communication. And yet, it is lost in standard interviews on film. That is, until the Interrotron.

Q: I don't get it.

A: I got tired of sitting so close to the camera. (In my early films, my cameraman would grab the back of my head and pull me back because you could see the side of my head in the lens. When he yanked me back, it often hurt.) And I started to wonder, what if I could become one with the camera. What if the camera and myself could become one and the same?

Q: You're losing me.

A: Well, not literally. Are you familiar with Teleprompters?

Q: Not really.

A: Well, Teleprompters are used to project an image on a two-way mirror. Politicians and newscasters use them so that they can read text and look into the lens of the camera at the same time. What interests me is that nobody thought of using them for anything other than to display text: read a speech or read the news and look into the lens of the camera.



Q: OK.

A: I changed that. I put my face on the Teleprompter or, strictly speaking, my live video image. For the first time, I could be talking to someone, and they could be talking to me and at the same time looking directly into the lens of the camera. Now, there was no looking off slightly to the side. No more faux first person. This was the true first person.

Q: It sounds like Buck Rogers. Were people willing to tolerate this?

A: I worried at first. Would it frighten people? Would they run out of the studio screaming? Who could say? I used it for the first time in Fast, cheap and out of control. And it worked like a charm. People loved the Interrotron.

Q: The Interrotron? Did you make up the name?

A: No, it was named by my wife, Julia Sheehan. She liked the name because it combined two important concepts — terror and interview.

Q: But doesn't the device intimidate people?

A: Oddly enough, no. It doesn't. People, if anything, feel more relaxed when talking to a live video image. My production designer, Ted Bafaloukos, said, "The beauty of this thing is that it allows people to do what they do best. Watch television." We often think of technology as working against the possibility of intimacy. But there are so many counter-examples. The telephone is a good counter-example. There are things we can say to each other on the phone that we would never say if we were in the same room. You know, "Being there is the next best thing to using the phone..." The Interrotron is like that. It creates greater distance and greater intimacy. And it also creates the true first person. Now, when people make eye contact with me, it can be preserved on film.

Q: Have you used it much?

A: Whenever I need to. I used it in a film that introduced the Academy Awards in 2002. Gorbachev, Laura Bush, Iggy Pop, Al Sharpton and Walter Cronkite have all been on the Interrotron.

Q: Did McNamara like it?

A: Well, you have to remember that we are talking about someone who has been interviewed a thousand times. He walked into the studio and said, "What is that?" I smiled and said, "The Interrotron." He said, "Well, whatever it is, I don't like it." But then he sat down, and we proceeded to record over twenty hours of interviews. I guess he came to like it, too.

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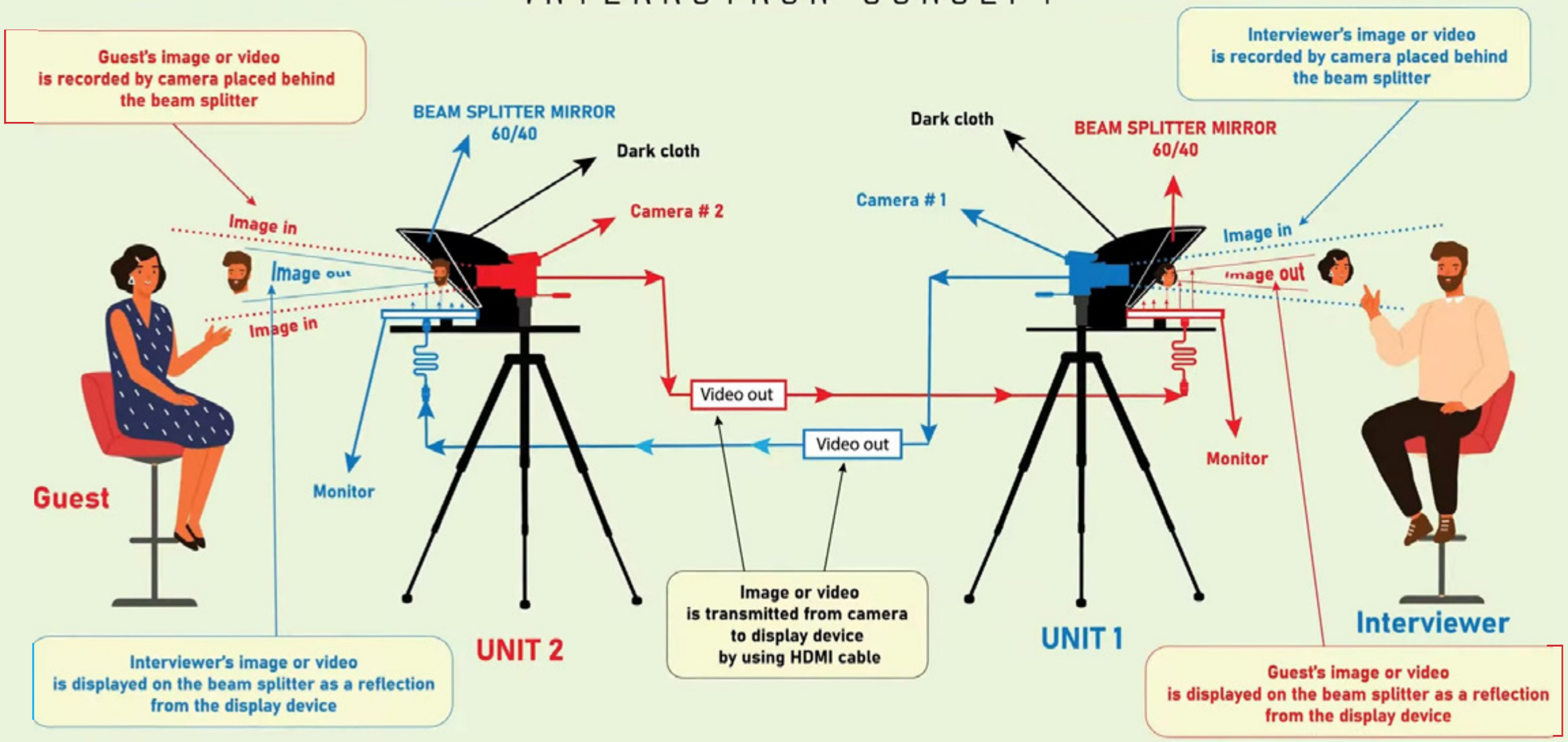
# INTERROTRON CONCEPT



# Comrade for All Seasons

When I first met him, Comrade Pansare was already a legend. It was at the CPI's Bhupesh Gupta Bhavan in Mumbai, where a few years before filmmakers protesting censorship at the Mumbai International Film Festival across the road had staged a highly successful parallel film festival called Vikalp. Following on our momentum we continued with monthly screenings of documentaries at Bhupesh, regardless of whether the film had acquired a censor certificate. So far there had not been any official interventions.

In 2007 we announced a screening of Sanjay Kak's new film on Kashmir, Jashn e Azadi. The audience had arrived and the film was about to start. Comrade Pansare who was visiting from Kolhapur was present when the police suddenly swooped in and ordered us to stop. Someone had told them we were showing "terrorist" propaganda and they were making enquiries on who we were and threatening arrests. It was here that Comrade Pansare stepped in. He literally ordered the police out, stating that they had entered private property without a warrant. For Pansare apart from being a longtime top leader of the CPI was also an accomplished labour lawyer. Such was his moral authority that the police withdrew without a word.

In the following years I followed Govind Pansare's work from a distance but really got to know him only after 16 February 2015, when he and his partner, Uma, were fired upon by two motor cyclists in Kolhapur who had tracked them returning home from their morning walk. Uma tai eventually recovered from her wounds but Comrade Pansare despite early signs of recovery passed away on February 20.

It is a blow that Maharashtra and India have yet to recover from. Only two years before, on August 20, 2013 a rationalist, Dr Narendra Dabholkar, had been gunned down by motorcyclists while he was on his morning walk in Pune. The eerie similarity forced me into cinematic investigation of these two murders. In the three-plus years it took to complete our film Reason/Vivek, two more rationalists, professor M.M Kalburgi and secular activist and journalist Gauri Lankesh were also gunned down by killers on motorcycles.The police and State however, while arresting a few of the pawns, seem completely averse to naming and investigating the masterminds.

Today I'm not here to elaborate on this glaring lapse of justice. I am here to do at least cursory justice to a true hero who lived his entire life and laid this life down so all of us could breathe the air of the just and secular democracy that our freedom fighters had fought, lived and died for.

Much of my appreciation for the life and work of Comrade Pansare began as I immersed myself in his speeches, writings and the persona I pieced together from those who had known and worked with him. I realized that Pansare was a communist who not only understood the full horror of caste, he was also someone always willing to make common cause against fascism. As Reason grew into a 4 hour epic covering the vast history and geography of India, much of Pansare's amazing down-to-earth vision could not find its way into the finished work, but those who watch what there is of him may not be able to help but marvel at his intellect, knowledge base, courage and through it all, his irrepressible sense of humor.

As I write this I am struck by the parallel with the life work and personal magnetism of Dr Narendra Dabholkar. Clearly the killers did not choose their targets off hand. They chose people who were successful in their appeal to the secular heart of India just as Mahatma Gandhi had been over half a century ago.

Again it is to Comrade Pansare I owe the knowledge that those who finally killed Gandhi in 1948 were Brahminists who had made six earlier such attempts starting as far back as 1934 ! At which point in time as Pansare pointed out, there was no concept of Pakistan. So it was not Gandhi the Muslim Appeaser that Brahminical Hindutva hated at this stage, but

the Gandhi who had defiled caste purity by insisting that everyone should do their own manual scavenging. This was the Gandhi who went on a hunger strike to reassure Dr B.R Ambedkar that Hindus could do away with untouchability, and to whom people responded by throwing open temples and wells to Dalits. This was the Gandhi who initiated the Poona Pact with Dr Ambedkar which first gave birth to the policy of Reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Newspapers of the day quote Ambedkar thanking Gandhi profusely for granting more reserved seats than had been asked for.

Another gem from Pansare that I retained in the film was his take on Shivaji. Shivaji whom the 19th century anti-caste leader Mahatma Jotiba Phule had shown to be a fighter for peasants and the underclass, had since been appropriated by the elite as an icon of Hindutva whose main identity was distorted to a Hindu king fighting Muslim rule in India. Pansare rescued him with his booklet "Who was Shivaji" published and translated into scores of Indian languages, where he pointed out that there were key Muslims in Shivaji's army and key Hindus in the armies of his Muslim opponents. It was not a Hindu Muslim war but a war against oppression.

Yet another Pansare contribution I retained was his defence of S.M Mushrif's book "Who killed Karkare", which is a shockingly plausible expose of the 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai in 2008. By now the whole world believes that the attack was the exclusive handiwork of 10 terrorists who came by boat from Pakistan and killed almost 200 people. What Mushrif exhaustively and painstakingly showed and what Pansare endorsed was that while a Pakistani terror attack did indeed take place it was restricted to a few hotels in South Mumbai. Indian intelligence had been warned in advance about this attack by US intelligence but this information never reached our coast guard or our Navy. Instead a parallel attack was simultaneously launched by Hindutva operatives whose main objective was to eliminate Hemant Karkare, chief of Maharashtra's Anti Terror Squad.

Hindutva terror had been operating with impunity since 2002 conducting a series of bomb blasts across the country and blaming them all on Muslims. Karkare had become dangerous to Hindutva as he was the first high ranking officer to begin a probe into these attacks, and had unearthed crucial evidence in the form of video and audio tapes of planning meetings recorded by the Hindutva operatives themselves. The probe had reached a critical stage with many confessing to their role. Among the accused were top ranking BJP leaders as well as army officers like Colonel Purohit accused of stealing and distributing army grade RDX that was used in several blasts.

A denouement to this case would expose a can of worms. Karkare had to be eliminated. He was killed, his death then passed off as the handiwork of Pakistan-based terrorists. Within a few years of his death all the Hindutva terror cases he had been investigating, including many where confessions had been made before independent magistrates were overturned. Today Pragya Singh Thakur, accused in the Malegaon bomb blast, is a BJP member of Parliament. Col Purohit, Aseemanand and almost all other Hindutva accused are out of jail.

Many feel that it was Pansare's vow to hold 150 meetings across Maharashtra to talk about "Who killed Karkare" which became the last straw that led to his murder.

I did not want to end on a note of utter despair so I closed the film with a quote from Govind Pansare who was ever the optimist. Like many progressives he believed that iniquity would inevitably lead the downtrodden to rise. "It will happen. It's not just a dream" he said, and paused, for much as he was a communist he was also a poet of the future – so he added, "And dreaming is no sin."

***Anand Patwardhan is a well known filmmaker.***

*The article was originally published in The Citizen, 21 Feb, 2022*

# An Interview With Anand Patwardhan

It happened during the 1988 International Film Festival of India (IFFI) held in Trivandrum. I was trying to persuade Anand Patwardhan to agree to receive the first copy of a book on Malayalam cinema at an official ceremony from the reputed film critic of The Guardian, Derek Malcolm. The author of the book was a friend of mine. Anand agreed to receive the book but not without posing a question to me : "Why Derek Malcolm? Is it because he is a white man?"

Many years later when *Films Division* interviewed Anand for a curtain-raiser film on Films Division for *MIFF (Mumbai International Film Festival for Documentary, Short and Animation films)*, I heard him saying: "Luckily, we need not refer to Ben Kingsley as Gandhi, since FD has the original Gandhi footage!"

Anand speaks so lucidly through his films and in person. That is why, even while working for an official documenting agency, I always go back to Anand`s films for measuring the actual height and weight of Indian history.

Every time I wake up for a sunrise shoot or patiently wait to capture a clear-sky sunset shot, I cannot help envying Anand. I cannot recall a single `beautiful shot` in his films — a shot devised for the sake of achieving beauty. It is the political conviction that illuminates his skies without bothering about the acceptibility factor, that strikes me over and over again. It is not for nothing that Anand`s films have withstood so confidently the test of time. And about the wrath of a nervous officialdom towards him and his films, it is only a cinematic addition to the good old stories of flourishing court poets aplenty juxtaposed with one or two poets of destiny.

Here is an interview with Anand Patwardhan.

**MATHRUBHOOMI**

JOSHY JOSEPH : "My film-making was not born out of a love for cinema", you said. You also have said that, "If you try to get into film-making as a career, then I think its not worth it." And here we are talking to film-maker Anand Patwardhan. What pushed you to film-making?

ANAND PATWARDHAN: I liked still photography and my mother had bought me a second hand enlarger, which we installed in the bathroom when I was about 15, but my love for cinema began after I started to make films and not really before this. In that sense I am an accidental filmmaker. The trigger for my first film footage was the anti-Vietnam War movement in the USA, which I had become a part of. I had a scholarship to study Sociology at Brandeis University, then a hot bed of anti-war protesters. We did many actions against the war and I borrowed a camera and filmed some of these. Later I also made a short film to raise

awareness and funds for East Pakistan refugees who were pouring into India in 1971. This was just before the war of Independence that led to the creation of Bangladesh. America, allied to Pakistan at the time, was in denial about the repression and murder launched by the Pakistani army and their collaborators, so our film was a reminder of what US policy was unleashing.

Filmmaking was far from my mind when I returned to India in 1972 and worked in a voluntary organization called Kishore Bharati where we tried to encourage scientific temper in rural education as well as tried to modernize farming techniques. In one of our fraternal organizations at Rasulia there was a clinic where doctors had noticed that Tuberculosis patients got cured but then often relapsed due to a lack of long-term care. So I made a 20 minute film strip using still photographs and a sound track on a cassette player to play for outpatients. Incidentally Dr. Binayak Sen had joined the clinic at Rasulia and worked there for several years not long after I left.

By 1974, I joined the Jayaprakash Narayan led Bihar Movement against corruption which escalated into a demand for Sampoorna Kranti (Total Revolution). I fell into filmmaking again when in November 1974 a big demonstration was planned in Patna. Expecting police violence the organizers asked me to take photographs that day. Instead I went to Delhi and recruited Rajiv Jain, a friend who had a Super 8 camera and an 8 mm camera. With this amateur equipment we filmed the November 4 Patna mass rally and the resulting police repression. I then went back to Delhi and projected the 8 mm footage on a small screen while another friend with a 16 mm camera filmed off this screen achieving a rough "blow up". I returned to Bihar with yet another friend Pradip Krishen who had recently bought an old Bell and Howell 16 mm camera that you need to wind up manually to shoot for 30 seconds at a time. All this led to the making of "Waves of Revolution" a film that went underground immediately after completion as by June 1975 a State of Emergency was declared by Indira Gandhi.

JOSEPH: So, your entry into films and your entity now as a film-maker were very much shaped by your politics. Does the search for your idiom of cinema and your ideology inter-twine? I will try to explain a bit. Although you do not mind being branded as "Indian Michael Moore", I somehow find a major difference between your idiom of cinema and Michael Moore's techniques. You have also expressed it – "He is guilty of striking too many blows even after his opponent is down for the count". Similarly, your observations about Fernando Solanas' *Hour of the Furnaces* – "I appreciated its directness and sympathies, but I remember not liking the form very much as it bombarded the viewer with slogans, rapid-fire cutting and authoritative textual interventions". The operative words are 'blows', 'bombarded' and 'authoritative'. Does the Gandhian in you search for a peaceful intervention through the medium of cinema? Does that define your idiom?

PATWARDHAN: It is true that I am drawn most to non-violent struggles for justice because I feel that violence even in a good cause ultimately dehumanizes us, but I wasn't quite aware that this preference influences my approach to cinema or my appreciation of cinema form. Now that you say it, it seems plausible. I never want to hit my audience on the head with a sledgehammer but am delighted if by pointing them in the right (or rather, left) direction my film makes them feel that it is they who came to these conclusions on their own. My job then is not the job of a bully who brainwashes them into submission but of a lawyer who slowly persuades them on the strength and weight of the evidence placed before them.

JOSEPH: Where should today's viewer locate your cinema with its tilt towards the Latin-American school of thought of *Imperfect Cinema* and in the backdrop of today's much hyped school of *Artistic Cinema*? Answer me in a detailed manner as these are aesthetic questions very much related to the political positioning of film-makers and their times?

PATWARDHAN: Just as I prefer to avoid labeling myself philosophically and politically as a Gandhian or a Marxist or now, an Ambedkarite, I also find the labels attached to cinematic form somewhat stifling and claustrophobic. *Imperfect Cinema* was a theory that grew out of the conditions of filmmaking prevailing in the 60's and 70's in Latin America where those fighting against brutal, oppressive regimes worked without funds and without good equipment and always under the threat of being caught, tortured and killed. This cinema bore the marks of its own birth passage so that scratched film, out of focus, hurriedly taken shots and jerky movements were worn proudly as a badge of courage under adversity. Working in India the threat to life was not so acute but I did face a similar paucity of equipment and funds, had to be secretive for fear of arrest and my early films reflect this. Later as I bought or borrowed better equipment and my own technical abilities improved by trial and error, my films began to have a different look and feel. Today the technology itself has changed dramatically so that even a newcomer to cinema can shoot brilliantly sharp and attractive images at a relatively low cost. There is no "imperfection" left except that, which is deliberately created and therefore quite artificial.

As for *Artistic Cinema* in truth I am rather allergic to the term. If there is such a thing as art, it is an unconscious activity and not a self conscious one. To me the self-conscious creation of art is not art, it is usually another three letter word starting with the letter 'C'. Adivasis who paint on their mud huts or artisan potters do not

call themselves artists. Their work is declared as art only when we put such objects into a frame and invite a certain kind of gaze. So I am wary of people who call themselves artists because I think that while this indefinable entity known as art may exist, it is the job of history and geography to recognize it. When something transcends time and space and is appreciated over decades and centuries and across cultures and national boundaries, it must have touched a universal truth, which we can, for want of a better word, call art.

JOSEPH : You were a fellow-traveller of Jayaprakash Narayan's anti-corruption movement in Bihar and also documented it with an 8mm camera in the black & white film, 'Waves of revolution'. What was J.P.'s answer to your question, that even Gandhians recognize and emphasize the class question. Since you could observe the JP Movement from within, I should ask you a question of the core difference between the anti-corruption movement of J.P. and Anna Hazare. What, how and why?

PATWARDHAN: Those were heady days for a 24 year old who had returned from an idealistic peace movement in the USA and then spent a few years in the intractable Indian countryside where the pace of change was terribly slow. The Bihar Movement was in contrast exhilarating with its promise of social, economic and political revolution. I saw people breaking their caste threads, landed families parting with land, students who vowed never to take dowry. The signs of danger were present though. JP had tried to rehabilitate the RSS because he had seen their dedication and commitment during famine relief work a few years earlier. In the national imagination the RSS was still the ideological force that killed Mahatma Gandhi. JP however was convinced that he and the Bihar movement could wean the RSS away from its religious hatred of minorities and forge a vibrant youth movement for social change. I was skeptical and even wrote articles in Everyman, a paper run by the movement, warning against the entry of the RSS. History has shown that while JP made no real headway in changing the RSS, the RSS was able to use JP to rehabilitate itself and become a national power to reckon with. In time the BJP was created, the Babri Mosque destroyed and India has never really recovered from that process of polarization.

In the post Emergency period JP became a figurehead that no one listened to. While he himself remained somewhat of a left socialist, talking of class struggle and arguing for the release of all political prisoners including Naxalites, Nagas and Mizos, he was soon sidelined and made irrelevant.

What is the similarity with Anna Hazare's movement? While Anna is in no way an equivalent of JP either in stature or in intellectual capacity and unlike JP is probably a votary of "honest" consumer capital development, there are unmistakable parallels and the distinct possibility that mistakes of the past shall be revisited. Today, as it was in 1974, there is undeniable public disgust with high and low levels of corruption. There is the iconic old man of integrity who is the symbol of the fight back. There is the RSS in the wings, the only organized force that may gain from all this. There are also those at the side of the old man who are warning him against falling prey to the RSS. Let us see what unfolds.

JOSEPH : Now in your latest film, 'Jai Bhim Comrade', you asked poet and activist Vara Vara Rao that while addressing the class question, the left ignored the caste question. Without pausing there, the film further commented about the left leadership being dominated by the upper caste comrades. How do you further your long quest and 'tryst with caste-destiny' in India, in 'Jai Bhim Comrade'?

PATWARDHAN: I am not trying to pass judgment on any individual or party nor do I want to undermine the tremendous contribution made by people who were not born in poverty and stigma but still chose to side with the oppressed.The film is an attempt to create the space for a dialogue on caste not just with the Left in all its myriad forms, but within the Dalit movement and with upper caste elements who are not even aware that a caste problem exists in this country. I think different sets of people will take away different things from the film. What I am happy about is the number of people across the class, caste and political spectrum who have told me that they could not sleep at night after watching the film.

JOSEPH : The Dalit Movement in Maharashtra is depressingly fragmented and is bereft of any vision ignoring the Dalit identity itself. One time rebel poet Namdeo Dhasal and Republican Party of India's Ramdas Athavale are co-opted by Hindutva forces. Your film has several real life episodes of the suicide of your friend and poet Vilas Ghogre and the cold blooded murder of fire-brand leader Bhai Sangare, which are also depressing. Unlike other 'festival circuit film-makers', since you took the depression in your film straight to the people (like BIT Chawl and Ramabai Colony in Mumbai) by premiering there, you addressed and engaged this depressive scenario, both in your film and in the Dalit unity, head-on. What then?

PATWARDHAN: The response from the Dalit community at large has been phenomenal. Not only are the numbers in the audience huge, 800 at BIT chawl and 1500 at Ramabai colony, people have stood up for 3.5 hours as chairs were not available. Everyday there are calls from different parts of the state and country to do more screenings.

The film is obviously fulfilling a felt need. People have seen their leaders fall prey to venality and compromise and yet they have no alternative but to join one or the other compromised political entities. So the dissatisfaction is great. I have shown many films to working class audiences in the last 40 years. This is the one film that draws huge crowds and rapt attention. Perhaps it is the language, the Marathi that is spoken in this region, perhaps it is the music but most likely it is because people feel betrayed by their leaders and identify with the clear voice of the dynamic youth in the film who speak uncompromisingly for radical change.

JOSEPH: Lets talk about literature for a while. Dalit writing in Maharashtra has got a deep-rooted strong presence unlike the Bengali Literature. The 'Dalit' word itself is alien to the Bengali dictionary. Although my friends like Palash Chandra Biswas are questioning the caste hegemony in Bengali literature, the general perception is that in a post-Tagorean period, the marginalized were brought to the mainstream discourse by writers like Mahasweta Devi. Writers are public intellectuals. What is the scenario in Marathi? In your film 'Jai Bhim Comrade', playwright Vijay Tendulkar attacks the Shiv Sena in a common man's language and tone. Do writers make their presence felt in public life? Does Marathi Dalit writing impact beyond literary circles?

PATWARDHAN: Here I have a confession to make. I read Marathi literature quite infrequently and with difficulty. My parents never spoke Marathi at home as my mother was from Hyderabad, Sindh. I grew up more or less with English as my mother tongue (except when speaking with my father's relatives), went to schools where the language of instruction was English. I really began to learn and speak Hindi well only when I joined the village project, Kishore Bharati in Madhya Pradesh and then later in the Bihar movement. My Marathi remains basic but has improved in the 14 years it took to make this film, though even now I grope for words when having to make a public speech in Marathi.

So it would be wrong to think that I approached this film from a literary perspective. What triggered it was my specific love for Vilas's poetry and music and later the poetry and music of others like him, like the dynamic Kabir Kala Manch.

As for the public role of Marathi writers, in recent times not many have passed the bravery test. While in the past Marathi writers, specially Dalit writers, had their glorious days of speaking for the masses and speaking out against injustice, in later years many so-called progressive writers who had been radical in their writings ended up kowtowing to whichever party came to power. Vijay Tendulkar and P. L. Deshpande are amongst the exceptions who withstood the wrath of fascist forces without blinking.

JOSEPH: "I liked literature until I started to take it up academically and then I got bored with it". Is it the case even now? If so, why? You think academics are boring people?

PATWARDHAN: You could put it that way. Sometimes they are not necessarily boring as people but their output is boring. They have learned the fine art of cross-referencing with or without using footnotes. For me a work of literature or even literary criticism falls flat on its face if it depends entirely on familiarity with another body of knowledge to which it endlessly refers. To understand T.S. Eliot you have to read Ezra Pound and to understand Pound, you read some Chinese texts and so on and on and on. Why? I want works to speak to me here and now, to feel and smell and taste it. Then if I get excited enough I will bother with the back-story.

What happens in the world of academics is not very different from what happens in the world of art. Big words and incomprehensible sentences pose as signifiers of brilliance. I confess to being bewildered at first, giving the work a large benefit of doubt and then slowly finding myself getting irritated because I trust the fact that I am not plain stupid and that if I just do not get the point of something there is a possibility that there is actually no point of import being made; that the beauty everyone is awed by lies merely in the dress up.

As a documentary filmmaker I constantly have to grapple with how to represent the complexity of everyday life. If I use a cinema language and code that is only accessible to a select few I could do rather well in circles that celebrate such an approach. But it would mystify and alienate others whom I want to reach out to. So while I never try to over simplify what I see, I do endeavour hard to bring out the most important aspects of a situation in a cinematic language that is clear and direct so that I am confusing only when the material in front of me is actually confusing.

JOSEPH : Are you an Atheist?

PATWARDHAN: I am an agnostic. I don't know if there is a thoughtful Creator or it all happened by accident. When one looks at Nature and how intricately inter-dependent all creatures are, the sheer genius of it makes you want to believe that we are all a part of a grand design. On the other hand how thoughtful can our Creator be if he/she also created evil and sorrow and suffering and death ? If he/she had such super powers why not create a happier world ? So I like what Bhai Sangare says at the end of Part One in Jai Bhim Comrade when he quotes the Buddha: "If God exists it won`t make any difference to you. If he doesn`t exist it still won`t make a difference. So the Buddha didn`t speak of God or of the soul or of the Supreme. He spoke about the existence of Man. He didn`t even speak about what happens after death. The Buddha only spoke of how we should conduct

ourselves on the journey between birth and death."

JOSEPH : I do not think that hell is God's idea and in that sense the binary of hell and heaven vanishes for me. Christ is an experience and that helps from my mundane anxious moments like the take-off and landing moments of the aircrafts I travel, to all the other travels in life. How do you keep your calm at your testing moments as a film-maker, like the most humane face I love to remember in 'Ram ke Naam', the Head Priest of the Ayodhya Temple who was so articulate, convincing and compassionate – priest Laldas – who later got murdered and the news reaches you … every time I see this film, I am gripped by that take-off / landing tremor. But Christ experience helps. What about you?

PATWARDHAN: I think it is possible to be spiritually and psychologically grounded without being at all religious. My father was like that. He had no irrational religious beliefs and yet he was more secure even at the age of 94, when death was around the corner, than anyone else I have met. He loved life but was ready to embrace death without the slightest regret. I am not like that. I think my lack of spiritual belief leaves me vulnerable and yet I cannot exchange it merely for the sake of comfort.

On the other hand though I have made many films against religious bigotry I am not intolerant of people who are genuinely religious specially if their religion teaches them to be just and tolerant to others as Gandhi's take on religion did, or Lincoln's did.

JOSEPH : You are so miserly with the first person singular, 'I' or 'me' in your films except in 'War and Peace', where you talk about your family roots in national politics and even the subsequent disillusionment. It was for the first time, viewers got to see Patwardhan universe with Patwardhan family. But in your writings (eg. Committed to the Universal, India and Pakistan : Film Festivals in contrast, The battle of Chile, Terror : The aftermath, The Good Doctor in Chattisgarh, The Messengers of Bad News, How we learned to love the Bomb, and Republic Day Charade), the connect between the narrator and the reader is so effortlessly established by 'you' (or 'I') being there. I do understand that 'you' don't have to be there in the narration in all the films, as you are very much present through your questions and the images you shoot – you handle the camera and you edit. Still this doubt lingers on. Is it something to do with the differences of the medium of cinema and the medium of writing? In cinema you have multiple tools and in writing, the only tool is words. And 'you' throw yourself more concretely. Am I making any sense to you?

PATWARDHAN: At the best of times I have tried to avoid or minimize commentary or narration. I really prefer the images and sounds I have captured to tell their own story, albeit with



help from me as an editor. On rare occasions I achieved this as in "Bombay Our City" where there is no voice over at all for the full 82 minutes. At other times when the images and sounds I had captured needed some explanation or some important backgrounding, I provided this through narration. In "In memory of friends" I used the words of Shaheed Bhagat Singh to comment on the India and Punjab of the 1980's.

In 'War and Peace' there was a special reason for using a first person narrative. BJP was in power and I knew I would be branded as an anti-national for making a film that questioned India's nuclear nationalism. So I began the film by telling the audience that my uncles had fought for India's Independence and spent many years in British jails i.e think twice before writing me off as a traitor.

Again when making "Jai Bhim Comrade" I chose not to have a voice over but used more impersonal inter-titles to give information or pointers throughout the film. This was because I did not want to become the focus of this film as there were far more important events and people that deserved attention. Of course as you say I am in the film, through questions, through camera, through editing and through the friendships I made.

JOSEPH: After the 'iron curtain' which existed during the cold war period, today there is a 'velvet curtain' in the world media which is a very tricky curtain. You fought and won many wars against state censorship and you wrote about 'velvet curtain' – "In many ways the censorship that is practiced in democracies today is much more insidious because the public is blissfully unaware of it. They are sucked in by the 'choice' of a 100 channels that serve up the same fare, sell the same soap and cola, provide virtually the same infotainment and the same Page 3 news, 24 x 7. They are so conditioned by this fare that they do not mind or even realize the total absence of the vital stories of our times". How to tear down this velvet curtain? Even after recording the other missing stories for almost four decades by now with a missionary zeal, don't you feel lost and somewhat preaching just to the church choir?

PATWARDHAN: Not at all. Everyday and at every public screening I attend brings with it the vindication that it has all been worth the effort. I get a huge amount of positive feedback from viewers. What I confess is frustrating is the low levels of distribution normally available to documentaries and consequently the fact that millions of Indians have never seen these films. Let us see how it goes. I think with 'Jai Bhim Comrade', at least in Maharashtra we may make a real breakthrough in terms of getting this film out to the masses.

JOSEPH: "It doesn't have to be high art for it to be useful", you said. Will you be embarrassed, if I

tell you that in my viewing experience, your film 'War and Peace' transcends as high art?

PATWARDHAN: I do think that if there is art, it is there in everyday life. There are times when one gets lucky and is able to capture such moments. I told you the example of the Pakistan schoolgirls debating nuclear war in "War and Peace". My camera viewfinder was not functioning. So I put the camera on auto focus and wide angle and blindly moved it to wherever the next voice came from. It became the best sequence in the film!

JOSEPH: You think fascism in India won't actually become full-blown fascism because of our centuries old democratic traditions and Arundhati Roy believes its not much the democracy, there is a kind of inherent anarchism which will save India. We just haven't the order and organization that fascism seeks in order to thrive. But when Arundhati spoke despairingly about virtually all existing non-violent movements and termed Mohandas Karachand Gandhi as 'perhaps our first NGO', you reacted sharply to that. You don't negate Marx for Gandhi and Gandhi for Marx. You have admitted that your ideal was always mixed. You wrote a paper in 1971 to integrate Fanon and Gandhi; for Fanon violence was necessary to overcome the sense of inferiority that the black man had internalized and for Gandhi only through non-violence could you dispel this inferiority. Don't you think our tribal uprising today, though in expression it is Maoist violence, but in essence, it is desperate in that expression, desperate to negotiate with the state which only responds to violence? Don't you think that violence is only its nature of expression, an attribute, not its essence? To quote our Pastor John R. Higgins, very similar to the Ayodhya priest Laldas – "The essence of water would be H2O; an attribute of water would be transparency". May be Arundhati was trying to make her point forcefully regarding this 'attribute – essence' core involved in the Maoist issue. What do you think?

PATWARDHAN: I don't have fundamental differences with Arundhati except that I have absolutely no romance of the gun. While my opposition to violence is gut level and instinctive I think violence has no pragmatic value either. I do not believe that in the 21st century a sophisticated Indian State can be overthrown by an armed struggle launched through the forests of India. So I fear for the lives of the bravest and brightest of our people who choose to make revolution by the force of arms as I see it as a form of suicide. I see adivasis being caught between State violence and the violence of the Maoists. Of course it is the State that must take the major blame for having expropriated the lands and livelihoods of the people. But the answer provided by the Maoists will not bring long term relief. I also see ordinary people, mostly Dalits, adivasis or other sections of the working poor who protest systemic violence being branded as Maoists as has happened with the Kabir Kala Manch. It is the unfolding of a tragedy.

JOSEPH : Let me slow down and ask you certain short and personal questions. Tell us about your association with ODESSA and your friendship with John Abraham and later with Sarat (C. Saratchandran).

PATWARDHAN: John had seen my films Prisoners of Conscience and A Time to Rise and invited me to join his Odessa team and travel through Kerala with a 16mm projector doing screenings from village to village. Later I did the same thing with Bombay Our City. It was a wonderful experience although my conversations with John were always funny as he was usually drunk and yet somewhere continued to make profound sense.

With Sarat there was a longer relationship which developed from our common desire to take cinema to the people. Sarat was one of the most selfless filmmakers I know, promoting the work of others without talking about his own substantial work that had documented all the major environmental and peoples' struggles in Kerala including the most famous one to oust Coca Cola from Plachimada. Sarat brought me to screen my films in Kerala several times and with his limited resources he even made a Malayalam version of my film Ram Ke Naam.

JOSEPH: I know Aravindan's 'Thambu' is one of your favourite films. I have a non-sub-titled copy with me which I will present to you. Why do you like 'Thambu'?

PATWARDHAN: Never thought about it, but initially perhaps because it so resembled a documentary. It was beautifully shot in dramatic black and white in what appeared to be available light, the plot was minimal and yet the characters in this working class traveling circus grew on you.

JOSEPH : Art and Politics were integrated in your family. Your mother was a Shantiniketan trained potter and your father was from a socialist family immersed in the struggle against British Rule. I had seen you accompanying your father in Pandit Bhimsen Joshi concerts. You lost both of them recently. You have dedicated 'Jai Bhim Comrade' to the memory of Sarat, Tarique Masud and your parents which is very touching. Tell us about your parents and your upbringing.

PATWARDHAN: It is hard for me to speak about my parents now as no day passes without me wishing they were still here. In consolation everyone tells me how lucky I am for having had them for so long but in a way when you spend 60 years of your life attached to two people their sudden absence becomes that much more difficult to bear. My mother passed away from cancer at 80 in 2008 and I have

still not even put away her things, not made a memorial website for her as I intended to do. She was one of India's first "artist" potters who specialized in glazing. Her book "Handbook for Potters" can be found with almost all glaze potters in India because she experimented on thousands of glazes, clays and temperatures with her immaculate chemistry work and hard physical labor and rather than keep the "secrets" she had discovered, she shared the fruits of her work in this recipe book of her experiments with glaze.

My father's absence I feel even more acutely. He passed in 2010 at the age of 94, perhaps from a common cold, which may have become pneumonia because his old heart was too weak to pump out the fluid. He was cheerful to the end and we had no inkling that these were his last days. He had always said that when the time came for him to go, he would go in an instant and he did exactly that. His brain remained sharper than mine right to the end. He could remember even cell phone numbers if you said them aloud just once so he was our directory and our encyclopedia. He cried when he saw movies and he laughed aloud at the drop of a hat and yet he was the calmest and gentlest person I have ever known, one who never once raised his voice in anger.

Needless to say I was lucky to have such parents. The other day I chanced to look at my birth certificate dated February, 1950. In the column where caste had to declared is written: Indian.

JOSEPH: One last question again expecting a lengthy answer – you like a diarist form in films but not a confessional one. "I haven't got to the stage where I want to bare my soul on camera." Why this aversion to confession? You think being confessional is a fashion with 'artistic cinema' and doesn't get along with your 'imperfect cinema'? But Gandhi was confessional. May be Richard Attenborough glossed over those aspects. Even your review in 'Economic and Political Weekly' entitled 'Gandhi : Film as Theology' had an intimate confessional quality of writing, from a film-maker. Why not bare your soul on camera?

PATWARDHAN: I am definitely neither as honest nor as self aware as Gandhi. Nor do I believe that everything I do, good or bad, is a lesson others can learn from one way or the other. So I do not want my personal life on air. I don't want to live in a fish bowl with people gazing in. My films are another matter. I do want people to gaze on them. That is the difference.

*Joshy Joseph is a filmmaker from Kochi. He specializes in subjects on north east. He has authored two books in Malayalam and regularly writes in the esteemed 'Mathrubhumi Weekly'.*

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Jorge Müller Silva and Patricio Guzmán

## Interview | Patricio Guzmán on The Battle of Chile

**9/11,** 1973, the Chilean military, with the support of the United States, overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende. The filmmaker Patricio Guzmán was 32 years old at the time, and had been filming the events leading up to the coup for a year and a half—in marches, on the backs of trucks, inside the chambers of commerce. When the military finally bombed La Moneda, Chile's White House, Guzmán was there to film it. The footage he captured from this period formed the core of the extraordinary oeuvre of documentaries Guzmán produced in the following decades, particularly his epic The Battle of Chile (1978-80), which endures to this day as a furious witness to a terrible history.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the coup, Icarus Films and Cinema Tropical are co-presenting a nearly full retrospective of Guzmán's works across New York City this September. A new restoration of Guzmán's debut 1972 documentary, The First Year, which chronicles the initial 12 months of Allende's presidency, will play at Anthology Film Archives, and a crisp, 2K restoration of The Battle of Chile will screen at the Brooklyn Academy of Music for a week. Finally, IFC Center will present a number of Guzmán's more recent works, including My Imaginary Country, about the mass popular uprising in Chile in 2019.

In The Battle of Chile, Guzmán paints an

all-encompassing portrait of a people-powered government under siege from military and economic warfare. The sweeping, tripartite film moves from public marches to copper mines, government proceedings to union meetings, gatherings of the upper class to the slums. We see the struggle for power—and the horrors that ensue—unfold in vérité time. In a particularly intense moment at the end of the first part, "The Insurrection of the Bourgeoisie," the frame freezes on the visage of a soldier brutalizing a protester. "This is the true face of the Chilean military," announces Guzmán in voiceover. The soldier aims his gun straight at the lens; the camera falls, and the image spins towards the sky. It was the last shot that Guzmán's collaborator, Argentine cameraman Leonardo Henrichsen, would ever take. The making of this film was a matter of life and death.

When General Augusto Pinochet seized control of the country in 1973 and established a military dictatorship, Guzmán was captured and held prisoner in Chile's national stadium. Eventually released and forced into exile, he finished editing the film in Cuba, and screened the first part at the 1975 Cannes Film Festival. Jorge

Army Arrests, September 11, 1973

Left to right, Bernardo Menz, Patricio Guzmán, Jorge Müller Silva and Federico Elton



Müller Silva, the main cameraman on the film, was captured, tortured, and never found again.

Since the end of Pinochet's dictatorship in 1990, Guzmán has been making lyrical, elegiac documentaries about Chile's past and present. Last week, I spoke with the filmmaker, now 80 years old and based in Paris, about the thrilling and disturbing magnum opus that is The Battle of Chile, his memories of the coup, his magical meeting with Chris Marker, and his commitment to hope in the face of defeat.

SAMUEL BRODSKY: One of the things I didn't know about the 1973 coup, even as a Chilean, but learned from watching The Battle of Chile, was how the the right waged economic war against Allende—how the opposition, the upper class of Chile, got together with the United States to strangle Allende's economy and bring about panic.

PATRICIO GUZMAN: Well, it began when the right started to hide merchandise and food in a popular and institutional way. The popular way was that any housewife or group of neighbors from the upper-class neighborhoods would hoard food and groceries. This immediately caused a shock in the distribution of goods. You went to buy groceries and there was nothing left. The news outlets blamed it on the government, saying it was socialism that was behind it.

BRODSKY: There's a humorous moment near the beginning of the first part of the film when a woman is interviewed on the street, eating ice cream. You ask her how she feels about the food shortage, and she says something like, "Well, I don't think there is a food shortage, because I haven't lost an ounce of weight!"

Yes, there was this sense of loyalty among the people. Even though things were hard at times, they were exciting, emotional. The right wing was constantly making you think that everything was about attack and attack until we got to total chaos. They made speeches on various ultra-right-wing radio stations. And, well, Allende constantly presented bills that were systematically rejected in both chambers of government. But still, there were certain loopholes, certain corridors, that the government took advantage of to squeeze in all kinds of things, so that the distribution of food, objects, products was not completely paralyzed.

BRODSKY: The sense of solidarity among the people, as depicted in the film, is quite touching.

GUZMAN: We understood what it meant to participate, because under the other governments it was: you vote and you move on. But to participate in this case meant working—and that was quite a lot. Sometimes it was hard to load a train with sacks of flour, for example, to distribute among the people. We were doing that while also making the film. It was physically and mentally

taxing, to defend the government you elected with your body.

BRODSKY: It's interesting that the strikes we see in the film are led by the upper classes, the businessmen, the folks who're usually opposed to strikes. There's a contradiction there, right?

GUZMAN: Well, the whole country began to experience a right-wing war against Allende and his government. Roads were blocked. Buses stopped running. And even the port of Valparaíso was partly blocked up. This class did not want to do what the government was telling them to do, which was basically to relinquish some of their power, some of their wealth. And since Chile was on the verge of bankruptcy at the time, it was complicated. Foreign debt was increasing, and it looked huge. Allende could not say, well, since there are no trucks, we are going to buy 50 million trucks. It was impossible. It was a strike that could not be easily neutralized, and they wanted to create conditions that would encourage a coup.

BRODSKY: Can you tell me how you met Chris Marker and how he helped with The Battle of Chile?

GUZMAN: Chris arrived in Chile in 1971, soon after Allende had been elected. Chile was being visited by all sorts of Europeans at that time, who were coming to see how it was possible to make a democratically elected socialist government, and turn around the capitalist system. They came from Poland, Germany, France, Spain, and among them was Chris Marker. He thought it was a good subject to make a film about. He came to my house because he knew I had made a film about Chile [The First Year] and was making another one. He knocked on the door and said, "Hi, I'm Chris Marker." I froze. I already knew him. There was a film of Chris that all of us in Chile had seen.

BRODSKY: Which one?

GUZMAN: La Jetée. So I told him that I knew him, and that I admired his work very much. I said to him, take a seat, please, and he sat down like any other visitor, and we had a cup of tea. It was a surreal situation because we didn't know each other. But he was a genius of documentary filmmaking. I was wide-eyed. Then he suddenly said to me, "I've come to buy your film. Yesterday I saw it, and I decided to buy it from you to show it in Paris." I must have been just under 30 years old, and I was ecstatic. I agreed to send it to him by mail, and he left for France.

BRODSKY: That was The First Year?

GUZMAN: Yes. We had just started the process of making The Battle of Chile, because things were getting tense in Chile—there were feelings of pre-civil war. But we didn't have any





film. The only importer of Kodak film in Chile had closed and we didn't have any left. So we wrote to Chris and asked for help. The answer was a one-line telegram. It just said: "I will do what I can. Chris."

I then began to form the team. There were about four of us: Jorge Müller, who would later be assassinated shortly after the shooting of the film; Bernardo Menz, the sound engineer, only 18 years old at the time; José "Pepe" Bartolome, a Spaniard who was passing through Santiago who helped with production; and me. Then, a month later, a parcel arrived at the Santiago Airport directly from Kodak. In the package was over 40,000 feet of black-and-white film stock, approximately 14 hours, and sound equipment. You could never have imagined how happy we were. Thanks to Chris, we were able to shoot the film.

BRODSKY: I'm curious about the critical reception of The Battle of Chile here in the United States. One of your first fans was the film critic Pauline Kael. Did anybody in the U.S. criticize you or the film for exposing the involvement of Henry Kissinger and the CIA in the coup?

GUZMAN: In the United States, this film had a splendid run. Next to me, right now, I have a big poster, and it says "Spectacular," in English. And below that it says The New Yorker. And there's another one that says "Magnificent," and below that it says The Village Voice. The film primarily circulated in New York and San Francisco. It's still as successful today as it was 50 years ago. That's unusual for a documentary film. It is very modern in style; it doesn't look like a film from 50 years ago. The style, the agility of the film, the way of narrating the facts with a very brief voiceover.

BRODSKY: When the first part of the movie was released in the United States, did you visit New York and San Francisco?

GUZMAN: No, I sent my production manager, Federico Elton. I stayed in Cuba, finishing the other two parts. I became less involved in distribution, but I did exhibit the film in France and Spain. It was an amazing time for the team, because in Chile there was this massacre with the coup, and the country was being transformed into something else, but we had the magnificent job of documenting precisely how that disaster happened and of making it known.

BRODSKY: It's impressive how the film has these moments of great suspense—it feels like a thriller, or an action movie at times. Was it always your intention to imbue The Battle of Chile with those elements?

GUZMAN: Well, whenever you make a movie, you rely on an essential element. In the case of The Battle of Chile, it was easy because it was pure action. Everything that happens

*Chilean Army troops firing on the La Moneda Palace in Santiago on Sept. 11, 1973. Credit: Agence France-Presse — Getty Images*

in the film is an action. Everything we filmed was in movement. A minister was moving, a factory was moving, the police were moving around, hundreds of thousands of people were mobilizing and moving around. The best thing for the viewer is to see the action unfold as it happens, as if they were there.

BRODSKY: I wanted to ask you about the current situation in Chile. The recent plebiscite, in which the new constitution was rejected by voters, was a huge defeat for the left in Chile. After 50 years, the country still operates under Pinochet's constitution, and the mass protests of the last three or four years came to a halt with that defeat. How do you feel about the future of Chile? Can something like Allende's revolution come about again?

GUZMAN: I believe that there will be another revolution, but it will take a long time. There are a lot of young people in Chile with good hearts. They are prepared and they are the most enthusiastic. But they are young. The country is full of businessmen and old tigers. It's hard with that system in place, when those people control a large part of the country. But ultimately, I have hope. I always have hope.

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*Samuel Brodsky is a filmmaker, producer, and writer living in New York City.*

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(Salvador Allende, addresses the crowd in Santiago, Chile, August 30, 1970 (Credit: AP Photo))

***INDEX***
***Films***



***INDEX***
***Filmmakers***





***INDEX***
***Languages***

# Festival Team

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