



# CULTURE CULT

VOL. 01 NO. 02

NOVEMBER 2015

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*Self portrait of Noriyoshi Ohrai (1935 - 2015)*

# CULTURE CULT

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*A Magazine of the Arts, Literature and Culture*

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## WRITE TO US

We would greatly appreciate your feedback and comments regarding any of the pieces published in this issue. We will be printing a selection of the letters in our forthcoming issues.

**NOTE:** Letters may be edited before publication for clarity purposes. We would abstain from 'expurgation'.

Mail your letters to [CultureCultin@gmail.com](mailto:CultureCultin@gmail.com).

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If you wish to contribute to our publication, you are more than welcome to **WRITE FOR US**. Please refer to **page 99** for details regarding how to submit.

First phase of submission is open till **November 30**.

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SYED AMIR MILAN

*The Demarcation [CC] indicates the end of a particular segment [CC]*

# EDITORIAL

## *Two eyes. Two paintings*

I have never been an atheist. If the rider of absolute honesty be imposed, I may go so far as admitting that it was a due to a propensity in the major part of my teenage years to turn the other way, rather than any soundproof conviction, that would lead me to 'believe' that God did not exist.

It would be anger or disappointment, underexpressed emotions of a child trying to play a self-conceived version of his adult self.

It would inevitably be the wrath - the bad dices of life that would make the self seek refuge. It would find cushion in the turbulent alleys of imagination, which would display all the traits of a true artist while painting hope in absolute chaos.

With age, however, the works of the other true artists in this world and those *beyond* began to slow down the march of the automated, proud modern mind and it wasn't long before the brain, in a blind, instinctive lunge at comprehension, began piecing together shards of new experiences, lived through words, sounds and visuals that remained unchanged in forms but for the way I was to interpret them.

"The mysteries of creation - the creation of the arts - was to be unravelled" was the original idea which later adopted the standing tagline, "so as to follow in those footsteps". A few solved ones and the idea of the unsolved infinite is all it takes to feel a sense of unfathomable awe towards the architect, the composer, the director of the grandest piece of drama at play around this life of ours and in the stars beyond.

And yet, in a day and age marked by the capricious power play by self-appointed religion representatives, theism has been reduced to being a sceptre for gross misrule. The dishevelled unity of mankind has been further partitioned by groups advocating varying means of invoking the omnipresent.

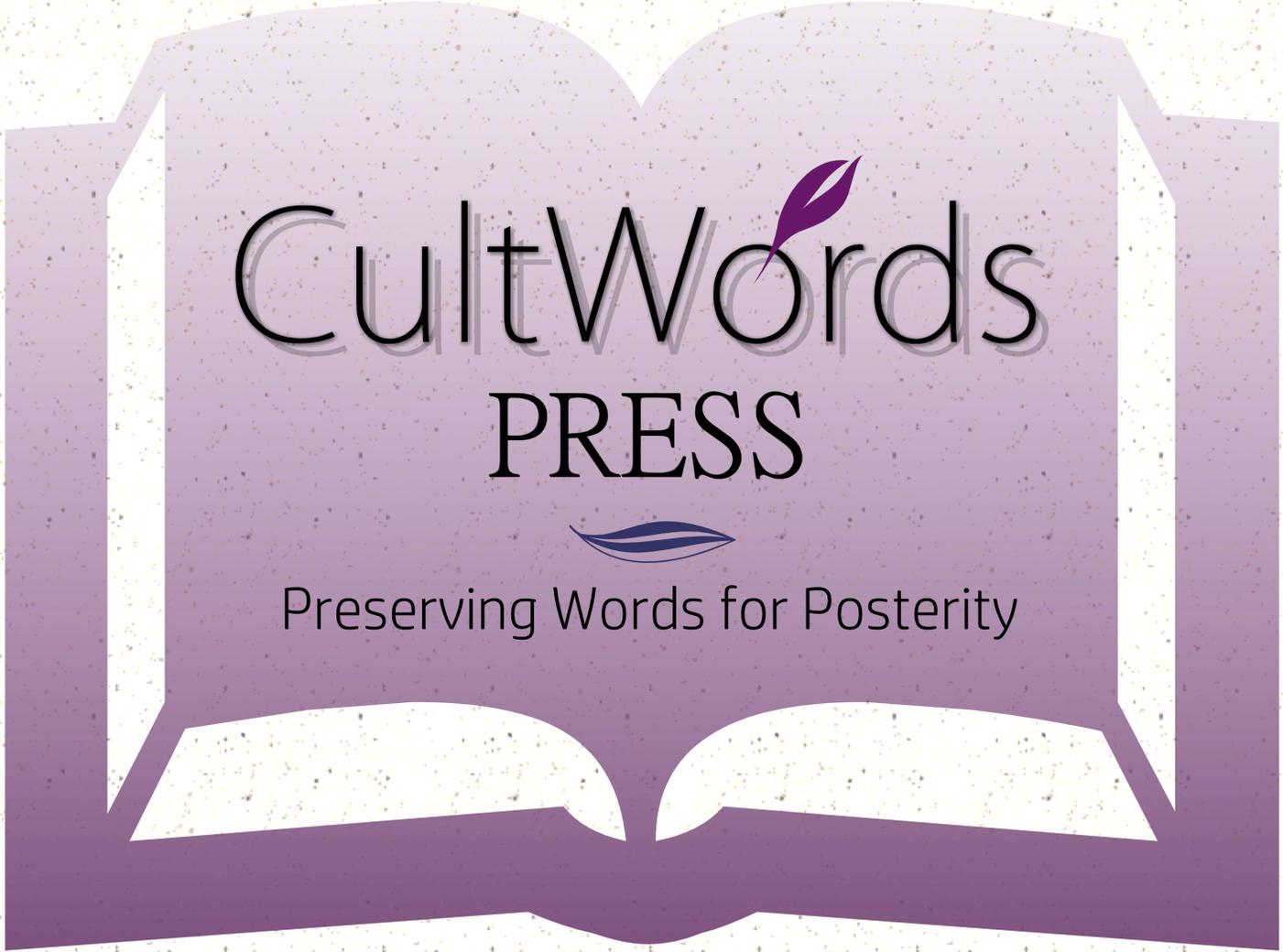
I believe atheism is undoubtedly the better alternative during such a time - *that* atheism which is as sound a system of belief as religion at their finest. Atheism cannot be the "Godless' by mere declaration", "conceptually hollow" form that I would mean to practise in my teens. The best among the atheists I have come across are ones who do not *require* the concept of God to lead their lives for the fact that they have already invested all of that belief in themselves and their fellow human beings - a trait they tend to share with the best of believers.

I confess I may not be capable enough to ever be either of the 'best'. Yet I daresay it would have been enough for me if I could forget exactly *when* and under *which* circumstances I wrote this down - if only I could retain the *what* and forget the *how*; maybe after a hundred dark nights' hence!



JAGANNATH CHAKRAVARTI  
EDITOR

*... it would be  
enough for me if I  
can forget exactly  
when I wrote all this  
down... a hundred  
dark nights' hence!*



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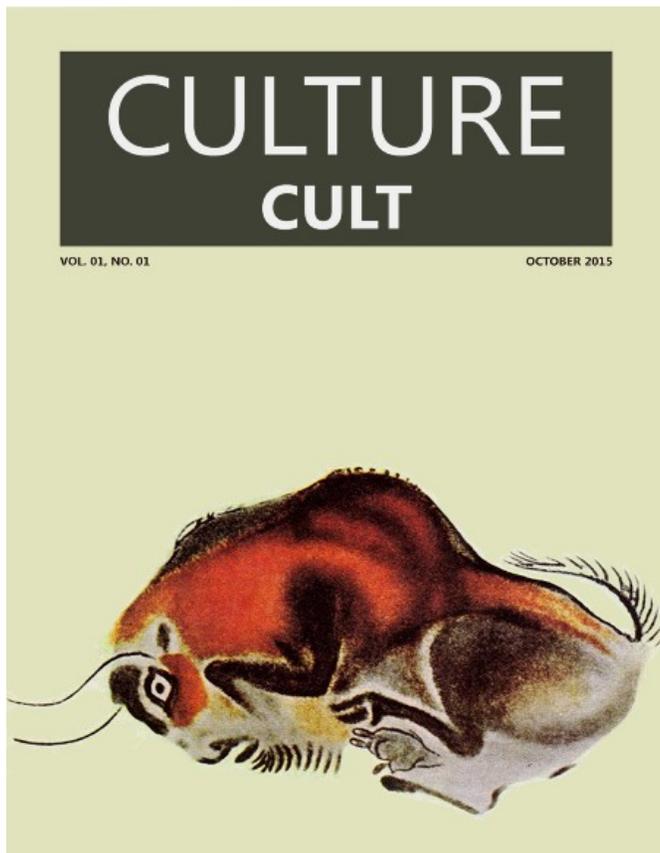


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# CORRESPONDENCE



## OPPOSING AGGRESSION

As novel as the idea of the column 'Ban Culture' appeared on paper, it was unfortunate to find that the article 'Naked Aggression' was thoroughly biased as far as the views of FEMEN (the radical group of women falsely calling themselves 'Feminists') are concerned.

What the article fails to convey the group's escalating, provoking attacks on anything that has to do with Islam which leaves very little difference between the group and the fundamentalists they intend to criticise.

How such a group can ever bring about a change in mindsets is beyond me. Their flashbulb hogging actions and tactics are a blight in the name of feminism and have seldom appeared to be anything but a gimmick. The writer should have addressed their nearly militant attitude before dragging in references of Simone de Beauvoir and citing credible examples of social activism from the world over, alongside FEMEN.

- Pritha Sharma, Pune, India

Letters may have been edited for clarity.  
Send in your opinions and feedback to  
CultureCultin@gmail.com

## OODLES OF TALENT

Dropping by a word of heartiest congratulations to the team of CultureCult who have, in their very first issue, succeeded in engineering a brilliant feat in independent publishing by creating something that has the potential to go places!

Great choice of writing, artwork, design. Everything about this magazine oozes oodles of talent. Here's wishing CultureCult all the luck for a promising future ahead. Keep churning out the beauties!

- Jayati Sinha, Kolkata, India

## MEMENTO MORI

It was good to see a proper homage to Sombhu Mitra in the October issue of your magazine. The curse of oblivion is a disease which we suffer from greatly as we conveniently brush aside the past every single day. It is good to find a new endeavour putting as much emphasis on the present as on the past.

A word of thanks for the retrospective of Sunil Das. His unfortunate death has been a jolt for the art world but those of us left have very little to do except remembering the dead with reverence when the inevitable happens.

-Ashok Kiran Paul, New Delhi, India

## DISCOVERING JIBANANANDA

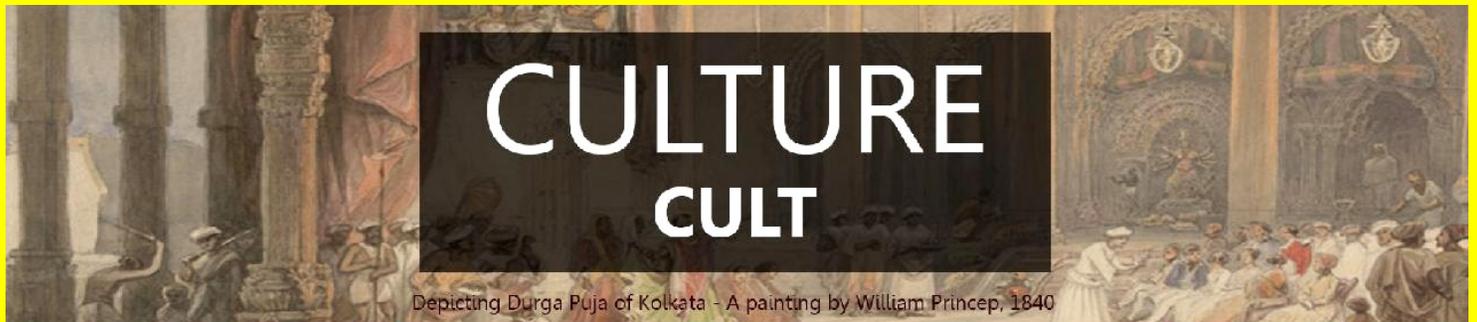
The best thing about your first issue was the poetry, especially 'Ayalan' by Adisa Obasanjo and 'Warmth' by Ankit Kaushal.

The serial - Siddhartha Pathak's 'Cross Eyed Sleep' seems to be off on a grand note while Herbert H. Hoffman's 'Plethora and Wholesale Too' is a funny but enduring little tale about modern society!

But the cake would go to the translations of Jibanananda Das' poems. I have seldom come across a piece of poetry as hauntingly mesmerizing as 'Twenty years hence'. I can't even imagine how they must be in the original.

- Brian Lorre, Hobart, Australia

# get initiated...



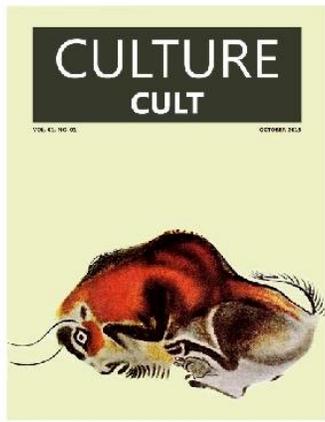
Depicting Durga Puja of Kolkata - A painting by William Princep, 1840

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OCTOBER 2015

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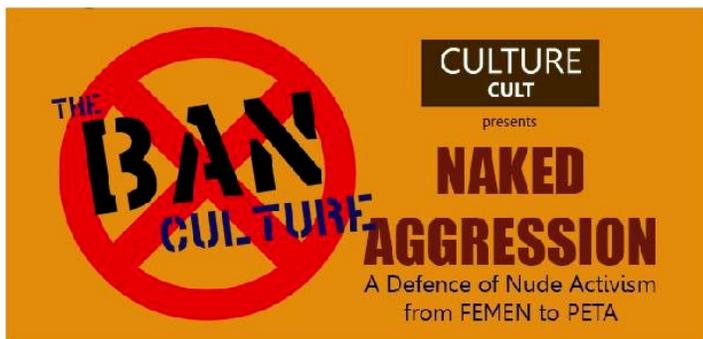
NEW ON CULTURECULT



Serial Novel: Cross Eyed Sleep (Part 1) - Excerpt



The Ban Culture: Naked Aggression



CULTURE CULT presents **NAKED AGGRESSION**  
A Defence of Nude Activism from FEMEN to PETA

COLUMN / THE BAN CULTURE 30 OCT, 2015

## The Ban Culture: Naked Aggression

THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN CULTURECULT MAGAZINE'S OCTOBER 2015 ISSUE AS A PART OF THE COLUMN 'The Ban Culture'. Read the full issue [HERE](#) The assaults are not so much on the senses as...



FICTION / SERIAL 3 NOV, 2015

## Serial Novel: Cross Eyed Sleep (Part 1) - Excerpt

EXPOSITION David Mondal has always possessed the singular idea in his head that human beings sleep with their eyes crossed under a veil of the assorted lids and lashes.



COLUMN / THE BAN CULTURE 30 OCT, 2015

## The Ban Culture: Naked Aggression

THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN CULTURECULT MAGAZINE'S OCTOBER 2015 ISSUE AS A PART OF THE COLUMN 'The Ban Culture'. Read the full issue [HERE](#) The

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Review: Hashuli Baker Upakatha

Article: ISIS and the "Art" of Culture Cleansing

Review: Manjhi - The Mountain Man

Review: Anubrata bhalo acho?

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Serial Novel: Cross Eyed Sleep (Part 1) - Excerpt

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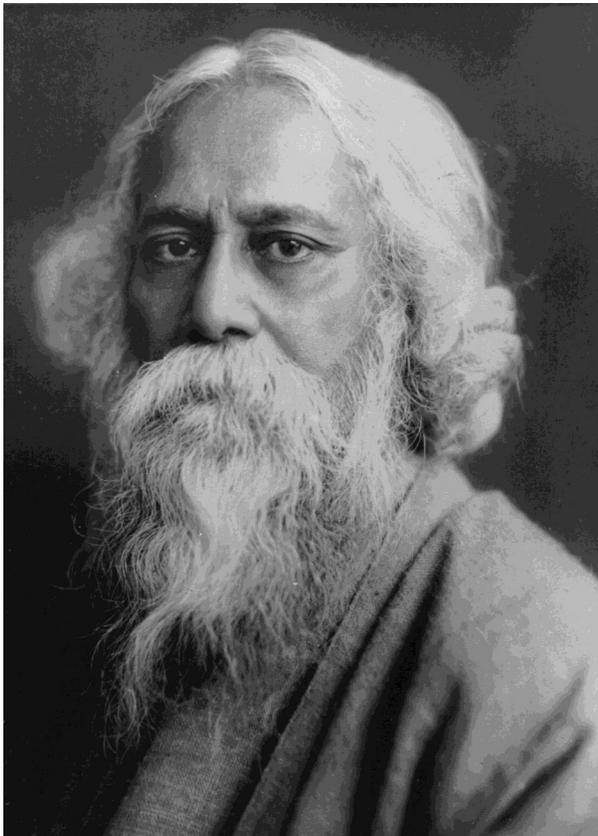
*A column that **defends** what are generally regarded to be **afflictions**, plaguing the extant **cultural** setup.*

*Of course, the magazine does not necessarily subscribe to the views expressed in the article.*

*Remarks/counter criticisms can be mailed to [CultureCultin@gmail.com](mailto:CultureCultin@gmail.com) for publication in our next issue.*

# Of Awards and Premonitions

*Rounak Chatterjee*



*Rabindranath Tagore*

In lands of government by the people, the sort of award given out on the consensus of a band of juries hand-picked by elected representatives of the nationals is considered to the highest honours in their respective crafts. The idea to be remembered even centuries from the present with hopes that democracies would survive and recognise them in lieu of these official honours conferred on the country's greatest practitioners in their respective fields of excellence, whatever be that may.

The reason why the citizens have high opinion of these felicitations is their deep regard for the constitutional process itself. Although activism and protests have never been scarce in these nations, a Grand Croix French Legion of Honour or a Padma Bhushan, a Knighthood or any exceptional service award by a country is generally revered in a nation which has respect for itself, if not for its present government.

Sometimes, as has happened in India during the past month and more, the awards are returned to the 'government' as a show of protest, expressing symbolic solidarity with a view shared by a large number of the populace.

**Repudiation of the Knighthood by  
Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore as  
communicated to Lord Chelmsford,  
the then Viceroy of India.**

*Your Excellency,*

*The enormity of the measures taken by the Government in the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has, with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilised governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent and remote.*

*Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organisation for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification. The accounts of the insults and sufferings by our brothers in Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India, and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been ignored by our rulers- possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine as salutary lessons.*

*This callousness has been praised by most of the Anglo-Indian papers, which have in some cases gone to the brutal length of making fun of our sufferings, without receiving the least check from the same authority, relentlessly careful in something every cry of pain or judgment from the organs representing the sufferers. Knowing that our appeals have been in vain and that the passion of vengeance is building the noble vision of statesmanship in our Government, which could so easily afford to be magnanimous, as befitting its physical strength and normal tradition, the very least that I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised into a dumb anguish of terror.*

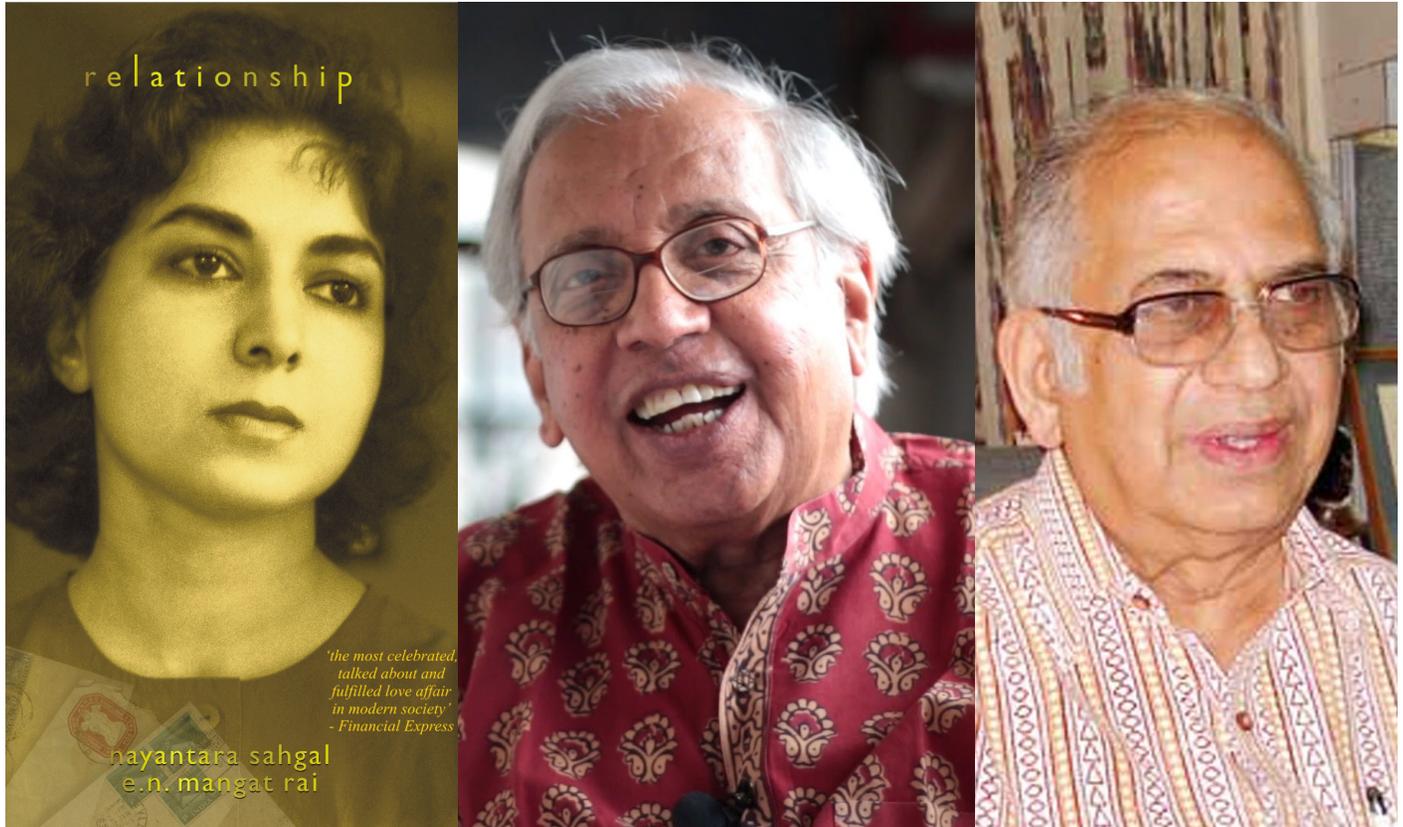
*The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part, wish to stand, shorn, of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my*



*countrymen who, for their so called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings.*

*And these are the reasons which have compelled me to ask Your Excellency, with due reference and regret, to relieve me of my title of knighthood, which I had the honour to accept from His Majesty the King at the hands of your predecessor, for whose nobleness of heart I still entertain great admiration.*  
*Yours faithfully,*

*Rabindranath Tagore  
Calcutta, May 30, 1919*



'Growing Intolerance' being the magic words on this occasion, the usual compound ripostes were inflicted one after the other from each side. A slew of writers felicitated or belonging to the Sahitya Akademi being the first to strike, it was soon followed by a man of science, P M Bhargava, returning his Padma Bhushan. As the usual delegates of the government began retorting strongly, the members of the so-called 'intelligentsia' hit back with filmmakers joining the fray and returning their national awards. The Nayantara Sehgal and Mandakranta Sens were joined by the likes of Dibakar Banerjee and Anand Patwardhan.

It is hard to argue with the fact that the reasons cited for these returns, from the killing of rationalist MM Kalburgi to the rampant use of partisan and inflammatory comments by elected representatives and those close to the government. This month, it even ended up involving the biggest showbiz icon in the Indian subcontinent, the mighty Shah Rukh Khan. While backing those returning these awards, his acceptance of the fact that intolerance was a reality, prompted an MP and general secretary of the ruling party to directly attack King Khan's religious identity,

ironically strengthening the 'intolerance' point in no small terms.

It is natural enough for opinions to be varied in a multifarious nation such as ourselves and logically enough, it does not come off as much of a surprise that there are voices, blatantly advertising for the government or wondering out loud quite naturally, that question the actual value these acts of renunciation may have in terms of tangible result.

These acts have prompted belittling statements from their peers as well, with avid party loyalist and esteemed actor Anupam Kher vehemently deriding the statement (even as he protested the verbal missiles directed at Shah Rukh Khan) and superstar Kamal Haasan invoking the separation of culture and state, arguing that awards were given by eminent juries and had nothing to do with the government.

The most alarming fact among this assemblage of arguments and counter arguments is the vilification of the act of sacrifice itself.

As India is systematically reminded of the vague glory of a distant cultural past, it has chosen to



overlook a history more recent, at a time when our nation was yet to achieve its right to choose a 'ruler' every five years. The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre by the British in 1919, which left nearly a thousand dead, compelled the nation's first Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore to return the Knighthood he had received from the Empire in 1915.

If one is inclined to argue that a symbol of achievement as a Nobel is required to do something the laureate dared to, one must realise that the person is questioning the national set-up itself by devaluing the recognitions of the constitutional process that has also brought the present government in power.

If the base accusation of craving for the quarter hour of fame is seen in an unflinching light, it is, at best, a sound excuse to bring to national attention the cancelled concerts of eminent musicians due to their 'uncomfortable' nationality, or the lynching of a man for his (alleged) eating habits, or attacking those with ink who dare use the letters as a means of voicing one's opinion. It is to revisit the reasons why students and scholars are voicing concerns over anomalies at reputed national bodies such as the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) or University Grants Commission (UGC).

The ball, as they say, must be kept rolling.

The warriors of thought, whether scientific or of the abstruse, have a premonition of darker, stifling times ahead, recognising what it is that disturbs the free train of thoughts at present.

It is we, our elected governments, who have facilitated their acumen of deliberation. Thus, should we not give their points a second reading before swearing blindly by the favourites? [CC]



*On Page 12: (From Left): Nayantara Sahgal, Ashok Vajpayi (eminent Hindi poet/critic) and P.M. Bhargava (Left, top): Dibakar Banerjee Left: Shashi Deshpande, who quit Sahitya Akademi*

## FEATURE

# Revitalizing Mumbai!

*Madhurima Basu*

*Madhurima Basu, a year-old Mumbaikar, looks back at a festival meant to revitalize the cause of Mumbai as not only the entertainment hub of India but as one of the cerebral nerve centres of the nation in a trying time of our nation's history.*



Although operative for 16 years, never before has the film festival organised by the Mumbai Academy of Moving Image (MAMI) in the entertainment capital of India been such a grand celebration of not just Hindi cinema but Indian cinema in general, with a vibrant international flavour that succeeds in making Jio MAMI as enriching a film 'festival' as they come.

Having received new funding thanks to the association of Reliance Jio with the existing setup made possible by the hands-on efforts of Isha and Nita Ambani, the annual film festival has been transformed into a new, thoroughly improved avatar under the guidance and supervision of a new team consisting of festival director Anupama Chopra, creative director Smriti Kiran and chaired by filmmaker Kiran Rao, the 17th edition of the festival opened with the herculean challenge of screening over 200 movies from 58 countries in a span of just seven days, from October 29 to November 5.

Although the five theatres selected for the screenings were PVR ECX (Andheri), PVR Juhu, PVR Ghatkopar, PVR Phoenix (Lower Parel) and Regal Cinema (Colaba), the event received a grand opening at the historic Gateway of India on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> which turned out to be the most splendid opening in the history of the festival. From Oscar recipient

AR Rahman to quintessential Bollywood superstars such as Hrithik Roshan, Irrfan Khan or Kangana Ranaut, the presence of the Bollywood A-listers and the promotional material featuring them that ran for months in Mumbai theatres, raising anticipation for the event (besides encouraging Indian filmmakers to submit their films), became a valid point of convergence between the mainstream that is Bollywood and the respect the brass has for good cinema.

Hosted by actress Kalki Koechlin, the evening found the chief guest (Maharashtra Chief Minister) Devendra Fadnavis sending out an interesting message at a time when the vibrant city's reputation is clearly at stake with the forceful cancellation of Pakistani music maestro Ghulam Ali's concert in Mumbai's Shanmukhananda Hall, "I'm really happy that Jio Mami, Mumbai's own film festival is opening at such a historic venue. A few years ago the same venue was under siege. Through this we want to showcase a symbol of resilience. *Nothing can terrorise Mumbai and Mumbaikars.*"

Israeli filmmaker Amos Gitai was felicitated for Excellence in Cinema in the international category by celebrated Indian filmmaker Shyam Benegal. "This is my first time here and I loved coming here. India has always been a land of great inspirational thinkers like Satyajit Ray." Speaking on creative and intellectual freedom, Gitai said, "Filmmakers should be given liberty to speak their mind. He should have the freedom to engage in cultural engagement which in reality is not a flower on cake. Everybody should have a voice and this voice should be maintained"

Screenwriters Salim-Javed were recipients of the Indian excellence in cinema award. Screenwriter-lyricist Javed Akhtar had a word of two for the younger generation of writers whom he advised, "(They) should think about what they like and not what others like. Because at least that way you will have one person who is sure to like your film"

The festival opened with the Indian film Aligarh by Hansal Mehta, the 17<sup>th</sup> edition being only the second time that an Indian feature has opened this festival after the 1998 edition was opened by 'Hazar Chaurasi ki Maa'. The true tale of a homosexual

Marathi professor of the Aligarh Muslim University shown the door after his sexual orientation comes to light received overwhelming response from the Mumbai cinephiles.

The celebrated jury at the festival included international filmmaker Ava DuVernay (maker of the Martin Luther King jr. story 'Selma') who headed the jury for the International Competition category along with filmmaker Christina Voros, actress Vidya Balan, actor Saleh Bakri and Cameron Bailey, who doubles as the artistic director for the Toronto International Film Festival.

Actress Kati Outinen, the muse of Aki Kaurismaki, featuring in his signature works such as Le Havre, Drifting Clouds and The Match Factory Girl headed the India Gold Jury, along with Pakistani filmmaker Sabiha Sumar, Anthony Chen (a past winner of the Silver Gateway award at the Mumbai Film Festival), artist Atul Dodiya and Clare Stewart, who is also the head of exhibition at the London BFI Film Festival.

Besides India Gold, the competitive section for Indian films, a new out of competition category had been introduced by the name of India Story comprising 18 Indian features that also included six documentary films. The films for both categories have been curated by Bina Paul, an Artistic Director of the International Film Festival of Kerala and Deepti DCunha, who is a curator of Indian films for several film festivals around the world. In order to transcend the typical association of Mumbai with Hindi films, establishing a wider connect with the umbrella term 'Indian cinema', special emphasis has been placed on regional variety with the India Gold section featuring films from 14 different languages.

Featuring an impressive roster of 25 films in the special Childrens' film category christened 'Half-Ticket' that included the unconventional road film 'Dhanak' by Nagesh Kukunoor, the festival also organised tributes to Indian filmmaker Chetan Anand and French auteur Agnes Varda, the only female filmmaker of the French New Wave.

The restored classics section gifted Mumbai the opportunity of catching iconic films from India and beyond as the audience were treated to the restored



**Clockwise from Left:**  
 A still from *Haraamkhor*  
 Theatrical Poster of *Ixcnul (Volcano)*  
 A promotional still of Qaushik Mukherjee and  
 Nikon's Bengali fantasy horror film *Ludo*  
 Manoj Bajpayee in *Aligarh*

prints of Satyajit Ray's famous 'Apu trilogy', Ritwik Ghatak's Komal Gandhar (E Flat), M.S. Sathyu's 'Garam Hawa' Guru Dutt's 'Pyaasa' and Japanese legend Eiichi Yamamoto's 'Belladonna of Sadness'.

October 31 saw the organisation of a special event at the Mehboob studio called the 'Movie Mela' that was graced by the presence of Bollywood actors, directors, writers and musicians including the likes of Anil Kapoor, Javed Akhtar, Deepika Padukone, Sonam Kapoor and Rishi Kapoor. While representatives of the new generation of Bollywood such as Ayushmann Khurranna, Alia Bhatt, Kriti Sanon, Aditya Roy Kapur, Arjun Kapoor, Parineeti Chopra held interactive sessions, filmmakers such as Kabir Khan, Dibakar Banerjee, Zoya Akhtar, Ajit Thakur and Gurinder Chadda shared their experiences of filmmaking.

The seven days were graced by the hallowed presence of not only Israeli auteur Amos Gitai but also Australian cinematographer-filmmaker Christopher Doyle who had the Mumbai cinefreaks in a frenzy with a curated presentation of clips and short films,

delivered in a skirt while he held aloft a cricket bat, going on to share experiences of working with Korean auteur Wong Kar-Wai and Indian-origin filmmaker Manoj Night Shyamalan.

Gurvinder Singh's 'Chauthi Koot', based on the Sikh separatist movement of the 80s, secured the Golden Gateway award in the 'India Gold' competition section while debutante filmmaker Shlok Sharma's unusual love story of a teacher and his 15 year old student, 'Haraamkhor' was the proverbial runners-up, winning the Silver Gateway Award.

The Golden Gateway award for the International section was won by Guatemalan-French drama 'Ixcnul' (Volcano) by Jayro Bustamante which is a burning dissertation of intellectual apathy towards modernity while debutante filmmaker Raam Reddy's 'Thithi', a comedy surrounding a family which has congregated for the cremation rites of a family patriarch, secured the Grand Jury prize in the International Competition.

A special jury mention went to Cesar Augusto

Acevedo, the maker of 'Land and Shade' while 'Ixcanul' star Maria Telon and 'Mine Walking' actress Farzana Nawabi received special jury mention for the achievements in acting.

Both the social impact award and the Golden Gateway Award for childrens' feature went to Jayaraj's 'Ottal', based on Anton Chekhov's short story 'Vanka', which doubles as a treatise on environmental preservation.

Dhruv Saigal's bilingual short 'Kunal' won the top honour in the 'Dimensions Mumbai' category.

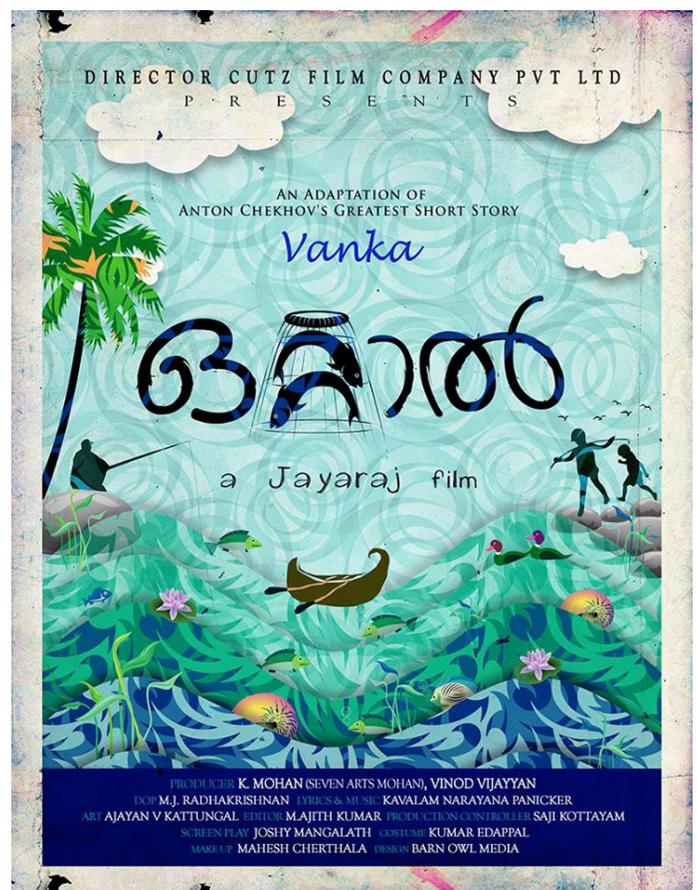
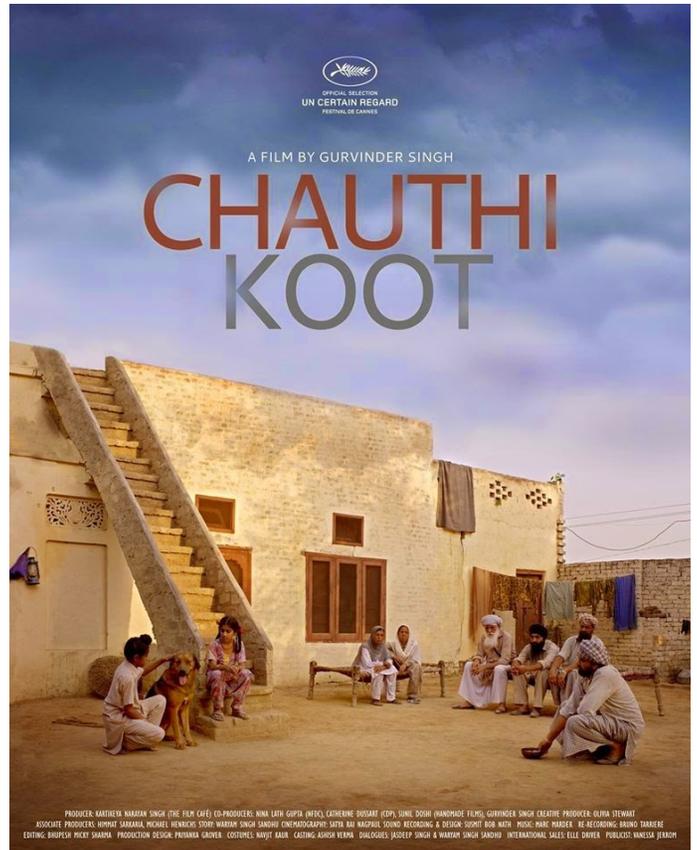
The curtains came down on the festival post the screening of the French romantic comedy 'One Plus One' (Un plus une), directed by Claude Lelouch. A gala closing ceremony was nonetheless held at Mumbai's Taj Land's End Hotel on the evening of November 5<sup>th</sup> that was graced by the presence of Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed who was the chief guest on the occasion along with young adult delegates from the formerly strife-torn state who were especially brought down to Mumbai to experience the cinematic celebrations.

At a time when there is a growing protest against intolerance in the country, raised by a section of the intelligentsia which also includes a bevy of award-winning filmmakers of the nation, the Jio MAMI film festival came and swept the shores of Mumbai like a fresh breeze of hope, revitalizing the cause of Mumbai as not only the entertainment hub of India but as one of the cerebral nerve centres of our nation which has a duty, a responsibility of elevating itself out of the purview of opinions peddled by peripheral, separatist elements in the fringes of the India's beloved city and the home of 'Bollywood'.

[CC]

**Right, Top:** Theatrical poster of 'Chauthi Koot' (The Fourth Direction)

**Right:** Theatrical poster of 'Ottal'

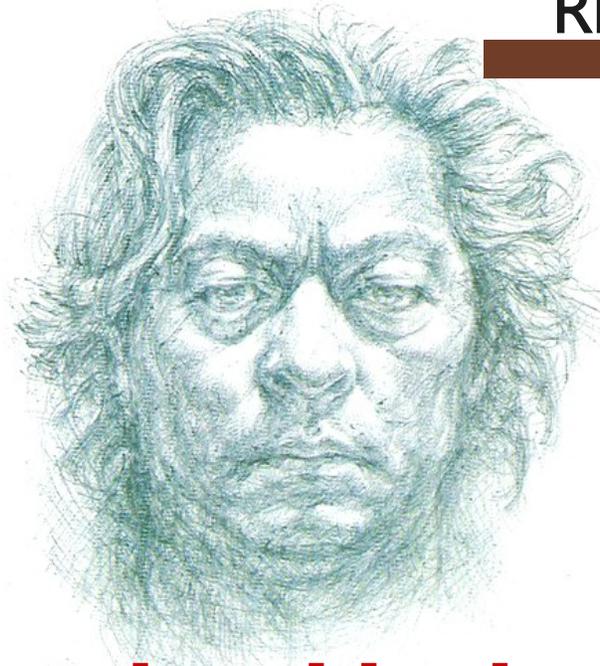




*Pastel colour science fiction artwork by Noriyoshi Ohrai*

*A curated retrospective of Ohrai's art is on display on pages 03, 18, 20, 21, 77, 78 and 93 of this issue.*

## RETROSPECTIVE



# Noriyoshi Ohrai

## [1935 - 2015]

*By Laxman Ramamurthy*

As far as the grave matter of inspiration is concerned, Japanese illustrator Noriyoshi Ohrai has carved a neat niche for himself for being the definitive influence on several generations of artists in the 30 odd years he has been a driving force in international art and popular poster design.

Dropping out of the Oil Painting Course at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music at the susceptible age of 22, Ohrai chose to work as a newspaper advertising editor besides doubling as an illustrator in the book publishing sector.

Ohrai set up his studio in his wife Yasuko's native town Miyazaki in 1973, where he did illustrations for science fiction and fantasy novels and Japanese manga before receiving worldwide recognition in the early 1980s for producing international poster designs for the second instalment of George Lucas' epic science fiction trilogy of 'Star Wars'. *The Empire Strikes Back* posters were noted the world over for capturing the inherent thrill of the magnitude of events that the films were bent on portraying and they gained a cult following soon after.

The private person that Ohrai had always been, he was never one to claim his rightful time under the

spotlight, rather utilizing the time to hone and practise his craft, constituting a great body of work which include the popular posters of Star Wars, The Goonies or the string of Toho's kaiju films, popular the world over as the 'Godzilla franchise'.

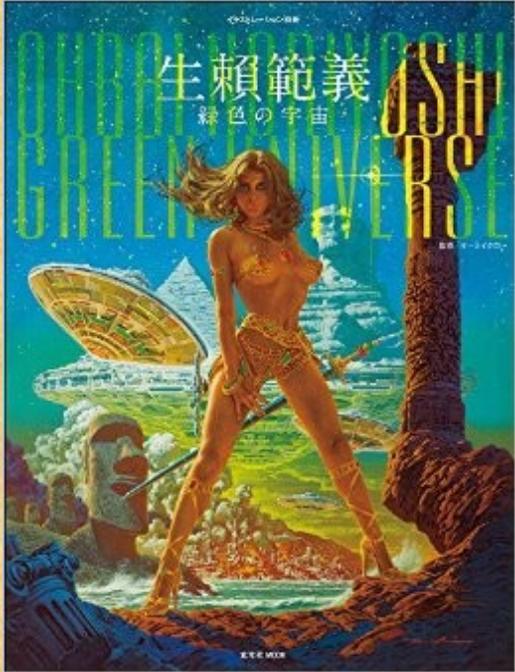
Ohrai went to illustrate books of history, a multitude of fantasy/science fiction pulp literature besides contributing to popular titles of video games such as Koei's 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms' series and 'Metal Gear Solid'.

The diffusion of world cultures and celebration of the pulp, in its commendable avatars, has ensured that Noriyoshi Ohrai remains an artist who is not only well circulated, but one often invokes a familiar sense of recognition whenever his art is put in front of the discerning eye.

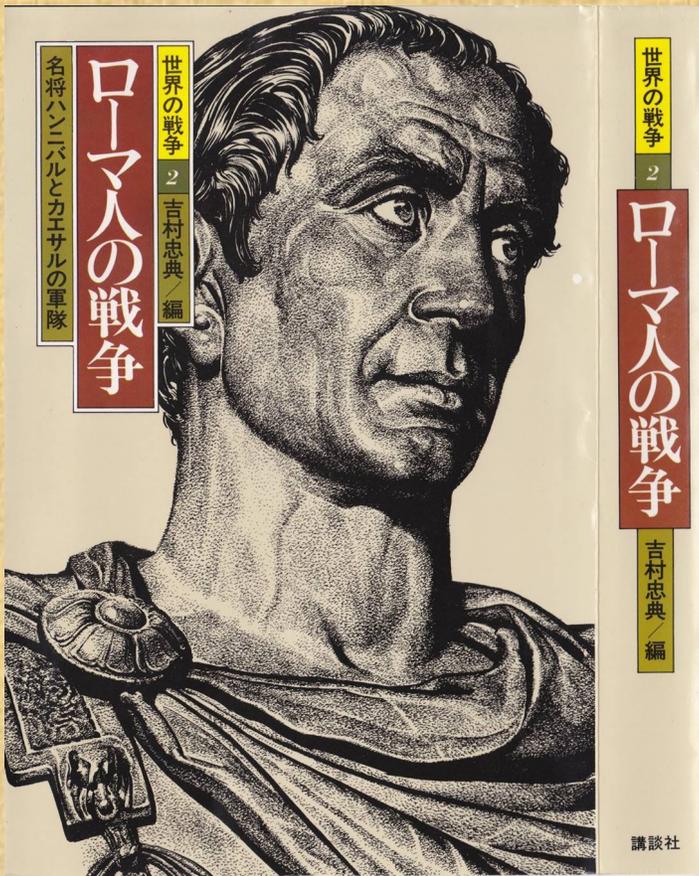
Even as his private persona kept his name in the small print for an unfair number of years, let the tragedy of his passing on October 27 of this year be a reminder for connoisseurs of art all over the world to remember, take notes and celebrate Ohrai's masterstrokes as we bid adieu to a silent inspiration, which provoked minds of children and adults alike the requisite fodder to open up terrains and possibilities hitherto unknown to the simpler imaginations of the times. [CC]

*Left, left down: The Green Universe Artwork by Noriyoshi Ohrai*

*Down: Illustration of Druwaldon by Noriyoshi Ohrai*



DELILAH



Top: The cover of a historical Book on Julius Caesar

Right: Cover of Mazinsaga 06 (September 1998)

Down: The earth 46 million years to recovery

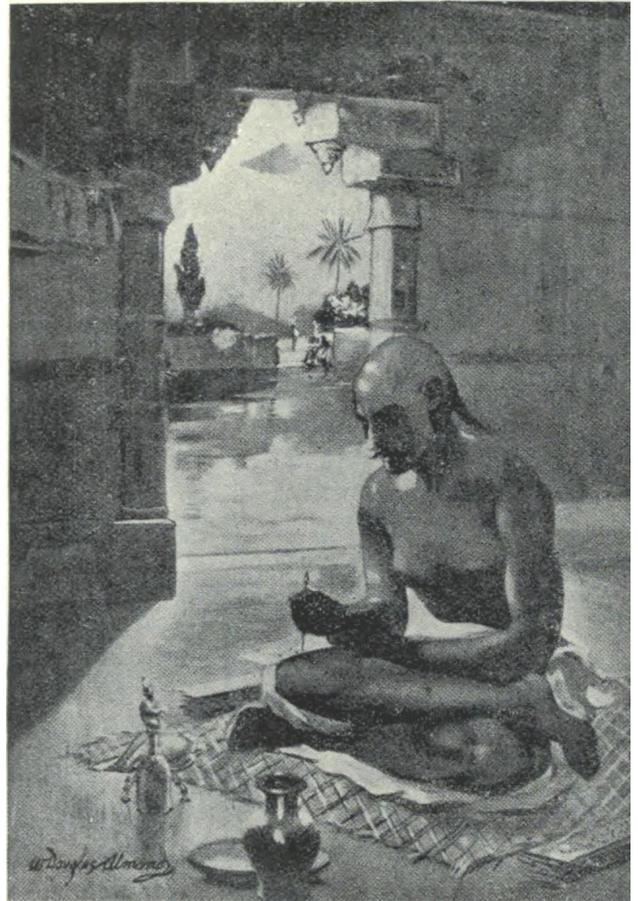


## FEATURE

# Kalidasa: Interweaving Nature and the Feminine

*Madhulika*

*Madhulika* explores the peerless creations of Kalidasa to pick out the resplendent gems of artistic excellence where the ancient Sanskrit poet celebrates Women as 'Prakrit' or Nature and lovingly depicts their unique relationship.



Greatest of all ancient poets and dramatists, 'Kanisthikadhishtha' Kalidasa is not only a source of inspiration for connoisseurs of Sanskrit literature but for aficionados of Indian Literature in general. His ornate, matured but at the same time, youthful poems appear to stem from his heart like spontaneously sprouting springs of rainy season that bears the potential to make the world content.

Nature and women were two favourite subjects of the poet's community wherein their collective poetic wisdom would wander in search of poetic stimulation. But unlike other poets, Kalidasa has not only depicted nature in alamban, uddipan, or alankarika forms and women as only a feature of the meeting-separation (sanyoga-viyoga) form. The poet's actual skill lay in showcasing the interwoven nature and woman. Kalidasa's poems are full of interrelations between women and nature, whether woman is depicted as a companion of nature or vice versa. Kalidasa has sometimes portrayed this interrelation using figure of speech, at times he has shown the catalytic form of the same and somewhere its calm attitude has been depicted. At times, a woman has been correlated with nature and at

others, nature has been associated with women.

Among all seven works of Kalidasa, two - 'Ritusamharam' (Description of the seasons) and 'Meghadutam' (Cloud Messenger) have chiefly described the myriad hues of nature and the consequent changes they tend to bring in terms of human behaviour. In 'Ritusamharam', as is already clear from the name itself, one can find pleasantly lyrical descriptions of the six seasons (Grishma, Varsha, Sharat, Hemanta, Shishira, Vasanta) found in India, along with perceptive descriptions of the change of human attitude and behaviour, especially that of the young lovers during these six seasons. The poet's most illustrious verses is to be found in the lyrical poem 'Meghadutam' in which he has masterfully painted the transformation in human behaviour as governed by the nature in transition. Kalidasa reaches a genuine zenith of delectable artistry which is widely regarded to be unique in world literature while portraying the cloud (Megha) as messenger (dutam) who intonates the images of romance involving Yaksha and his lover. The famous western scholar Horace Hayman Wilson, the first to translate the poem into English, has said "My own thought is that we don't have any classical or modern poems whose descriptions are more delicate and pleasing than this one" ('Meghadutum', Editors - Dr. Sansarchandra and Pt. Mohandev Pant, Publisher - Motilal Banarsidass, 1979).

### METAPHORICAL RELATION

Alankaar is of two types- 'shabdaalankaar' (beauty of sound) and 'arthaalankaar' (beauty of meaning). Kalidasa has used 'arthaalankaar' more than the former. He is renowned for his metaphors (upamaa). Using Upamaa and Utpreksha (simile), he has sharply and beautifully woven a common thread tying nature and women.

In 'Meghadutam', while describing the path to Alaka, Yaksha tells the cloud about the white, lofty mountain Kailasa. Yaksha says, "While wandering at will, you shall not then fail to see the city of Alaka, resting in the lap of her lover, Kailasa, with her silken robe, the Ganges, a little awry. At the start of the rainy season she bears on her tall mansions, a head dress of moist clouds like that of a



fair damsel all strung with the white pearl."

*"Tasyotsange pranyin ev strastgangadukulam  
Na twam dristwa na punaralkam gyasyase kaam-  
charin.*

*Ya vah kale vahati salilodgaarmuchchairvimana  
Muktajaalgrathitmalakam kaminiyabhavrindam."*

(Works of Kalidasa - C R Devadhar)

In Uttarmegha, the Yaksha describes his beautiful wife to the cloud -

"There (in Alaka) resides my wife, the Creator's prototype of a luscious women, slender and youthful, with pointed teeth and lips red like bimba fruit, a thin waist and a glance like that of a startled deer; she has a deep navel, with a measured gait owing to the weight of the hips and she is slightly stooping from the weight of her bosom."

In the drama Abhijnanashakuntalam (Act I), the King describes Shakuntala with the following words -

"Truly, her (Shakuntala) lower lip glows like a ten-



der leaf, her arms resemble flexible stalks. And youth, bewitching like a blossom, shines in all her lineaments.”

“*Adharah kislayragah komalvitapanukarinaw bah Kusummiv lobhniyam yawvanmangesu sanadhham.*”

(Works of Kalidasa - C R Devadhar)

Shakuntala has such personal an equation with the creepers and other green inhabitants of the forest that they understand each others’ deepest emotions. In *Abhijanashakuntalam* it has been described that nature not only echoes the feelings of the persons and even the progress of their thoughts – but actively partakes of man’s joys and sorrows and gives a foreboding of the approaching catastrophe. (Works of Kalidasa, Editor: C R Devadhar).

### UDDIPAK (CATALYTIC) RELATION

Nature and Women in catalytic form has been a trope employed by poets since times immemorial. Kalidasa’s poems (Kavya) is full of such uses. In ‘*Ritusamharam*’, there have been described six seasons and the effect they (seasons) have on women’s

state of mind.

“In the rainy season, the wives of wayfarers stand disconsolate with their charming sultry cherry-like lips wetted by tears trickling from their lotus-like eyes and renounce flowers, ornaments and unguents.”

“*Vilochanendivirvaribindubhi  
Nirsiktbimbadharcharupallawah.  
Nirrastmaalyabharnanulepanaah  
Stithah niraasah pramadah pravasinaam*”

(Ritusamharam, Works of Kalidasa- C R Devadhar)

“The majestic Rainy season of ‘*Ritusamharam*’ puts with its rainy fingers leaves and blossoms on the forest, while distant slow-moving lotus-like clouds sadden melancholy hearts of lonely women. The Hemanta season of ‘*Ritusamharam*’ perfectly acts as uddipak. The young Kalidasa was supremely concerned in faithfully depicting how youth reacted to the changing moods of the seasons.” (Works of Kalidasa, Vol.I, Editor: C R Devadhar).

Like these, ‘*Meghadutam*’, ‘*Kumarsambhavam*’, ‘*Raghuvansham*’ etc. are full of such evoking actions of nature on women.

In ‘*Abhijanashakuntalam*’, nature cares for Shakuntala and vice versa. When Shakuntala was leaving the ashram she asked her father and friends to care for her sisterly creepers and when her beloved female antelope shall safely deliver, they should send her someone to communicate the happy news. Even the little fawn stands in the way of Shakuntala. (Works of Kalidasa, Vol.I, Editor: C R Devadhar)

### PEACEMAKING RELATION

In Kalidasa’s creation nature not only acts as evoker, but also acts as a harbinger of peace for women. In ‘*Meghadutam*’, the suffering women find pleasure in the first drops of the rain.

“*Nakhpad sukhanprapya varsagravindu*”

(Purvamegha, *Meghadutam*)

## OTHER RELATIONS

Kalidasa had great skill in creating a resonance between women's body and natural artifacts. Kalidasa has established a relation between the ripe bimba-fruit and red lips of a woman several times-

*Nivibandhochhvasitshithilamyatrabimbadharanaam*

Uttarmegha, Meghadutam

*Umaamukhebimphaladharosthe*

Kumarsambhavam

In Meghadutam (Uttarmegha), Yaksha tells his wife that he can detect a little of her form in supple vines, her glances in the eyes of a startled doe, her face in the moon. (Works of Kalidasa, Editor: C R Devadhar)

## UNIFICATION OF NATURE AND WOMEN

Far from the clamour of town, Shakuntala grew in the divine lap of nature and when she was leaving the asharam of Kanva to go to Dusyanta, nature decorated (did shringaar) her, gifting from her endless bounty some choice articles that Shakuntala would treasure:

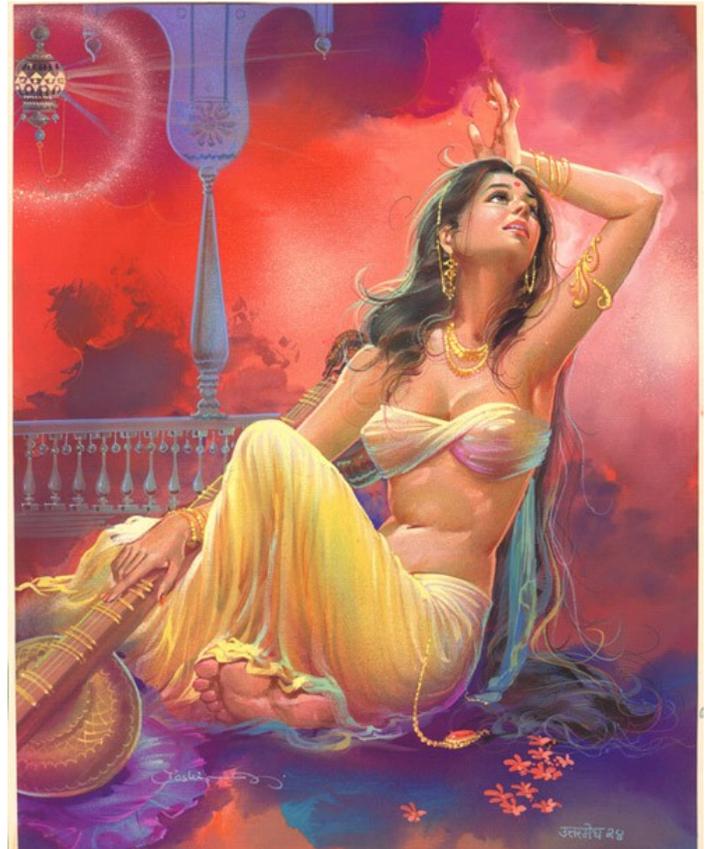
“One tree bore fruit, a silken marriage dress  
That shamed the moon in its white loveliness;  
Another gave us lac-dye for the feet;  
From others, fairy hands extended, sweet  
Like flowering twigs, as far as to the wrist,  
And gave us gems, to adorn her as we list.”

(Complete Translation by Arthur W. Ryder)

This way women's beauty is unified with nature in a unique turn of poetics. Not only decorative unification has been attempted but emotional unification can also be seen in various texts of Kalidasa. The cooing cuckoo bids farewell to the departing Shakuntala

(Act IV, Verse 9).

“The trees are answering your prayer  
In cooing cuckoo-song,



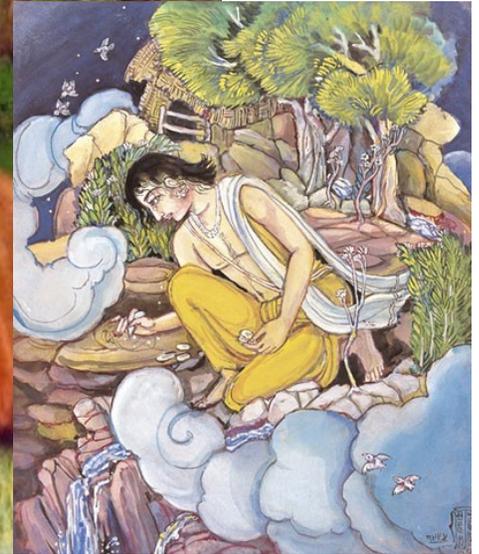
The Paintings featured in pages XX, XX and XX are part of a series on Meghaduta by eminent painter **Nana Joshi**.

**On Page 23:** The Beloved and The Bird  
**On Page 24:** Meeting in the Dream  
**Top:** The Moonlight in Alaka  
**Above:** The Wistful Beloved



*Left: Shakuntala by  
Raja Ravi Verma*

*Below: Yaksha in  
Meghaduta by  
Ramgopal  
Vijayvargiya*



Bidding Shakuntala farewell,  
Their sister for so long.”

(Complete Translation by Arthur W. Ryder)

When Shakuntala is leaving, Priyamvada tells Shakuntala that she is not the only one to feel sad at this farewell - the whole grove feels at her parting from them.

“The grass drops from the feeding doe;  
The peahen stops her dance;  
Pale, trembling leaves are falling slow,  
The tears of clinging plants.”

(Complete Translation by Arthur W. Ryder)

Kalidasa is rightly considered as the greatest poet of ‘shringaar-rasa’ (romance, beauty etc). There are two aspects of ‘shringaar’ – sambhoga (the romance of being together) and vipralambha (sorrow of separation). Kalidasa dabbled in both with equal aptitude. Meghaduta is replete with vipralambha. Kalidasa has also used ‘alankaar’, especially ‘upamaa’ delicately and beautifully and at the precise places. In Kalidasa’s works, the beauty

of nature is depicted with an assiduous elegance of metaphor (upamaa) that remains a shining exercise of the arts, peerless in world literature.

Kalidasa was a profound observer of nature. He has beautifully depicted serene ashrams, gorgeous river banks, elegant animals such as the deer etc. He has also proved his mettle as far as understanding women’s psychology is concerned. He had mastered in expressing emotions through actions. Kalidasa’s extraordinary imagination holds in perfect fusion the two elements, natural beauty and female emotions, and what he creates out of the two is nothing short of timeless and magical.

#### References:

1. Works of Kalidasa, Editor: C R Devadhar
2. Meghadutam, Editor: Sansarchandra and Pt. Mohandev Pant, Publisher: Motilal Banarasidass, 1979)
3. Abhijanashakuntalam, Editor: Subodhchandra Pant. Publisher: Motilal Banarasidass, 1970)
4. Ritusamharam, Editor: Vyankatacharya Upadhyaya and M R Kale, Publication: Motilal Banarasidass, 1997)
5. Meghaduta, Translation by Leonard Nathan
6. Complete Translation by Arthur W. Ryder

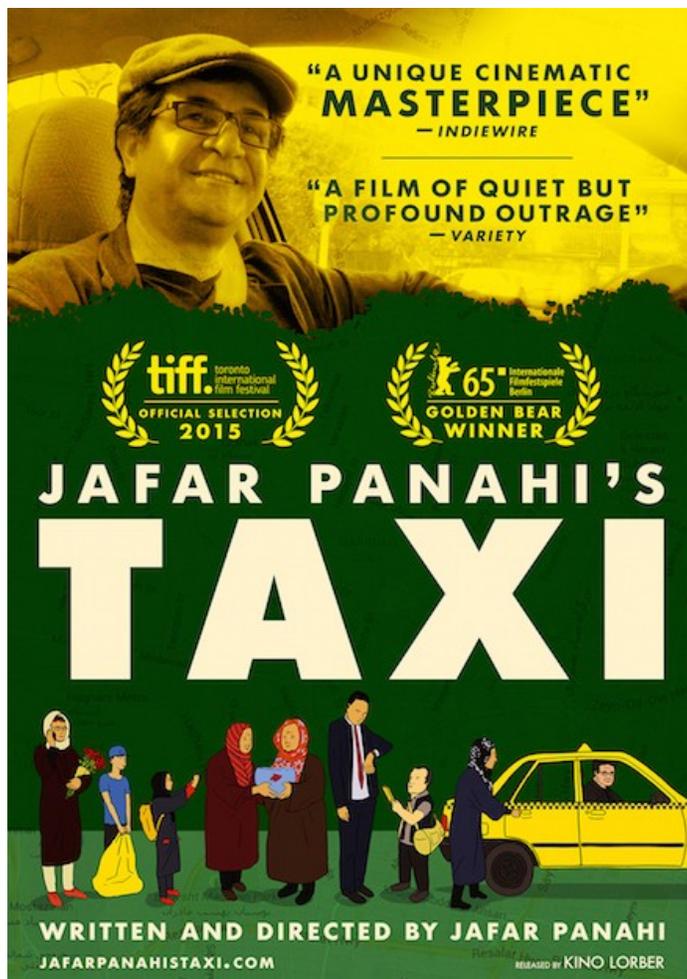
## FEATURE



# Kolkata Calling

*Arijita Dey*

**A PREVIEW OF THE 21st ANNUAL KOLKATA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

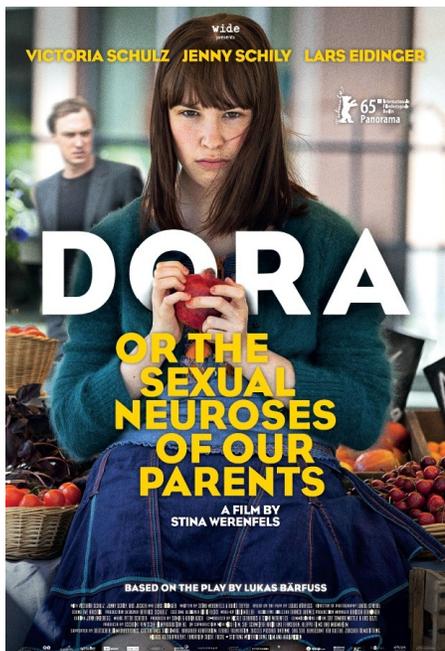


In a glorious history spanning two decades, the Kolkata film festival has travelled far, inceptioned in the early 90s as a natural progression of an illustrious history of filmmaking which had already carved a niche for a city in global Meccas of cinema thanks to the earlier achievements in filmmaking by the likes of Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen.

The second oldest film festival in the nation, the Kolkata International Film Festival had been a non-competitive affair till last year, when the Golden Royal Bengal Tiger Award for the Best Film (INR 5100000), the Golden Royal Bengal Tiger Award for Best Woman Director (INR 2100000) and the NETPAC Award was introduced to up the ante.

Post the shocking cancellation of the Abu Dhabi Film Festival in May this year, the Kolkata International Film Festival has achieved the unique distinction of emerging as presenter of the single largest cash award given at any international film festival across the world.

The success of last year's event has prompted the organisers to introduce two new awards this year.



This year's festival will see the introduction of two new cash awards for INR 100000 each for Best Documentary and Best Short film. A special jury award awaits the best film in the Indian Select category which will be conferred by the Indian Film Critic Association.

Traditionally held from November 10 to 17, the dates have been postponed slightly this year and the festival will be held from November 14 to 21 instead.

For the fifth year in a row, Kolkata International Film Festival will be inaugurated by veteran Indian actor Amitabh Bachhan, while regular attendee and the brand ambassador of Bengal, actor Shah Rukh Khan is likely to give a event a miss this time around for prior commitments.

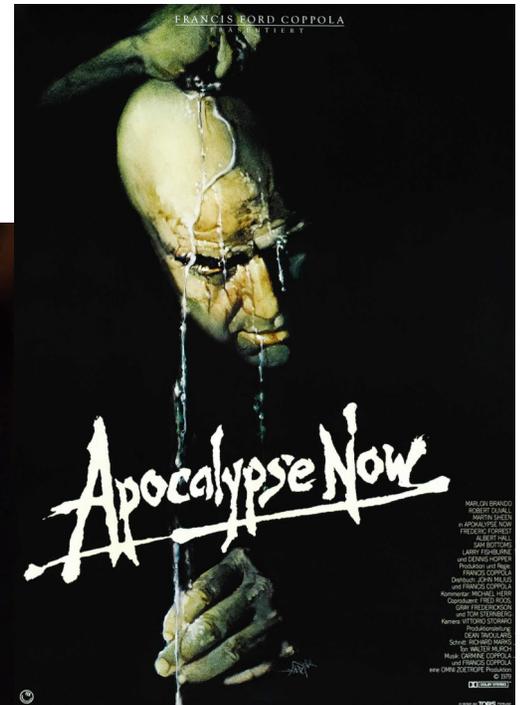
An impressive total of 149 films, filmed by 137 directors from 61 nations will be screened across 12 screens over a period of eight days. 23 among these will be Indian films. The venues include all three screens Nandan, the veritable cultural hub of the city constructed under the auspices of the state government in 1985, besides a slew of other govern-

ment-aided and private screens that include Rabin-dra Sadan, Sisir Mancha, Nazrul Tirtha, Star Theatre, Navina, INOX City Centre I, Mitra cinema, Carnival cinemas and Roxy.

Among the highly anticipated films to be screened this year at the festival, top billing has unofficially been conferred to Pakistani actor-director Sarmad Sultan Khoosat's 'Manto', the biopic of legendary Pak playwright and author Saadat Hasan Manto, Carlos Saura's 'Argentina', a documentary on performances depicting Argentinian folklore, and Jafar Panahi's 'Taxi', made in spite of the 20 year ban on making film imposed on the director by the Iran government, which ended up securing the Golden Bear and the FIPRESCI award at the 65th Berlinale.

The 21st edition of the festival will host a tribute to Manuel de Olivera, where the auteur's six films will be screened. The Great Masters category will feature six films by French filmmaker Jean Renoir, which include classics such as 'The River', the 1951 classic shot entirely in location in India, Grand Illusion, The Rules of The Game, French Cancan, Experiment in Evil and The Vanishing Corporal. The centenary tribute is to feature films of Kon Ichikawa, Orson

*Apocalypse Now:  
Film Still and Poster*



Welles and Debaki Kumar Basu.

Akin to last year, veteran Indian actress Sharmila Tagore has been appointed as the chairman of the jury board, which also happens to include Chinese actor Ban Lai, Sri Lankan actor Swarna Mallawarachchi, Polish filmmaker Filip Marczewski and Israeli filmmaker Samuel Muoz.

This year will also be a first to introduce a unique selection of Films on Sports that is a carefully curated assortment of the best films on the subject from India and beyond.

To feature in the category are national award winning films such as Rakyesh Omprakash Mehra's biopic of 'The Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh 'Bhaag Milkha Bhag' and the Soumitra Chatterjee starrer 'Kony' based on a book by Moti Nandi chronicling the challenges that an aspiring female swimmer has to overcome to reach her destiny. Other films to be included in the category include Breaking Away, Chariots of Fire, Escape to Victory, The Natural as well as Martin Scorsese's legendary 'Raging Bull', starring Robert de Niro.

The festival's 'focus' this year being Hollywood, a slew of classics are on their way to the Kolkata screens that includes old and modern classics such as Buster Keaton's 'The General', Michael Curtiz's 'Casablanca', Frank Capra's 'Mr. Smith goes to Washington', 'West Side Story', 'Ben-Hur' and Francis Ford Coppola's modern war classic 'Apocalypse Now' (The 'Redux' version). It is confounding however, how D.W.Griffith's controversial "masterpiece" 'The Birth of Nation' keeps finding itself among such hallowed classics when it is high time that the film is only reserved for the perusal of mature students of film evolution. In a world where there is no shortage of divisive elements, a racist motion picture on the rise of a banned white supremacist group such as the 'Ku Klux Klan' must not find a place in any celebration of cinema and is certainly a blot on the 21st edition of the Kolkata film festival as well.

Nevertheless, there is no shortage of good films making their way to Kolkata this year as we leave our readers from Eastern India with a curated list of our favourite and anticipated films at this year's festival.

Happy viewing!

[CC]

## STOP KIM KI-DUK



*Deviating from his trademark complexity and resorting to an argument driven critique of the qualms of modernity, 'Stop' is an independent feature by Kim Ki-Duk, where he tackles themes of nuclear power and effects of radiation with his trademark eccentricity, woven around the meltdown at Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant in March 2011.*

## MIA MADRE NANNI MORETTI



*Nanni Moretti, a master exponent of meta-films, stars and directs this Italian masterpiece about Margherita, an Italian filmmaker who copes with the imminent demise of her mother while shooting for a film on class struggle in the setting of a factory. The delightful presence of John Turturro in the role of a quirky American actor makes the film one to take home!*

## TAXI JAFAR PANAHI



*Banned from making films for 20 years, Jafar Panahi dares to follow up his 'This is not a film' with the Golden Bear-winning 'Taxi' where Panahi doubles as a cabbie in Tehran, taking on board the elderly to youngsters, children to vocal members of the working class, presenting a picture of Tehran hitherto unseen in the glorious, if subdued annals of Iranian film history.*

## ARGENTINA CARLOS SAURA



*Carlos Saura's tribute to Argentinian folklore is an assortment of musical numbers featuring zamba, chacarera doble, baguala, chacarera piano, zamba alegre, peña cuyana and a host of other forms featuring deftly executed by famous local dancers and musicians. Expect Argentina to be as touching and informative an effort as the master's 1998 epic 'Tango'.*

## MANTO

### SARMAD SULTAN KHOOSAT



*Tracing the final seven years in the life of legendary Pakistani author and playwright Sadat Hassan Manto, this biopic directed by Sarmad Sultan Khoosat and featuring Khoosat himself in the titular role, it depicts with poignancy the years during which he wrote his most powerful short stories such as Thanda Gosht, Licence, Hatak, Peshawar se Lahore, Toba Tek Singh etc.*

## FRANCOFONIA

### ALEXANDER SOKUROV



*The legendary maker of 'Russian Ark', a homage to the Hermitage Museum, Alexander Sokurov turns to the Louvre in Francofonia, musing on the illustrious history of the Parisian edifice which is world's largest museum in terms of footfall. Tracing the history from the renaissance to modern ages, Sokurov employs everything from newsreel to drone footage to bring his story to life.*

## OK KANMANI

### MANI RATNAM



*Reflecting the modern mindset of urban India, Mani Ratnam's latest is a romantic drama, where a young couple decide to embark on a live-in relationship in Mumbai before they would go on their separate ways to bring their respective careers to fruition. The tale of the lead couple is supported by the elderly duo of Prakash Raj and Leela Samson, who play their landlords.*

## THE ASSASSIN

### HOU HSIAO-HSIEN



*This veritable visual orgasm, which fetched the Taiwanese Hou Hsiao-Hsien Best Director honour at Cannes this year, is set in 9th century China and follows Nie Yinniang, a female assassin appointed to slay corrupt government officials by her master. In order to test her resolve, she is sent to the remote province of Weibo which is ruled by her cousin whom she is betrothed to.*

## FEATURE

# Indians, Asians and 'The Martian'

*Rounak Chatterjee*

*Rounak Chatterjee strikes out at the Asian snub in Ridley Scott's interplanetary blockbuster The Martian and why it may be an alarming step backwards in a sector that has been the last to welcome cultural variety of the inclusive sort!*

The advent of globalization has ensured that one Sabu, an exotic man of strength or a bumbling Indian buffoon essayed by a criminally talented Peter Sellers is not enough to outline one of the most diverse races in world culture.

Even if one excused the glaring alacrity and pathetic lack of research while writing Indian characters, generalizing them into a 'type' that would be ill-suited to find a home anywhere in the concerned nation, it had been downright insulting to see colonial conceptions rearing its ugly head through the artistic medium that, selectively enough, only chose to live up to its label 'entertainment'.

Although it is necessary to criticize, cultural superiority in the world of popular entertainment is a truth in any and every part of the globe. One is liable to find the glaring lack of, say, Buddhists in the popular mediums such as film or TV in the largest democracy in the world which also happens to be the birthplace of Buddhism. Also noticeable is the sheer lack of Mongoloid eyes in the leading men and women of Bollywood, even as people from the North-Eastern states sharing such features have



been living in India since time immemorial.

Such perception of superiority may be ‘natural’ to a certain degree before time brings an element of normalcy to the flow to correct the state of affairs in such cases.

One such case being the ‘Indian presence’ in Hollywood, the process was kick-started in the 21st century by television, rather than films, which ultimately rebranded the community to gift its worldwide audiences characters such as the long-running stint of Kunal Nayyar as Rajesh Koothrappali in the sitcom ‘The Big Bang Theory’. Not as benign as Apu from ‘The Simpsons’, Nayyar’s often-critiqued but hugely popular of Koothrappali is filled with racist jabs, digs at the nation which smell old and rank but is inversely justified by the fact that he is an exception to the typical notion of an Indian immigrant coming to change his luck in the land of opportunities – him being a pampered but brilliant son of a uber-rich doctor in the nation’s capital who doesn’t have the grassroots experience or the cultural upbringing required to inculcate any sense of (dramatic) patriotism.

Although stripped of any referential Indianness, Kalinda Sharma (Archie Panjabi) from ‘The Good

Wife’ contributed in a similar fashion to the mainstream ‘brand India’, portraying the gritty, bisexual investigator of a law firm. The writing and Panjabi’s sincere portrayal made her character carve a niche in a brilliant pool of talent that is the (ironically enough) Ridley Scott-produced legal drama.

The intermittent Slumdog Millionaire, effectively sending the concept of India backwards by a good couple of decades, managed to participate in the ‘familiarization’ nonetheless thanks to its huge Oscar buzz. The rise of Irrfan Khan as a bankable mainstream star, grabbing eyeballs in a ‘Jurassic World’ or an upcoming ‘Inferno’ by Ron Howard, ushered in the age of familiarity the sizeable Indian-origin population of the US and worldwide Indian audiences had always hoped for.

That is why criticism is not only justified but necessary, that in the very year an A-list Bollywood actress is heading a primetime network show in the US (Priyanka Chopra as FBI Agent Alex Parrish in ‘Quantico’), a character author-made for an Indian, Venkat Kapoor, a senior NASA engineer in Andy Weir’s book ‘The Martian’, was conveniently turned into the half-Hindu half-Baptist Vincent Kapoor, which was not played by an actor of In-

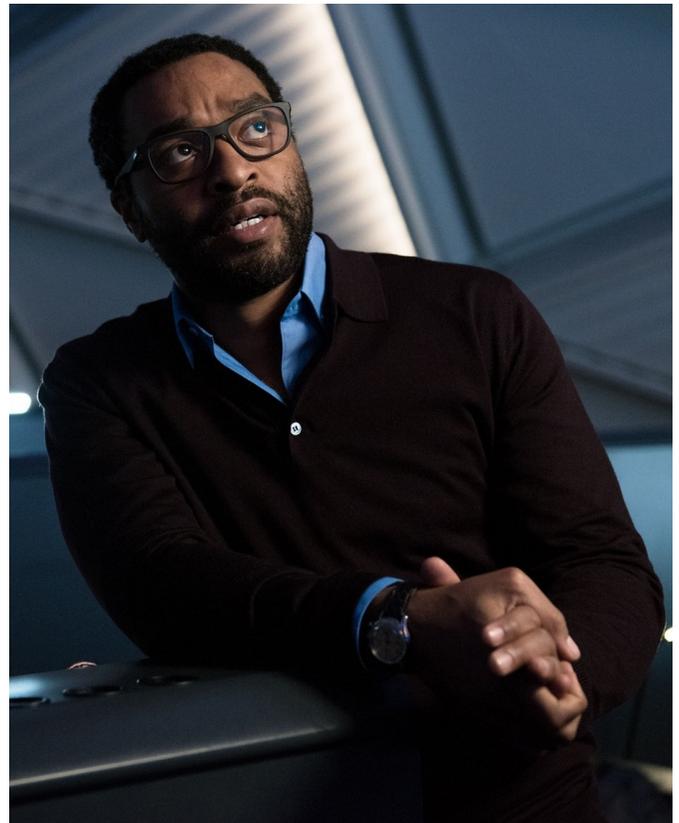
dian origin but by the British black actor Chiwetel Ejiofor.

Upon encountering criticism from MANAA, a media overseer group monitoring the featuring of Asian and Pacific Islanders in the media, for killing both Venkat Kapoor's role and that of the Korean character Mindy Park who was ultimately played by Mackenzie Davis, a white, blonde actress. The mindset contributing to these actions can be summed up from the way director Ridley Scott defended his position, not for *The Martian* though, but for 'whitewashing' his previous big budget endeavour set in the middle east 'Exodus: Gods and Kings', transferring the blame on the studio executive and 'public taste' instead: *"I can't mount a film of this budget, where I have to rely on tax rebates in Spain, and say that my lead actor is Mohammad so-and-so from such-and-such. I'm just not going to get it financed. So the question doesn't even come up."*

The process of blame being a cycle in effect, it is futile to debate exactly who is to be castigated for this great snub for India as well as Korea and Asia as a whole. All we do need to remember, however, is to raise that voice loud and clear and express vehement displeasure at best. At a time when the Indian origin populace is finally getting their cultural representation, any effort or act to turn back the clock or stall an opportunity must be condemned. Let us hope that the mere admission that it has not gone down well with a large number of people will be enough for entertainment moguls like Fox and Scott to reach, with renewed interest, for the people's pulse. [CC]

**On Page 33 (from left):** Archie Panjabi in 'The Good Wife', Irrfan Khan in *Jurassic World* and Kunal Nayyar in 'The Big Bang Theory'

**Right, up:** Priyanka Chopra in 'Quantico'  
**Right:** Chiwetel Ejiofor in 'The Martian'





# 46<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA, GOA

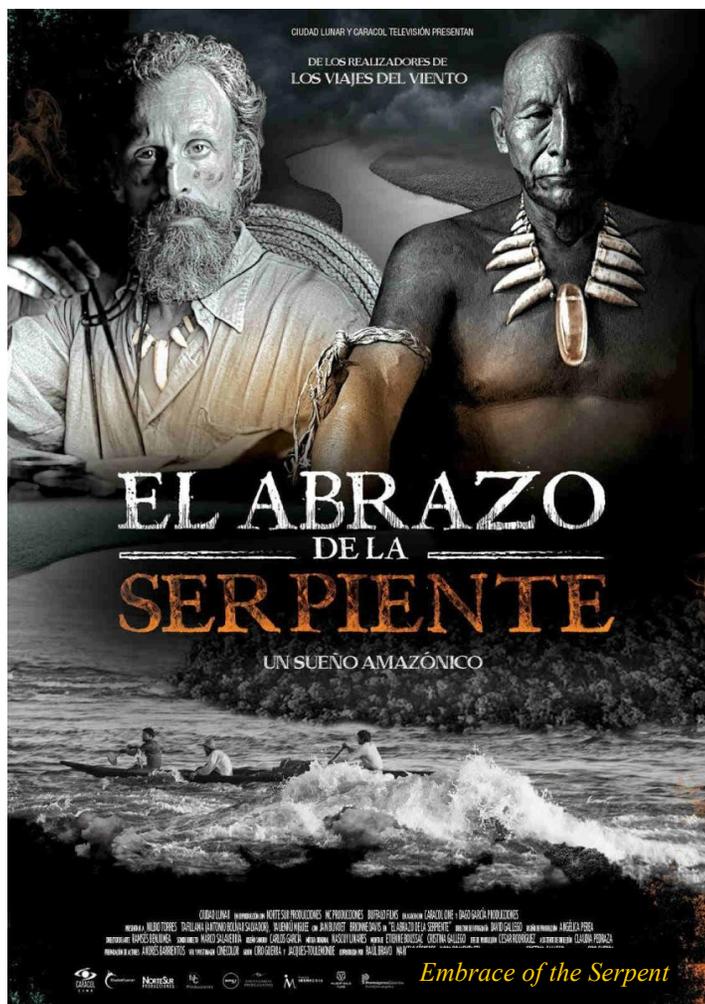
(20<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 2015)



A PREVIEW OF THE 46TH

# IFFI 2015

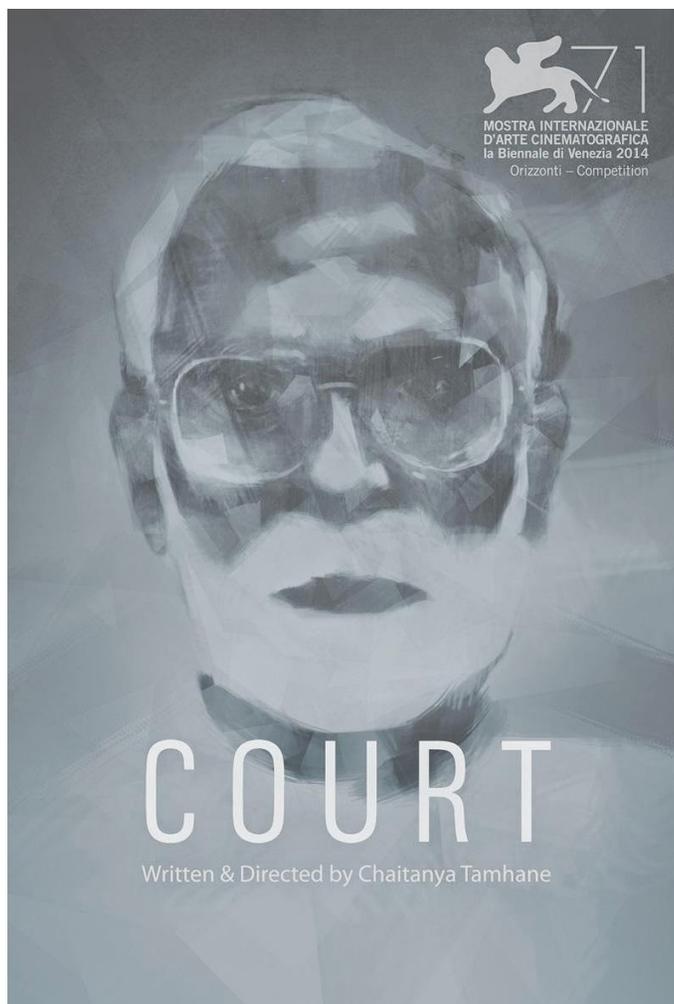
SUNDAR RAGHAV



November is, officially enough, the month of film festivals in India. Commencing with Mumbai, followed by two high-profile film festivals in Kolkata and Kerala respectively, comes the 'official' film festival of India. In its 46th year in 2015, the prestigious festival, like the last eleven years, will be held in Goa from November 20th to the 30th.

The 10-day festival is organized by the information and broadcasting ministry of the Indian government and boasts a vibrant international competition section besides the highly anticipated Indian Panorama, which happens to be the benchmark as far as the 1000-odd Indian films releasing every year is concerned.

The prestigious Indian Panorama has Manipur filmmaker-composer Aribam Syam Sharma as the chairman of its feature film section, while documentary filmmaker Rajendra Janglay has served as the head of its non-feature section.



The films selected for the international competition include 'Sealed Cargo' (Bolivia - Mexico - Venezuela - France), 'Rams' (Iceland), 'Mustang' (Turkey), 'The Measure of a Man' (France), 'The Man Who Became a Horse' (Iran), 'Eisenstein in Guana-juato' (Netherlands - Mexico), 'Labyrinth of Lies' (Germany), 'Kapo in Jerusalem' (Israel), 'Journey to the Shore' (Japan - France), Filosofi Kopi (Indonesia), 'Enclave' (Serbia - Germany), 'Embrace of the Serpent' (Colombia - Venezuela) and '3000 Nights' (Palestine - France - Jordan - Lebanon).

Two Indian films that will be in competition with the impressive list given above are both in Bengali. Debutante director and theatreperson Debesh Chattopadhyay's film on the life of a stage actress in the nascent days of group theatre 'Natoker Moto' (Like a Play) and Kasushik Ganguly's 'Cinemawala'.



*Left: Cinemawala  
Down: The 'Natoker Moto' poster.*

The triumphant feature will be felicitated by the Golden Peacock award that comes with a fat wallet of INR 4000000.

The winner shall be selected by an international jury headed by celebrated Indian filmmaker Shekhar Kapur, British documentary maker Micheal Radford, German actress Julia Jentsch, the Palestinian filmmaker from Israel Suha Arraf and South Korean filmmaker Jeon Kyu-Hwan.

Besides the organisation of an ICFT-UNESCO seminar on 'Film and Cultural Diversity' at the festival, workshops and seminars scheduled for the festival will include heart to hearts with notable film personalities such as Shyam Benegal, Kaushik Ganguli, Vishal Bhardwaj, Rajkumar Hirani, Anand L Rai and others.

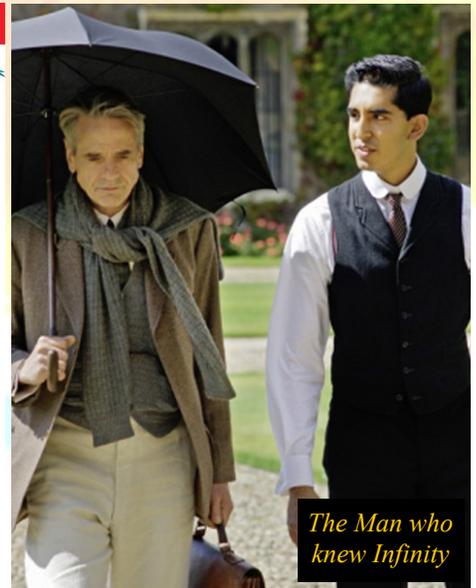
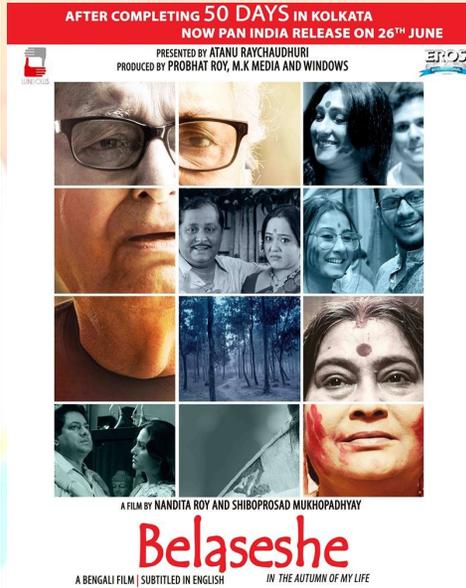
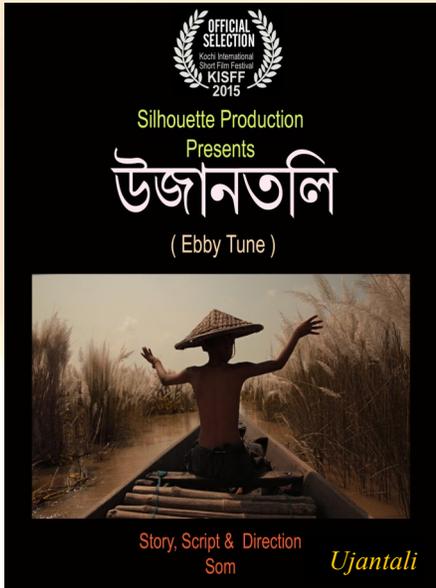
A newly introduced section termed 'First Cut' is to feature films of debutante directors from all across the globe and includes films such as 'Solness' (A. Michael Klette; Germany), 'Wednesday May 9' (Vahid Jalilvand; Iran) and 'Golden Kingdom' (Brian Perkins; Myanmar).

The most anticipated films in the festival remain India's official entry to the Oscars, Chaitanya Tamhane's debutante legal drama 'Court', the Sanskrit film 'Priyamanasam', cerebral auteur Buddhadeb Dasgupta's 'Anwar ka Ajab Kissa' starring the peerless Nawazuddin Siddiqui, the Cannes-favourite 'Masaan' as well as the Bollywood blockbuster of the year, the



Salman Khan starrer Bajrangi Bhaijaan which was an immensely popular, touching tale of cross-border relations between India and Pakistan, narrated with the feel-good cushioning of the finest variety that Bollywood can provide. The Kabir Khan film went on to amass millions and became one of the most popular films in Bollywood history, garnering positive feedback from both sides of the border.

As tradition dictates, IFFI will pay tribute to deceased cinema personalities this year as well. Filmmaker K Balachander, Odiya director Nirad Mohapatra and Assamese filmmaker Bidyut Chakravarty; music composers Aadesh Shrivastava, MS Vishwanathan & Ravindra Jain, along with actors Deven Verma, Manorama and Indra Bania; producers Eddida Nageshwar Rao and D Ramanaidu will be paid tribute at this year's festival.

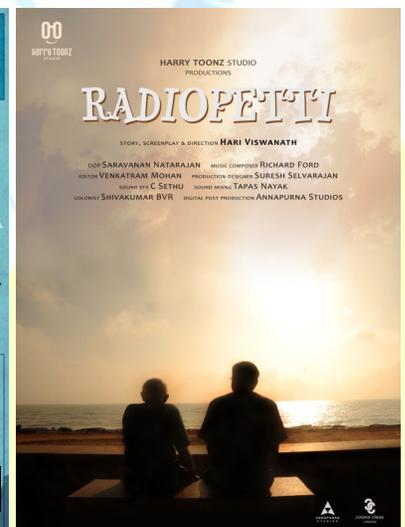
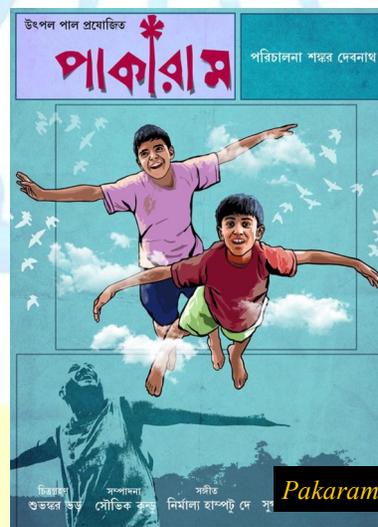
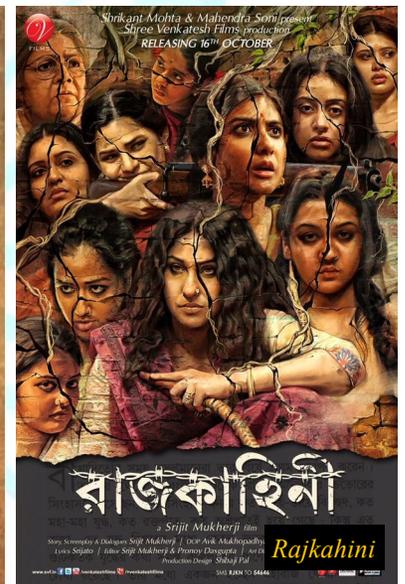
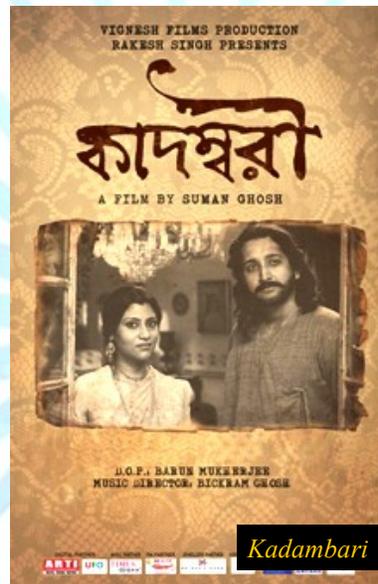


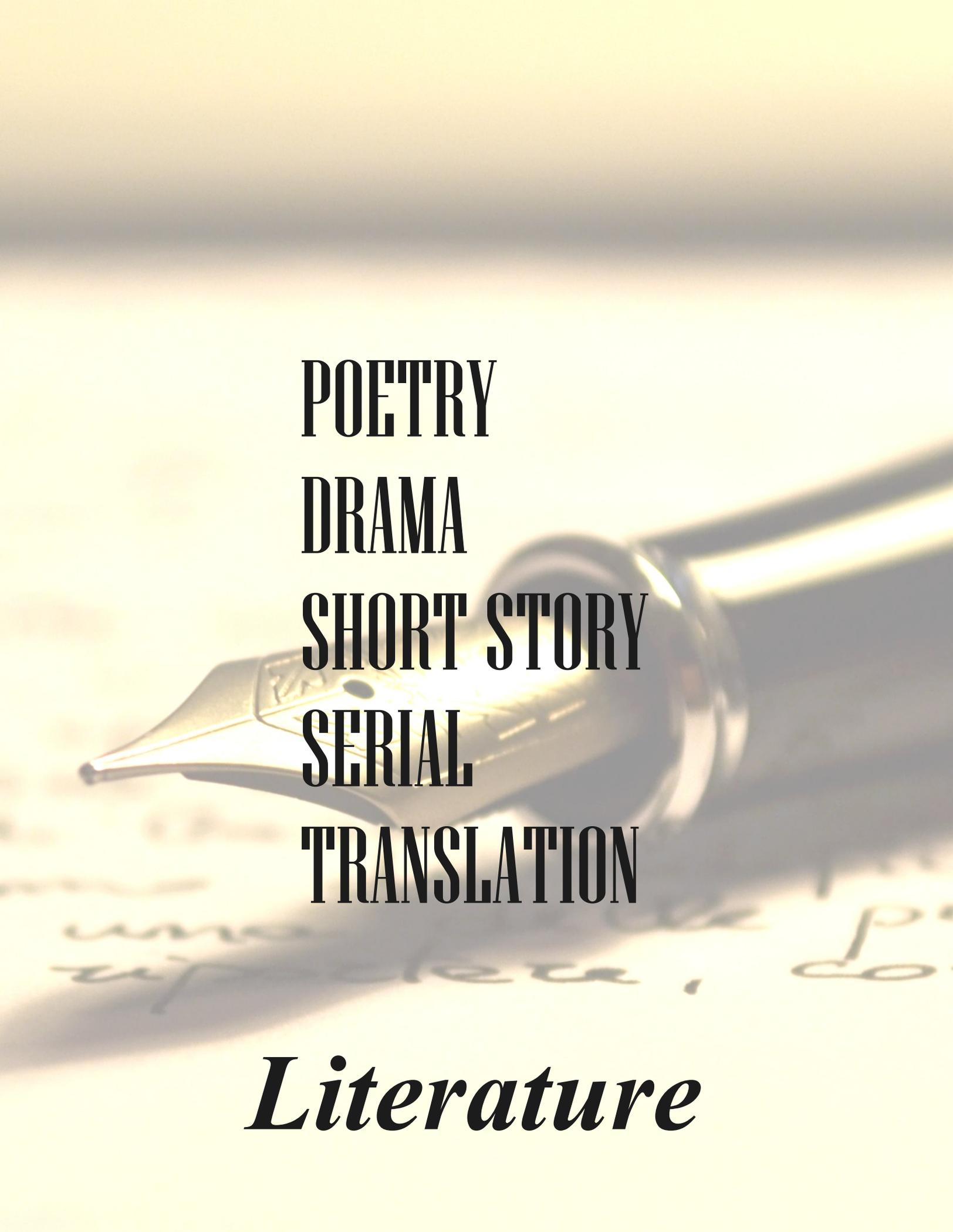
The 46th IFFI will host a total of 187 films from 89 countries in the 10 days, which is scheduled to begin with the screening of the British film centred around the life of Indian mathematician Ramanujan titled ‘The Man who knew Infinity’ with Dev Patel in the lead. Anil Kapoor will be the guest of honour during the festival opening .

‘Kingdom of Spain’ being the focus country this year, the fest has a selection of films by Spanish filmmakers Pedro Almadovar and Carlos Saura along with modern Spanish auteurs such as Alejandro Amenabar.

National Film Heritage Mission will be given an excellent exposure with the introduction of the ‘World Cinema Restored Classics’ section, besides presenting the ICFT- UNESCO Fellini Prize to the film which deftly represents UNESCO’s ideals such as peace, friendship and tolerance.

Even as, ironically, the filmmakers protesting the alleged intolerance in the nation, along with members of the Film Federation of India (FFI) and Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) have called for a boycott of the 46th IFFI, it has enough brilliant films (including 10 fiction and non-fiction titles in Bengali) to attract any avid cinegoer who chooses to put Art first. [CC]





**POETRY**

**DRAMA**

**SHORT STORY**

**SERIAL**

**TRANSLATION**

***Literature***

# POETRY

Artwork: Suhas Krishna

## Once

*Bodhi Ray*

She had once flown, clutching her desk and drawers,  
And as the clouds whizzed past.  
She caught a glimpse of God  
But the screams shut Him out

She had once sat on a rainbow, with its colours melting  
All muddled up, until it was night.  
She jumped down and headed home  
By the last local train

She had once eaten, by the wayside temple  
A gift from Gods, yet so simple.  
Now she belched after her meal  
The poison tasting stale

She had once worn clothes, the fabric clinging to her sweat  
The threads intertwined, until she was naked.  
Now she turned in her sleep, her lithe body awake  
The fabric became a blanket which He has flung away.

## Waterfront

*Ankit Kaushal*

Let us assume there is a boy on the riverfront,  
or a pebbled beach in an idyllic seafaring  
hometown.  
Let him sit near the water all day, and maybe even  
all night long.

Let him scoop the salty stones in a bundle,  
aiming it in two fingers & lidshut eyes towards  
the sky.  
Let him fail each time, let him keep at his  
precious retry.

Let him play his game of hope and let the brittle  
be showered into pieces of joy, as the little boy...  
Let us assume -  
Hopes to send one pebble all the way past  
the distant sky.

# Two Poems

*Trivarna Hariharan*

## Mirage

Your voice rests upon my palm like snow on a  
sunny afternoon's window.  
Something; you say,  
something still feels quite right –  
just about right.

And then the shield is lifted off both our eyes.

Maybe we're still looking for complete truths.  
The pure ones.

Somewhere behind a rooftop after some time,  
I hear the silent snow clear itself away.

## The Mechanics of Being Unfaithful

of course we gave ourselves  
names we couldn't understand and  
hence remained anonymous

so while we could refer to  
each other in ambiguities, we could  
never discern what we were really saying

we were hiding behind people  
who also probably hid behind us

and it is still unclear to me  
what all this hiding has yielded  
because even though we can hear each other speak  
from close

we can't even tell how we enunciate our syllables  
from a distance of five miles

# POETRY

## Two Poems

*Brandon Marlon*

### The Sultan's Tent

Veiled belly dancers gyrated,  
delighting patron and guests  
gorging on lamb and olives,  
rosemary flecks in their teeth.

Feathery fronds spun awhirl  
as squirming houris charmed  
between swipes at matbucha  
or nips of steaming mint tea.

Awaiting sizzling shish taouk,  
emirs traded caravan hearsay,  
fiercely rivaling one another  
with reports of desert ghoul.

Yet within the host's soul,  
a quest for insight stirred,  
diverting regal attentions  
from tinkling waist belts.

Concerned with obscurities,  
he forsook canopied luxury,  
envious of unconfined stars,  
keen to fathom their secrets.

### Realm of Souls

Our preparatory surpassed,  
we transcend to the intermediate,  
a patient, millennial domain  
where the newly disembodied  
await, lighten, and grow,  
in expectation of Resurrection.

Therefore, deserted grievors,  
don no more mourning robes;  
cast off the sackcloth and ashes.  
The dearly departed are fortune's intimates.  
Ours is a dominion wherein even  
the most weary among us recuperate  
and the grimeiest are laved of tarnish.

Here our essences, purged of dross,  
sifted from chaff, glisten with shafts  
of primordial light, shards of purity  
meticulously reassembled.  
The ethereal sphere is our entitlement,  
a blessed relief for those overburdened  
by the onerous density of destiny,  
a welcome release from life's knotty ravelment.

The greatest of phantasts pales  
next to the lowliest of the unillusioned;  
molting amid this crucible, we undergo  
delicate catharsis and gentle burnish,  
to reemerge with wide-eyed enlightenment,  
piecemeal and unprecedented.

In the grand foyer of existence  
heartfelt strivers edify, polishing the spirit  
with fresh measures, well-meaning endeavors,  
neither glorious nor ignominious;  
yet only through the refining furnace  
of posthumous kiln does apotheosis obtain,  
where the righteous are crowned and recline,  
feasting on the sublime effulgence.

## Just go with it

I took her  
 and ran with it  
 in my mouth,  
 I let it go with the flow  
 inside a mind's eye of third  
 and center.  
 Just breathe girl,  
 breathe through the jabs of  
 pains,  
 through stretching out too  
 thin  
 and pushing it too hard,  
 too much.  
 Wheels spinning,  
 trimming words down  
 to barenaked minimum;  
 Punch with spice  
 and this better be funny  
 bitch.  
 You're making me mad over  
 calls waiting and waiting  
 and waiting rooms for  
 luggage,  
 and baggage begging to be  
 dropped off at the carousel;  
 to spin the tails on the clock  
 hands  
 rounds and rounds,  
 betting on minutes  
 and scores for the games  
 of temporary winning,  
 and tie games  
 to go home with.

## Two Poems

*Poetry & Graphics: Ava Bird*

### Glasses cling

glasses cling  
 smiles around  
 someone speaks  
 more smiles  
 glasses cling  
 to happiness  
 yes to our gifts  
 of moments of  
 here and now  
 thanks  
 glasses cling  
 for being here  
 happy faces  
 smiles over  
 passing the tests and graduations  
 the levels the ladders the checks  
 marks yes  
 transcendence and smiles  
 the deluxe box  
 up in the sky  
 Movin' on up  
 glasses cling

## SHORT STORY

# The Dealer

*Jagannath Chakravarti*



I am actually not like that, you must believe me. Sure I don't have as *mastiwala* a life as I would have liked but that does not stop me from being a carefree *spirit* instead. And that means following the golden rule of minimal *bawali*. Problems or conflicts or hostile confrontations are not welcome precisely because I am tired of assuming a different spirit every time to successfully overcome them. Quite a few of those have been men that I wouldn't like to play again. You must believe me, Sirs, it's one of them that grabbed me by my soul and made me do what I did. Everyone in the locality will otherwise vouch for my char-

acter, you'll see.

Yes, I may have done a few things off the books, but they weren't certainly out of your books of information, officers! I regularly paid my *hafta*, which was a virtual licence for me to run my business in peace. You would look the other way and take a share of the profits, which leaves me an amount that is, *ha*, certainly better than nothing. But of course, predicaments tend to pop out of nowhere and for me, it did in the winter of last year when the old scion of the Catholic school across my *pan-bidi-cigarette* shop retired and



*I was not in the business of selling cigarettes to minors, I did not even pay these taxes to you, officers, back then. Because I would do nothing wrong. Then Montu in the grocery shop in the next lane sells a cigarette to a fellow in the eighth standard, and I get to be punished for it!*

left for his home in Brazil while that dreadful man took over. Father Costa had been a fine man, with an acquired taste for *pan*. He used to have one every night before going to sleep, but would even come over at other times just to chat with me. He respected me for being a graduate, but somehow didn't feel pity for me as I had assumed he would. It had actually made me respect him even more because I could actually open myself up to this fellow, simply because he had not zeroed in on a superficial version of my story halfway into our first conversation, like his replacement Father du Mont did.

I was not in the business of selling cigarettes to minors. I did not even pay these taxes to you, officers, back then, because I would do nothing wrong. Then Montu from the grocery shop in the next lane sells a cigarette to a fellow in the eighth standard, and I get to be punished for it! Father du Mont rebuked me for several minutes in a language that did not suit such a man of education and authority. Although most of it were in the father's native tongue which nobody could understand, his expressions were clearly worth a thousand profanities.

I was ordered to take away my shop away from my spot to the mouth of the lane, which was actually a much better suggestion now that the flyover in that end had ceased to be operational owing to several cracks that were spotted by a wary citizen which ended up forcing the municipal corporation to close traffic and begin repairs. You may not know it, Sirs, but I was the one to spot them and inform the authorities. Father Costa had literally patted my back for doing sensible civic duty. It was apparently a fraction of the work of God Himself that I had done!

It was a great time to relocate to the mouth of the lane because the traffic had been directed to take the road beneath the flyover, right next to my suggested spot, which was logically ill-suited to swiftly accommodate all that traffic. Jams happened often, and that gave the people time to come over for a smoke, or some chewing gum, or even a beautifully crafted *khili* of pan made with utmost care to serve the palate of a true connoisseur.

That is something that I'm really proud of, Sir. The upper class public, who are truly *sikkhito*, realise by the virtue of their experience and education that culinary arts is an art-form as well. So why should there be a discrimination against pan? It has such a glorious part to play in the history of our great nation- but of course, you officers being as intellectually sound as you are, know all about that. I should probably get back to my side of the story.

Although I could theoretically leave my spot, the very spot which I have known to be my own for the past seven years, in the lissom shade of a great *debdaru*, I didn't do that simply because Father du Mont *had* to be protested. He was harassing a common businessman just so he could set something right that was only wrong in his goddamned *opinion*. I never did anything wrong, Sir! Montu even confessed to the police that he was the one to sell the cigarette and got a few well-deserved *thabra*, but still the Father did not let me off the hook. To defeat me, the stubborn man armed himself with law.

I honestly had no clue that such a law existed but apparently, one cannot sell anything belonging to the tobacco family within a hundred metres of any school. Big deal! Were there any comprehensive statistics as to how many laws are by-passed daily and overlooked by... well, *you*... but of course, the *police* are the fairest people I know. You supported me like you support every businessman, small or a freaking mogul, when they seem to break a law you and I logically find *insane*.

I mean, a school kid who badly wants to smoke will easily walk a mere 100 metres and buy his fag! How am I the enabler then? Why is such a restriction put on my business in the first place?

The police didn't disagree with me, not because I had given them a premium on my *hafta* but because they found Father du Mont as abhorrent as I did.

Nobody liked that man. Even his own staff and students had not warmed up to him in all these months. So how do we expect officers to react when they are called in, in a fit of anger, by a lunatic who wanted them to immediately implement a law that doesn't make any sense in the first place.

I retained my spot. The police made promises of 'trying' to make arrangements, but it was clear to both warring sides that they were washing the matter off their hands for good.

I must confess that the incident emboldened me. And of course, I wanted to strike the first blow now that it was clear that du Mont wouldn't stop trying to dislocate me.

I had commenced my business by whispering to the eleventh grader Kaushik if he wanted to try out a new *mouri* flavour of a popular cigarette. I gave it to him as a complimentary gift, obviously, after adding before his stunned face, 'From now, you can buy cigarettes from here. And tell your friends.'

It was a slow start, but steady enough for you to notice, Sirs, and you promptly raised my *hafta*, you must remember... I



*I honestly had no clue that such a law existed, but apparently one cannot sell tobacco and assorted stuff within a hundred metres of any school. Big deal!*

honestly did not have a clue that so many kids smoked. This was supposed to be an English-medium school, an educational institution for acquiring knowledge. Their parents spend thousands every month for their education. And not just the boys! The girls had started smoking early too. They would seldom come and ask directly for cigarettes, but would often send their male friends, or if in a group, come in twos and buy a couple of packs easy.

Du Mont had wind of it, of course. A student had informed me that the Father had called for a parent-teacher conference in order to address the menace of the 'smoke shack' across the street. It was a conversation which had started with a rather clandestine inquiry from the tenth grader, 'Do you, by any chance, have cigarette papers?'

After I had admitted that I wasn't sure what they were, he had politely went on to explain that sometimes tobacco is smoked after rolling it in a 'cigarette' paper manually. By this point in the tête-à-tête, a very common picture had been conjured and I asked with an air of disbelief, 'You really aren't planning to smoke tobacco in those papers, are you?'

The boy had given me a sly little smile before nodding his head 'no'. As you can very well guess, officers, they were already hooked on to *ganja* before I became their supplier. And you surely cannot be surprised at that, Sir, because the police knew that too. I began doubling my *hafta*, the police informed me beforehand when du Mont made them conduct a 'surprise' raid. We have only been on the best of terms, Sir, and so I must ask you to carefully consider my side before you start pinning the blame of something a hundred times graver on me simply because I'm, by some definitions, a lowly drug dealer!

Officers, do you know how easily you can find someone who sells *ganja* within walking distance of that school? Well, of course you must! Where do you think the kids acquired it from before I started dealing in them? It was a fashion, Sir! Smoking *ghas-phoos...* weed... as they'd call it, has become a fashion among these boys and girls. No wonder they are so stupid! Smoking, drinking, clicking pictures of themselves all day long!

And the pictures were where it all started, you know. Out of a thousand *selfies*, she innocently uploaded the one where I am in the background handing a pack of cigarettes and what appears to be greenish substances inside a plastic pouch to a ninth-grader. I had no clue that it had



*As you can very well guess, officers, they were already hooked on to ganja before I became their supplier. And you surely cannot be surprised at that, Sir, because the police knew that too.*

caused such a furore over Facebook or something the night before.

As I came down to open my shop the next day, the mob of parents descended upon me. As you remember, they beat me up pretty bad. Had the officers not been there to save me in time, I doubt I would've come out of there alive. It had been a miracle that I had forgotten to bring my stack of marijuana pouches from home and had decided that I would bring them over after lunch. Honestly, the business really picked up from the afternoon, post the break of school.

Thus, in the presence of a horde of murderous onlookers, the police did not find any trace that suggested that I was in the business of spoiling their children, as the popular consensus was, fuelled by a campaigning du Mont who was obviously leading the mob from behind. The concerned officer later came to visit me in the hospital to assure me that he would do his best to bring the violent parents to justice. He had also said something that day that rings true even as I recall it now, 'They weren't angry at you, no! They were angry at themselves because they couldn't raise their children any better. As a mad man breaks expensive things when he's angry at himself, they simply directed their rage at you!'

It had been those words, and the fact that several of the attackers were briefly arrested and given a good telling-to, that gave me the strength to reopen my little shop at the same spot that I have graced for the last seven years.

I did not retract any of my business policies. The students were happy to have me back, and were sincerely apologetic for their parents' misdeeds. I forgave them, even the girl whose selfie it was that caused me all that trouble, and it was a good thing that I forgave her, seeing as how she was to die so tragically young and I was destined to sit here in a police station explaining how I had absolutely no role to play in it.

It had not been my fault that her 'friends' had harassed and hounded her when her little photograph brought their chain of addiction to an unpleasant halt. They did forgive her though, yes, but not before she was harassed enough to take to an addiction herself. And that is something which is absolutely illogical to put on me for the obvious reason that I did NOT know whether she was buying the stuff for the first time.

I did sell her the pack worth 100 bucks on the day she passed away, but how the heck would I know that the innocent girl would end up doing something so stupid? I had no clue that Father du Mont had scolded her in public for being tardy



*The students were happy to have me back, and were sincerely apologetic for their parents' misdeeds. I forgave them, even the girl whose selfie it was which caused me all that trouble...*

during the morning assembly, nor did I know that her parents had announced only the previous night that they were going to get a divorce. I merely assumed she was having a little party with her friends and that's why she was buying all that *ganja*. You must remember I am a man of business before everything else and what the customer does with a product shouldn't be my concern in the first place. Besides, she was in the twelfth-grade! She had to be nearly eighteen if not already so. How could such a big girl do something like that?

I must admit that had I known what she was going to do, I would've talked her out of it. Smoking it is another thing, but where did she get the idea of grinding the *ganja* and having the whole thing with a glassful of water, I don't know. Maybe she had run out of cigarette paper... I don't know! I always do keep a well-stocked inventory of cigarette papers and would've gladly sold her one... or just given it to her if she didn't have the money on her... she could have easily paid me back the next day. But she didn't ask for it so... I don't know...

I know you all are under pressure to solve this case soon and blaming it on me is your easiest way forward, but you must believe me officers, I have been in that spot for seven years, diligently paying my hafta and Father Costa really, truly respected me for being a graduate. [CC]



*Smoking it is another thing, but where did she get the idea of grinding the ganja and having the whole thing with a glassful of water, I don't know. Maybe she had run out of cigarette paper...*

Artwork: Jagannath Chakravarti



# POETRY

## Two Poems

*Daniel de Culla*

### In a Lamp

In a lamp and in a bronze candlestick  
 And in a carved stone in the Romanic time.  
 Culla was Templars' matrix house  
 Where they developed intellectual powers:  
 The collective bargaining, the business deal  
 The double-dealing  
 And the sexual intercourse  
 And anything they could go also:  
 Poems, ideas, dreams  
 With so many colors and textures  
 But ruining their lives  
 With misapplication and the anxiety to money  
 As it happens ever.



Artwork: Suhas Krishna



### Sleeping Beauty

The illusion of "Sleeping Beauty" coming from her  
 Whose bones are of mist and ether  
 At the cataract of two wind falling  
 Where she is not and is not seen  
 In an instant remembering creation  
 Monstrous thunder and clouds  
 Where souls once again meet unhuman  
 And name each other  
 In the esoteric, mirror that lies invisibly  
 When the sea whiter coiled as wire  
 Because it comes from the beginning  
 As the lightening flash  
 Reconciled with the sky at dawn  
 Disappearing instantly  
 Into bliss.

Or as when Irving said she was just a poet  
 Going to sea reading  
 Jeffrey Delman's "Dead time Stories"  
 Also known as Freaky Fairytales in the Film  
 Learning love through a decaying body  
 That happens  
 As kids die like beetles that route.

## POETRY

# The Mountain of the Moon

*Jagannath Chakravarti*

They were the species of wringing verses -  
 Useless arrangements of words  
 Repeating over and over, over time.  
 One could choose to ignore them  
 Or fall prey to their obsessive compulsion  
 And indistinct symmetry.  
 What if it were our impromptu affinity for  
 Symmetry - the mere obsession of  
 Primitive Crystallography  
 That has taught humans to bear or to  
 Brave mountains  
 With mere tunnel vision?  
 In search of the mountain of the moon,  
 Or the heart of an explorer at stake...  
 That is what we have to figure out for ourselves.



Artwork: Suhas Krishna



# Our Journey

*Nikita Khatri*

Perhaps in this world of oppurtunities  
 Where there are more men than hopes,  
 there still lies a thousand different faces  
 Hidden behind one soul.  
 A walk on the path, your journey what gave you,  
 will draw you down certainly,  
 What brings you back is the thought of trying one more time,  
 because once given can't be taken without his will.  
 On the way you shall discover,  
 what comes is all not true,  
 Half of them jubilant,  
 and half hideous will lead its way through.  
 But what is bizarre will also make you feeble,  
 only the true ones will hurt you more.  
 What is around you is exquisite, no wonder,  
 But times become solemn and secrets uncover.  
 And thats when you decide you have to let go,  
 of all the lies and the flaws.  
 Because what will bring you up is trying one more time,  
 as once given can't be taken without his will.

## SHORT STORY

# Obsession

*Larry Lefkowitz*

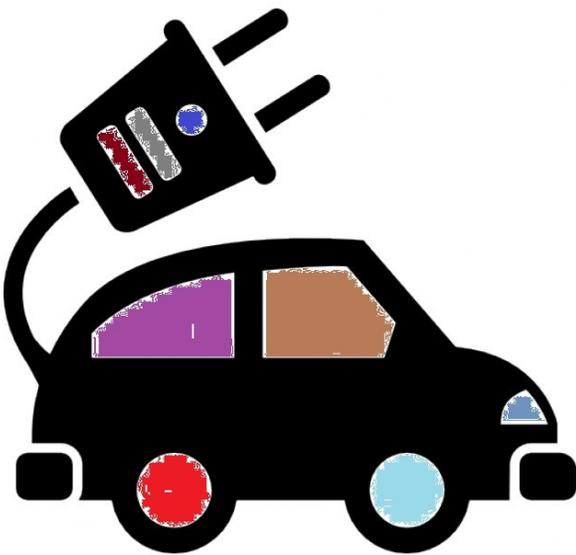
**M**y husband has been obsessed for some time with replacing gas fueled vehicles (“gas guzzlers”) with electric battery fueled vehicles. He is fond of quoting a Tesla Car forum user: “I got tired of being a sucker and paying for over-priced crude oil knowing the money was going to Islamo nut jobs that want to kill me.” He, my husband, is a “green nut” par excellence. A laudable obsession, you say. But wait. His obsession led him to a sub-obsession. The Tesla Motors electric car – read: the model S sedan. And lately the Model X SUV.

My husband wanted to change the name of our pooch from “Poochie” to “Elon Musk.” Elon Musk is the CEO of Tesla Motors. Here I put my foot down. He had to settle for naming our goldfish, “Elon Musk.” We are the only family in the world with a goldfish named Elon Musk. Even Elon Musk's family doesn't have a goldfish named after him. My husband praises the aerodynamics of the goldfish. “Like the Model S,” he says.

He is a sworn follower of the Tesla car internet forums via which aficionados exchange helpful information about the cars, how to operate their many and frequently updated applications, suggestions for vehicle improvements, videos and u-tubes showing the cars in action. During such forum watching, my hubby holds out his coffee cup or meal tray for my replenishing, his eyes glued to the computer screen. When I complained, he replied, “The model S has a cup-holder.” Small wonder I call myself, a “Tesla wife.”

He even put on a Russian video (circa November 2013) describing (for an hour) the Model S and its step by step operation– and he doesn't know a word of Russian, which didn't prevent him from translating it for my benefit (he knows the operating steps by heart.) I suggested he send his resume to the CIA. During

*Nicola is a Genius that it not getting as much recognition as Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, and Isaac Newton. Thanks to Elon Musk for finally making him a legend and taking his name to the level where he should have been in the first place”*



the presentation, losing patience at being forced to watch it, I sneered something about “dialectical materialism,” - a comment he ignored. After the presentation was finished, he said, “it was hopelessly out of date—so many new applications were added afterward, but it was part of Tesla history.”

Speaking of Tesla history, the Tesla Motor company and its cars are named for Nicola Tesla (1856-1943), the brilliant, if at times idiosyncratic, inventor of many electrical devices and systems (including the AC induction motor used in Tesla cars). Sometimes he went overboard, as in his theoretical invention of the thought camera which would photograph thoughts (alas, he lived before Google could bankroll it); on the other hand, Tesla didn't believe in telepathy. One Tesla forum poster (forum name: “ILOVEMYTESLA”) wrote: “Nicola is a Genius that it not getting as much recognition as Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, and Isaac Newton. Thanks to Elon Musk for finally making him a legend and taking his name to the level where he should have been in the first place!” This prompted a reply: “Well, of course he doesn't get as much recognition as Einstein. He said the theory of relativity was wrong.” Musk probably factored in the theory of relativity in designing the Model S.

Some of the Tesla forum posters (identified by their forum names) are household words. I joke that “Red Sage” is in my bed and “PhillyGal” in his. Most forum users include “Tesla” as part of their forum names. “Tesla Tap” wrote, I must have gone through 100 ideas before finding 'Tesla Tap': “Almost anything you can think of had already been taken. The 'Tap' sort of connects with the ability to tap the Model S display screen.”

“Ohms Law” wrote, “I really wanted to use a reference to electromagnetic induction, but I thought Faradays' Law was too obscure. Hence the more generic 'Ohms Law' which still applies to the underlying principles of a Tesla.”

“Amped Realtor”: “Mine was the result of a complete lack of creativity whatsoever.”

“Kleist”: “After the invention of the electrical storage . . . that is what Tesla is all about.” He added a description of Von Kleist and the Leyden jar (1745).

“Brass Guy”: “I first thought of Tuba Guy, but that's too nar-

row so I had to widen the scope. I'm often using a French horn or trombone. I can get a lot of brass in the MS."

"Nkwazi": "Zulu name for the fish eagle found in southern Africa. I like birds and grew up over there."

"Pettifoggeer": "I've used the same name on other forii, and it's sufficiently obscure not to be already in use. It refers to my (some would say) profession."

"Cattledog" is a skillful versifier. Here are the first three couplets of his "'Twas the Night before Xmas or Account of a Visit from St. Elon":

'Twas the night 'for Xmas and all through the forum,  
The posters were antsy, they'd thrown out decorum!

Their stocks had gone up at the end of last week,  
In the hopes that St. Elon would send out a tweet.

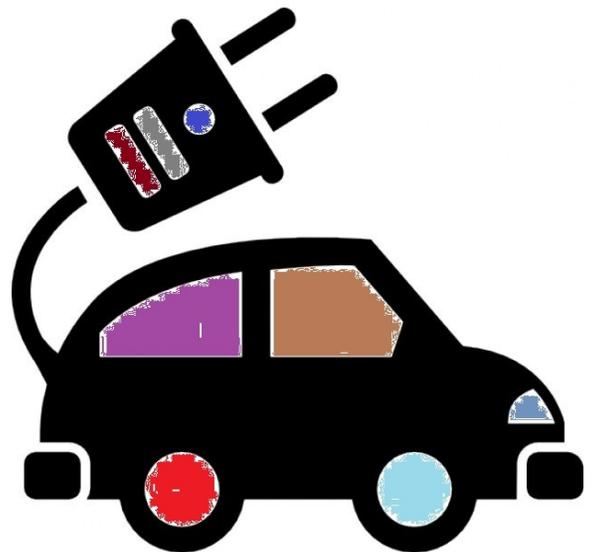
The Res. Holders were settle all snug in their beds,  
While visions of falcon wings danced in their heads.

To annotate: "stocks" refers to Tesla stocks (or perhaps metaphorically the hopes of would be Model X purchasers); "St. Elon" is Tesla CEO Elon Musk; "tweet" refers to the eagerly awaited notice that Model X will start production; "Res. Holders" refers to holders of orders for the Model X; "falcon wings" refers to the type of folding upwards doors on the Model X. Incidentally, the "X" in the "Xmas" short form for "Christmas" is, in my opinion, a (perhaps unconscious) tribute to the Model X.

When I wondered whether Elon Musk was a versifier, my husband, somewhat distracted lately (probably dreaming of the Model X), asked, "Our goldfish?" "No," I corrected, "the CEO."

Once, if I wanted my husband to come to bed for exercise and play, I would walk past the TV (in the pre-forum TV days) in my bra and panties. Last time I passed near his computer thus un-attired—he mumbled something about my liability to

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catch cold and said something about a forum hope that the new Model x would have heated seats! I felt like telling him to have self-intercourse with the damn seats!

I once half kiddingly (then) suggested I might seek a divorce. His reply: "Elon Musk is divorced. His wife claimed he was a genius but spent all his time wrapped up in his car." I shot back, "You have no excuse, you're not a genius." I'd like to see him Autopilot his life alone!

The odd thing is that he can't afford a Model S or a Model X. "I'm saving my money for a Tesla Model 3," he announced recently. The model 3 is targeted for 2017 as an economy car for the masses (Read: us). "I'm saving my money for a divorce," I replied. Or maybe I'll sublimate my Tesla problem into a book. I will title it "The Tesla Syndrome." At the university, I majored in English Literature, minored in Psychology. My MA paper was entitled, "Problems of Psychiatric Adjustment on the Part of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Caused by Hamletian Dominance."

I tell him that before he has a Model 3 – he may have a third wife. He was married briefly at a young age to his first wife. They separated, not because of a Tesla car – Elon Musk had not yet made his splash.

I am referring to the Elon Musk, the CEO, not the goldfish.

[CC]

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# DRAMA



## SCENE ONE

*Two men post an informal dinner. The setting is a drawing room. The background has the impression of a starry night - a blank canvas dotted with bluish-white, red and green dots, twinkling as if stars. There are two couches on the stage. A man in his early 40s in a tinted suit sit on stage left and an older gentleman over 60 sits on stage*

*right. The elder gentleman is wearing a peculiarly designed, off-white dressing gown. He is drinking some sort of liquor. A low, ornate table rests between the two couches. There are unconventional-looking bottles of liquor on the table, a transparent ice-container, and a bright table lamp with enough light to fairly illuminate the two gentlemen. At the beginning of the play, the 'stars' and this lamp is the only source of light. With the*

Artwork: Ava Bird

# A Moon of Jupiter

Pothik Bagchi

*play's progress, a generic spotlight will slowly fill the frontal area of the stage with the two couches.*

**Kallol** (*the younger man*)

You must understand, Professor, like everyone else I can easily imagine the distant past - the uncivil, wretched society, claiming they were civilized while living as mere probabilities in a random game of dice. Humans had all but given up hope and simply worked, used their brains to tuck themselves inside as safe a shell as they could. Even scientifically, their minds were quick to imagine the grandest of possibilities - but seldom did they try and believe in one so completely as to transform it into reality. It had learned how to multiply, *and* it was yet to learn how to multiply. They failed to design, control and direct their own thoughts. Yes, there were the masters of the Art of living, defining their success through

achievements that might deserve a sincere bow, but you must agree with me when I say this, Professor, they were primitive beings - they didn't particularly deserve the eventual gift that they received.

**Professor**

Yes, that is a theory. I don't mean your final sentence of course. But the point you made has been reflected in some recent research. The point is to implicate that our *great*

*evolution* was a gift. As you know, the scientific community largely believes in the theory propagated by ancient thinker Charles Darwin. Natural Selection is a truth that I, personally, do not believe that even our 'great evolution' can disprove.

**Kallol**

On the contrary, Professor, Natural Selection by definition is as random as nature itself. Yes, we have the ability of precognition to identify the vilely termed *calamities* of nature through our senses, but it has been historically documented that those humans, our revered ancestors, had no such sense of impending, potentially catastrophic events whatsoever. They feared the random because they had such little control over their surroundings. How could they realise the beauty of it when they suffer by the very hands of the same? Saying calamities to define a *fact* of nature may practically be an offence now but can we really not see their point?

**Professor**

Firstly, my dear Kallol, you have completely misinterpreted *Natural Selection*. It is not randomness that is at the

core of the idea, it is the theory of *Survival of the fittest!* So, yes, evolution does imply that they... we... did deserve the leap we achieved! In any case, I was not expecting you to defend them on any count. I am pleasantly surprised, Kallol. And yes, I do see your point. They were a brilliant lot, not as intelligent perhaps, but possessing immense potential all the same! They were primitive in the sense that they repeatedly went in circles as far as their mistakes were concerned, yes. They could appreciate everything that was good in the world, but had little patience or potency to sustain that goodness as a race. Any perceived obstacle was met with anxiety, disappointment or rage. They may have known the value of forgiveness, unto others and oneself, but *we* have the means to reap its worth! It happens to be one of the best ways to get to the truth, as I remember mentioning in class, not that you'd pay any attention!

### Kallol

Yes, I must admit I found them to be quite a bore. It wasn't your content, or opinions that would take me adrift, it was your sheer ability to take all the worth out of the lessons that you would inevitably try and quantify.

### Professor *(laughs)*

I am a dedicated man of science, Kallol! You do realise most of us do not subscribe to the allure of the 'performing arts' as you have chosen to display, dropping out of Structural Philosophy to pursue Drama... but the true artist that you claim to be, surely you realise the absolute poetic harmony of basic mathematics, even?

### Kallol

Forgive me for failing to realise you were creating poetry in class, Sir, but you must admit it is rather strange that there is no recorded history of this evolution at all! Where is the study? Where are the proofs? And since it is not here, *why* is it not here? That race has painstakingly documented every moment of their individual lives. They would take countless images of themselves, make motion pictures, script volumes of autobiographies that other people would read, wasting hours of the precious

little time they had... And yet, there is no clear documentation of the evolution that changed their very being. The documentation stops like a thousand year war which did not have any logic to cease...

### Professor

On the contrary, Kallol, the logic is right in front of you. We, as the human race, have evolved from the pathological need to preserve. We have learnt to look to the future only because of the truths that we gained as the collective human race, because of the way we tapped into the potential of our mind, our memory... You must remember the constraints of our ancestors. They would fantasize about travelling to planets, colonizing them, they would wonder about teleportation, telekinesis. And here we are...

*The professor empties his glass and puts it down on the table. Then he takes a little breather and points his finger towards the bottle, which naturally begins to hover in the air, pouring liquor into the glass and after it is done, the bottle reverts back to its original place, on the professor's cue of hand.*

### Professor

Would you like another? *(Kallol nods in the negative, takes out a cigarette box from his coat and lights one)* Now, if I did that in the 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> century, they would call it magic! A mere *performing art*. Being an artist, don't you ever wonder why you are no longer as relevant as you obviously were back then? It is simple, really. Because art isn't relevant anymore. Art is not a necessity in an evolved, perfect society, Kallol. You are intelligent, you are a human... you do realise that, I suppose!

### Kallol

You are against preservation, yet you happen to be a trustee of the Human Historical Preservation society.

### Professor

Being a trustee of the HHP is an important social

identity for me. It gives me certain leverage with the people who matter, I'm sure you understand that, Kallol. I don't, like most members of our community, believe in revisiting the past. But that does not mean that we do not respect it, and respect our ancient's juvenile desire to be preserved.

*Kallol offers the Professor a cigarette as he finishes the drink. The professor takes it. Kallol points to the bottle, which jerks alive again, more dramatically this time, and fills the Professor's glass to the brim. It seemed like the glass would spill over, but Kallol retracts the trajectory of the glass at the last moment and signals it back to its original place. The Professor notices this.*

**Professor**

Speaking of revisits, you have been quite a loyal patron of the HHP, I hear.

**Kallol**

Yes, I've been visiting the centre for a while. In fact, the reason I came to visit you this evening is so you can accompany me to Io.

**Professor**

The HHP? At this hour? What for?

**Kallol**

I have a theory. I am not a man of numbers, and there is the necessity of one who can be as, calculating, as you can be. Besides, this is not my field. If you do like the theory, you have my complete assent to claim it to the world as your own.

**Professor** *(twirling the glass slowly)*

And what is the theory, my dear?

**Kallol**

I'm afraid I can only tell you that once we are in Io.

**Professor**

Very well *(dumps the rest of the liquor, burps)*. I'm not sure I'm appropriately dressed for it... but it's unmanned anyway, so who cares? Shall we leave, then?

**Kallol**

I'll be in the photographic archives.

*With the sound of a bang, darkness hogs the stage all of a sudden, before light returns to signal that the two men are gone. The couches are empty.*

**SCENE TWO**

*A fast slideshow cover a large area of the background canvas, featuring images from known human history, from the Jurassic to the modern era. An animated projection shows the huge facade of the planet Jupiter on the darkened roof of the auditorium. There are two straight backed chairs instead of the couches, again with a table (a futuristic, metallic one) between them.*

*The two men converge near the slideshow from their respective sides. Kallol from stage left and the Professor from stage right. The professor finishes the cigarette, puts it out under his foot. Kallol motions towards the slideshow and it stops at an image of Gautam Buddha. The changes in the slideshow will be preceded by motions of Kallol's hand.*

**Kallol**

Would you happen to know this man, Sir?

**Professor**

He's familiar, yes, but I don't think I recall him exactly.

**Kallol**

How about him? *(Krishna)*, Or him? *(Jesus)*, Or... *(Chaitanya)*

**Professor**

I believe they were all entities associated with the religious beliefs of our ancestors. Our evolution has enabled us to forgo that particular weakness... Please do not tell me you are about to defend religion, Kallol! There are rehabilitation centres for people who think like that! I believe in a divine creator as much as the next person, but surely you do not imply that there were incarnations, mes-

sengers or children of God who came to save humanity from time to time! Segregated beliefs had been the biggest divisive force for our ancestors, Kallol!

**Kallol**

That I don't deny. But there is something about these people that make them more similar to us than they were to the ancients!

**Professor** (*guffaws*)

I've heard this argument before, I have! You are implying that they had shown traits of the evolution before it actually occurred. They were charlatans, Kallol! At best, performing artists hypnotising a gullible mob who had no means of knowing any better! Unlike us, they would drink to their misery, Kallol! They were thirsty for the hope that these people... these leaders... were peddling for profit!

**Kallol**

What really happened on February 22nd, 2222, Professor?

**Professor** (*taken aback*)

What does that have to do with -?

**Kallol**

We never learned to stop thinking about profit, did we? Even as we stand here, you in your nightdress, there was something that motivated you enough to come here, is it not?

**Professor**

Now, Kallol, it is my mere curiosity that brings me here and nothing else. Even if your theory is worth the entire wealth of collective human knowledge, I would never claim it -

**Kallol**

I'm sorry I had to lie to you, Professor, but I do not have a theory... (flicks fingers, the slideshow vanishes. Kallol sits on the chair to stage right)

*Professor, irate, charges and Kallol. He comes forward to grasp the back of the chair on stage left.*

**Professor**

Do you mean to say you have lied to me to bring me all the way to this freaking corner of the solar system? I am leaving right now, I must insist that you stop visiting me from here on.

**Kallol**

What happened on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, Professor?

**Professor** (*bursts*)

Everyone knows what happened! Humanity stopped the mind-numbing, wasteful task of writing its own history! They were under the impression that they were doing it for posterity and whatnot, but they eventually realized that they were doing it solely to fill their inflated egos. They evolved, damn it! They finally evolved!

**Kallol**

You're lying, professor! Evolution hasn't taken away our urge to document history. There is none who peddles largely inconsequential information anymore, people may not write autobiographies too often but your office itself has walls of portraits displaying the previous Deans of your institution. Do you seriously ask me to believe you do not feel a strange satisfaction, in spite of your evolved mind, when you think that even after death, you will be remembered in your chamber of authority?

**Professor** (*calms down, sits on the chair*)

Documentation without purpose is a fruitless rationale, Kallol! Good work needs to be remembered as surely as the opposite is to be forgotten.

**Kallol**

Yes, our evolved memory does permit that. Ah, the forgetful humans... But we do have a choice, professor. We have the capability of turning the dark into something that is as glorious as the human mind itself. Our ancestors realised that.

**Professor**

Poff! You're about to bring up Art again, aren't you? It doesn't turn something bad into some-

thing that is good, my dear fellow - it's like a radiation spill. What you celebrate as Art, my friend, is a result of your mind failing to function as the perfect piece of technology that it is so it can be used to achieve what is beyond our realm of understanding! It is not a gadget for recycling, Kallol, which it becomes then! We have the responsibility of using it well and we are finally able to do so! Do you never wonder why the art of our age is aeons behind even the weakest of the work that is safely stored in this moon? (*gestures to indicate the entire preservation centre*) Our minds are our original and greatest gifts, unlike evolution, which is a natural process! Evolution showed us how to use them well!

### Kallol

But that does not explain why it is unclear whether the ancients woke up one day and found they had our extraordinary powers... or worked assiduously in order to achieve them. Did you really never know, Professor, that some of these men (*points at the empty projection canvas which begins to display silhouettes of men such as Krishna, Buddha and more while a high pitched, low tune begins*) have reportedly been evolved enough to function almost the way that we do. They had mastery over their minds... had abilities that received a linguistic definition not because of the fertile imagination that they possessed, but because the other humans caught them at it! Can you really deny, professor, that February 22, 2222 -

### Professor

You are not supposed to know what you are talking about... and for your concern, I insist that you stop your interrogation right NOW!

*After a pause, Kallol speaks*

### Kallol

It was a Friday. The date was hard to miss, being a palindrome of seven repeating digits. I merely ask why the ancients chose to cease obsessively recording events of humankind on that particular day... Why is there no record of anything that happened during the intervening 1500 years?

Where did all those countries go? If they realized the fruitlessness of borders, why isn't that glorious enlightenment a part of these records? Where are the missing records, Professor? I merely ask because I know for a fact that *you* know!

*Professor stands up. He is visibly livid.*

### Professor

Your theory stops here, Kallol! If there is a conspiracy to hide, you should understand that there is a reason why it is hidden! You don't know anything about that infernal Friday - nothing at all!

### Kallol

I do know some things, professor. And that is what baffles me. I know of the hundred year war, the fall of empires, the rise of humans and the subsequent desire to go extinct, before it stood up again, refusing to die. What I do not know is at what point during these events the evolution started? Of course, I have a theory. Would you like to hear it?

*Professor sits down, gives an exasperated sigh. Slowly extends his hand to the pack of cigarettes and lighter on Kallol's end of the table and lights one.*

### Kallol

It was, as I said, a gift! We can never know from whom, but it was a gift nevertheless. A gift that humanity received as suddenly as a cold in winter. They reckoned it was a disease, of course, barely understanding what the gift meant. The reactions were far from uniform. While some began seeing themselves as demigods, others could identify the truth among the variables. The war was inevitable, it is a consort of truth, or outgoing lies if you prefer... the rest of what happened was, as you claim, evolution!

### Professor (*the music will start to fall*)

Since there is no documentation of a hundred year war (*voice rises from here*), rise of empires, fall of humans and a desire to destroy, your theory is nothing more than a story, you stupid boy!

*(Tries to calm himself)* Why, tell me why is it so hard to accept that February 22, 2222 was simply the day of realization... one large step but a step nonetheless... a realization that it is futile to record and record and waste the present on the past and to take for granted the most wondrous thing ever conceived in nature... why is it hard to accept that we made a breakthrough on understanding life itself on that particular day... why?

*A lengthy silence. Kallol stands up and begins to speak as the concluding musical score begins, which is a sombre tune that has a coy start but a steep ascent.*

### **Kallol**

Because you are denying our minds to expand the way it naturally should. You are praising evolution but consciously attempting, at every juncture, to control the process. Have we not realised yet that the best way our minds have functioned is not by directing it, but 'losing' it in the process? And yet you have chosen to replace the chaos with a system that has as chaotic an inception as the one it replaced... one so contrary to the values we convince our evolved minds to be the *truth* that they begged to be hidden away, farther even than the moon of Jupiter... farther than the Solar System itself, perhaps?

**Professor** *(after a lengthy pause)*

I don't know what you are talking about...

**Kallol** *(meaningfully, giving a sideways glance to the professor)*

I know...

*The characters appear to freeze. Jupiter starts spinning in the 'sky'. As the music rises, the light twinkles like lightning strikes all over the auditorium. At one point, the two characters are no longer seen on the stage.*

*Curtain.*

[CC]



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# JIBANANANDA DAS

## Two Poems

TRANSLATED BY  
Syed Amir Milan

**JIBANANANDA DAS** (1899 - 1954) IS THE FOREMOST NAME AMONG POETS WHO HAVE WRITTEN IN BENGALI SINCE POST-TAGORE UNDIVIDED BENGAL. THE HARBINGER OF MODERNISM IN BENGALI POETRY, DAS WAS AN ECLECTIC AUTHOR WHO DEXTEROUSLY DABBLED IN POETRY AS WELL AS FICTION. IN SPITE OF BEING A PROLIFIC AUTHOR, HIS 'INTROVERT' PERSONA DID NOT LET HIM PUBLISH THE MAJORITY OF HIS WORKS DURING HIS LIFETIME. IT WAS ONLY AFTER HIS DEATH THAT A MASSIVE COLLECTION OF WRITINGS, LOCKED IN TRUNKS, WERE DISCOVERED AND INTERMITTENTLY PUBLISHED.

CANVAS - AN IMPRESSION OF DAWN IN ST. PETERSBURG BY **FYODOR VASILYEV**

# n<sup>ight</sup> of Winds

Last night was a night of deep winds – a night of endless stars;  
 Expansive gusts have played inside my mosquito net all night,  
 Which sometimes swelled like the belly of the monsoon sea,  
 Desiring at others to tear away from my bed  
 And reach the stars above;  
 At times I would feel – maybe in a state of light slumber,  
     There is no net on top of me,  
 It is but Flying by the Sirius like a white crane in the  
     Sea of blue winds!  
 Such a fine night it was!

All the dead stars came alive – the sky had no more space;  
 I saw the faces of the grey, dear departed of this earth in that swarm;  
 The stars they twinkled like the lover hawk's dewy eyes  
     On a fig-top in a dark night;  
 In the moonlight, the sky shone like the dazzling leopard-skin shawl adorning the  
     Neck of a Babylonian queen!  
 Such an astounding night it was!

The stars that died out thousands of years ago –  
 Even they had brought numerous dead skies through my window;  
 The beauties I had witnessed the deaths of in Assyria, Egypt, Vidisha  
 Had assembled on the distant edge of space last night, standing as if in  
     Battle formation holding long spears behind a veil of fog –  
 In order to conquer death?  
 To express the profound victory of life?  
 Or to erect fearful, sombre monuments of love?

Benumbed – overwhelmed I have become,  
 The intense blue torture of the night before has torn me apart;  
 In the ceaseless wings of the sky,  
 Earth has been obliterated like a bug last night!  
 And wild winds have descended from above,  
 Whooshing inside my window,  
 Like stricken zebras in a green expanse haunted by the lion's roar.  
 My heart has been filled with the smell of the green grass of the vast Veldt,  
 The essence of the horizon-plundering sunshine,  
 The great, alive, hairy ecstasy of the restless, endless darkness like  
     The roar of a concupiscent tigress,  
 My heart has been filled with life's brilliant blue intoxication!

My heart tore from the earth and flew away,  
 Like an inflated, drunk balloon on the ocean of blue winds,  
 Chasing the mast of a distant celestial body from star to star  
 Like a restless vulture.

---

## *p*rey

Dawn;  
 Sky the soft blue of a grasshopper's body:  
 Green as parrot feathers are the surrounding guava and sweetsop groves.  
 A solitary star shines in the sky still:  
 Like the twilight-drunk girl on a pastoral wedding night;  
 Or the Pearl from the breast of the Egyptian lady  
 Which she put in my blue pitcher of liquor  
 Thousands of years before on one night -  
 So shines a star in the sky still.

The rural women have lit fires all over the field  
 To preserve the warmth within -  
 Red fire like cockscomb;  
 Their fire burns still, crushing the dried fig leaves underneath;

They have lost their saffron in the glory of the sun;  
 Becoming fading wishes of a beaten down Myna instead.  
 The trees and the sky shine like the green and blue wings of a peacock  
 In the morning light, among the delicate dewdrops.

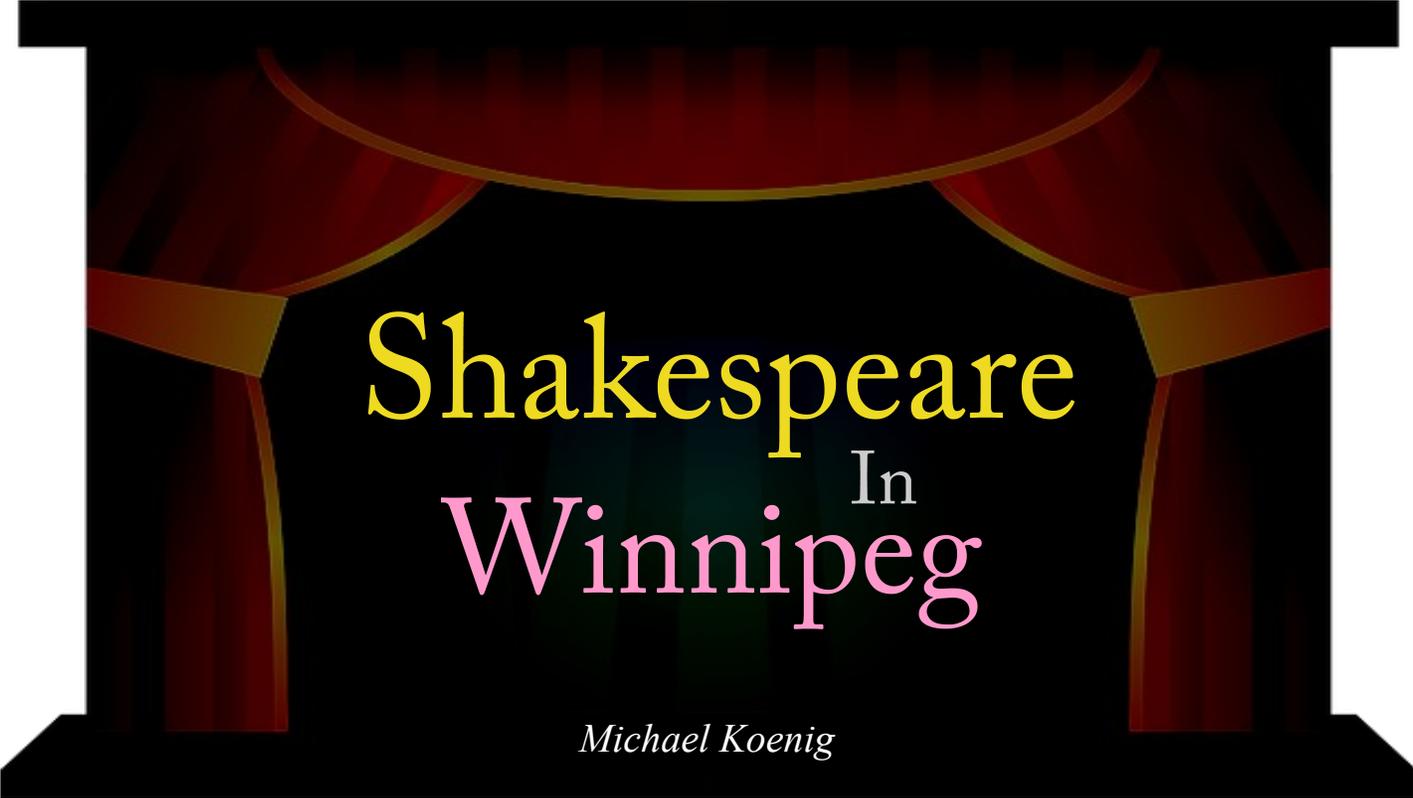
Dawn;  
 Evading the leopardess all night long  
 Traversing the starless mahogany dark of Sundari and Arjuna groves,  
 The beautiful chestnut deer was waiting for this dawn!  
 He has come down upon the morning light;  
 Eating green, aromatic grass like unripe pomelo;  
 He climbs down the sharp, cold waves of the river -  
 To gift his sleepless, tired, anxious body a jolt of emotion-  
 To experience the unreserved cheer of the light of dawn piercing  
 The frozen wombs of darkness;  
 So he can rise like the sceptre of the sun under this deep blue sky  
 To astonish one doe after the other with bravado, desire and beauty.

A strange sound.  
The river turns red like the petals of the Mochka flower.  
The fire starts again – the warm venison comes prepared.  
Under the planets on a bed of grass, exchanging dewy stories;  
Cigarette smoke;  
Heads full of hair fashioned in barbershops;  
A few scattered guns – cold – lifeless, innocent sleep.

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[cc]

## SHORT STORY



# Shakespeare In Winnipeg

*Michael Koenig*

In the third season of the show, Teddi fell in love with Brendan, just like the fans had hoped for ever since Season One. By then, the love between me and Ethan was gone, replaced at first by bitterness (on my part) and indifference (his). I was ready to leave the show because there were all these opportunities, but I was under a binding contractual obligation to keep saying stupid, teenage things.

When we first met, our characters were supposed to be in their senior year of high school. Ethan was 26; I was 24, and we were both experienced actors, though hardly well known.

He came up to me so casually the first time, but I knew exactly what was on his mind. We'd been making eyes at each other for weeks. We'd have to cool it down for the cameras.

"You were great in that scene" (pretending to swoon over him).

"Thanks."

"Wanna hang out?"

"Sure."

"I'll come over to your house. Just leave me directions."

"Okay."

In the first season, they were keeping our characters apart, so we had to keep our relationship quiet. This suited Ethan perfectly; he would have made a magnificent spy. I've only been in love on a few occasions, and when I am, I want to tell the world.

In those days, the whole world would surely have listened. Photographers were far more common than debts. Whenever I opened the door they were there, looking inside windows, climbing on ladders, hurling themselves in front of the car. Eventually I came to see celebrity as a well appointed prison, apt punishment for the especially

fortunate. The more people wrote about me, the less their comments seemed to resemble the person I am. The praise too, I suppose.

I was briefly considered to be the Most Beautiful Woman in the World, but I only wanted to be with Ethan. So I'd spend all day staring at him longingly, and then go home and make him spaghetti, after undertaking various evasive maneuvers, cars travelling at high speed, on dangerous canyon roads.

But as the ratings began to soften, Ethan got tired of me. He couldn't tell me exactly why.

"Look, this just isn't working."

"You're not giving it a chance."

"Get out of my face, Kathleen."

"Goddamn you."

Cue for me to pitch some random piece of glassware. Obviously this would be the perfect time for the producers to bring our characters together, right? The audience hated it. We disappointed them so.

I began spending more and more time in Mr. Greenberg's office, eating jellybeans from the jar on his desk. (I had an amazing metabolism then.) He was the producer of the show, and at least two dozen more. Cheap bastard. I feel sorry for him having to deal with pretentious jerks like me.

"I'm tired of doing the show. I want to do Shakespeare."

"Treat this like Shakespeare. Same situations, better jokes."

Corniest advice in the world. I follow it everyday.

"All those crazy plot twists? That's Shakespeare. You know how Mary's character has just had her sister's husband's baby, and her husband's mistress came back from the dead? That's Shakespeare."

"That's not Shakespeare, Mr. Greenberg. That's shit."

When the show got cancelled after the fourth season, I was the villain in the press. At the time I was at least somewhat relieved, though I missed the ridiculous paychecks. I'd gotten used to tipping with \$50 bills.

*"All those crazy plot twists? That's Shakespeare. You know how Mary's character has just had her sister's husband's baby, and her husband's mistress came back from the dead? That's Shakespeare!"*

I disappeared for years, travelling alone through Europe, greeted by strangers with a smile, not sure if they recognized me because I was an American, or because of who I used to be.

I began speaking in a mock European accent. A series of boyfriends, each ten years younger than me, all of whom own restaurants, bars, or gyms. *Lady Macbeth in Winnipeg*. I really wasn't that bad.

On several occasions, I was misquoted in European interviews. I just hope Mr. Greenberg knew I never meant them. Now that I'm nearly fifty, I've come to regret being such a little arsonist. I'm sorry that I never got the chance to say goodbye, and thank him for the jellybeans.

For a long while, the show was the topic of no one's conversation, but younger people have adopted it as a kind of absurd landmark. Sometimes it seems as if they're primarily celebrating the poor writing and acting and the music and how seriously we seemed to take it all. I used to pretend that I didn't read every single thing that anyone had ever written about it. Now I just smile and say thank you. (It drives the mean ones crazy.)

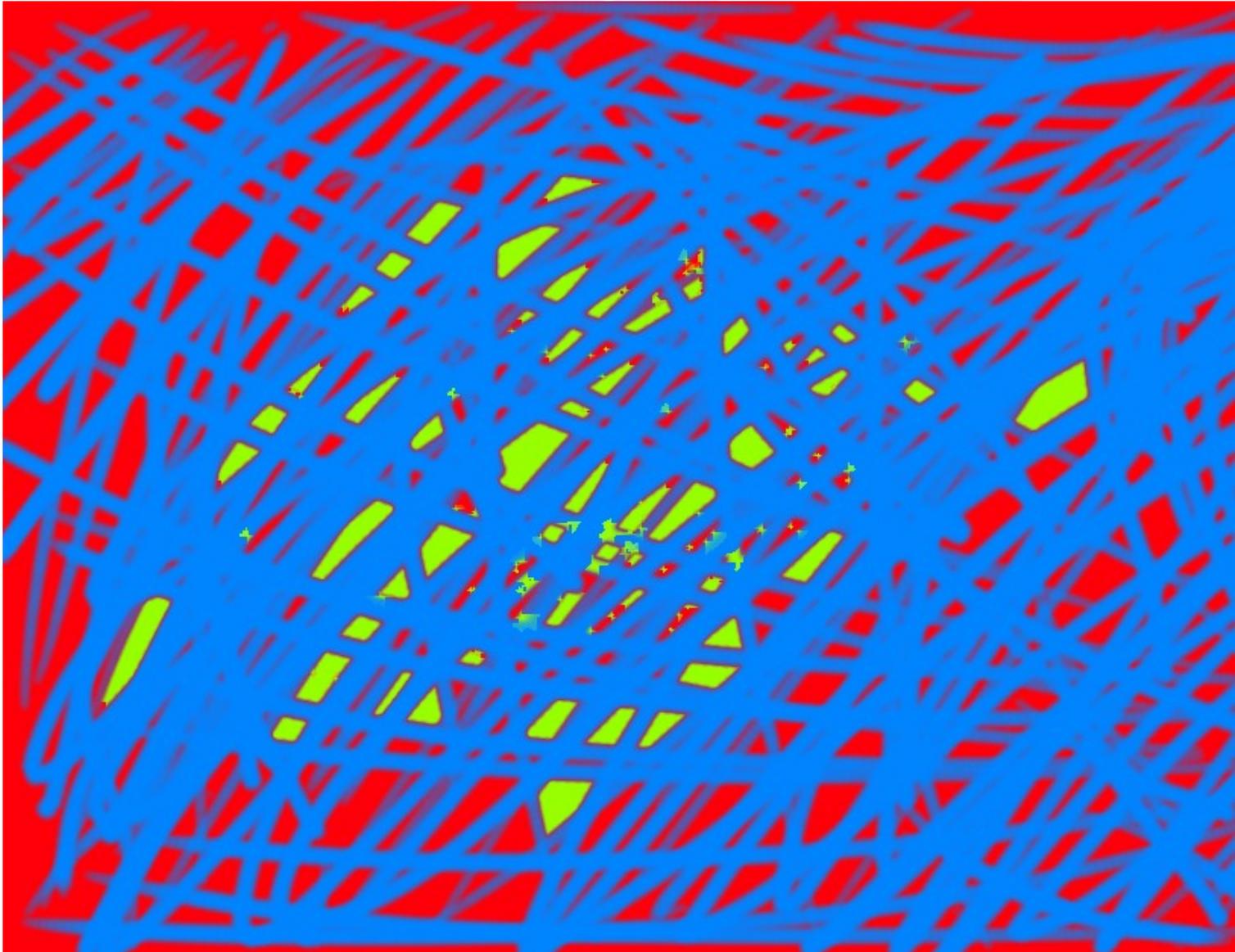
A few months ago, they announced that they were reviving the series, and offered me the opportunity to play my own mother. I told them absolutely never, impossible, insulting, when do you need me there? It was like some insane auction where all I needed to do was say no, until I finally said yes. All in all life is pretty good but I'm ready to get back to working for money. (I'm tipping with \$100 bills now, even when the service isn't all that special.)

Over the years, Ethan and I have gone through every conceivable stage of our relationship: Unbearable to be around, pretending not to care, arms-length friendly, ill-advised reunion movie. I haven't seen him for ten years. Interviewers ask if he was my one and only true love and I say sure because it makes a better story. And if I can make him sweat a little, why not?

Ethan's coming to the set tomorrow. We have three scenes together. He's married with six kids, said bad things about me in the press, went through a drug problem, lives in New Mexico, seems happy now. I'm nervous, of course, though I have no expectations. Whatever will we talk about, once the scene is over?

*I began speaking in a mock European accent. A series of boyfriends, each ten years younger than me, all of whom own restaurants, bars, or gyms. Lady Macbeth in Winnipeg. I really wasn't that bad.*

## SERIAL

*Artwork: Priscilla Björk • Title: Pathogen*

# Cross-Eyed Sleep

*Siddhartha Pathak*

## PREVIOUSLY

Initiated to a life of violence and crime at an early age, David Mondal has worked his way up from being a pickpocket to a professional assassin. His first murder victim was a fellow teenager Shyamal who had beaten David up over a bitter turf war in Kolkata. David chose to attack him, disguised as a ghost in the dead of the night as Shyamal was on his way home in an inebriated state. David also remembers his 'temporary saviour' Father Lucius and the wide eyed girl he had raped behind an abandoned factory when he was young. Even as he travels to Mumbai for an assignment and overhears a co-passenger's bid to find a contract killer to murder his wife, what David can most vividly muse upon is an old theory of his that asserts that human beings sleep with their eyes crossed under the protective lids shielding the windows to the soul.

## ASSIGNMENT

As David Mondal glances out the window and his eyes come to rest on the name of the station, etched in black on a cemented banner of yellow, in English, Hindi and a version of the local tongue, whatever language that may be, he realises that the train has finally crossed the borders of Bengal.

Unlike David's dream of getting to the big city, the particular milestone of setting foot beyond one's common region had never held any fascination for him whatsoever. It was true, he reckons, that for a child for whom the idea of getting to Kolkata was not a mere thought but a dream, surpassing the confines of the territory that held as captive the big, bustling city of his dreams was something that was beyond the scope of his stilted ambitions and imagination.

That is perhaps why David did not even feel a prick on his spine the day he had finally crossed the landmark.

Odisha had come calling at around 1 in the morning, an unseemly hour to remain awake for David but for the fact that he was actually head on into an assignment. The four boys he had befriended occupied the partition of the sleeper compartment adjacent to that of the six travelling women, mostly in their 50s and 60s, one among whom David's primary interest lay in.

Keeping witnesses, David finds, is a superior method of being anonymous than being the easily-spotted lone wolf in the crowd. A friendly persona, people who would care enough to vouch for him if need be, gave David's 'work' the sense of societal involvement that

it obviously lacked.

Being a *supari* killer is supposed to be a one man's game. But David is not cut out to be an assassin by the books.

The women had rented a place near Swargadwar, the interior quarters of the city of Puri, away from the touring seafaring crowd. The boys, on the other hand, were set to get a sea-front hotel, with a view of the endless, of course, on a budget that was too short to be a shoestring for any goddamned shoe.

At least that was the way David had expounded it to the kids. They were college-goers and David was all but 27, a stripling lad with an educated demeanour and a handsome persona to boot. Three of them had been studying English, while the other was a virgin of Economics, vying to be an eligible bachelor! David had cooked up a perfect facade for himself after careful consideration.

The arrival of one of David's co-passengers interrupts his brief foray into the past. David is certainly not one to dwell in his own history, but the myriad characters and people he had *become* and come across often resurfaces in his mind to fill him with an odd sense of warmth. It was markedly different to the obvious darkness that he recognises as clearly as daylight itself, dwelling in the nether regions of the person that he is. It is a relief, a privilege to play somebody else and this realisation immediately steeled David's resolve to break out into a smile at the girl who only had a cheese sandwich for dinner last night.

'Era breakfast *kokhon* serve *korbe*? I'm



famished. Besides, you know what they say, breakfast is the most important meal of the day! They should make it quick...'

It will be unfair to assume that David expects what the other person will reply in return. David is a good judge of actions, a prudent observer who can nearly predict the course of events during a very short span of time. But it is a gift that does not extend to people and situations he has not had a chance to observe yet in all their glory. Being the practical individual that he is, David is prepared for human rejection at any point of time.

The girl, however, does not necessarily react in the offensive. She returns a generic smile, a half-hearted but friendly effort, mouthing the words, 'It's barely seven'

'Yes, you're right...', David is vocally dejected, 'they won't get here in hours. I should get something right here. Who knows when the train will stop next?'

David stands up, stretches his arms wide, yawning all the way like the typical Bengali he is essaying, even uttering a standard 'Ma go...' along. He jumps excitedly a couple of times, assumingly letting the dry cold of the compartment leave his sleepy joints.

David makes careful mental note of the first few actions that he undertakes in the view of the other players. His method seldom involves slipping into the preconceived idea of a 'persona'. The role rather develops with the initial set of actions that he performs consciously and the conversations that end up occurring as a result.

Of course, since continuity demands that he lives up to his actions till the point when conscious 'acting' begins, he decided to focus on the fact that his persona, like his character, is a strange eater. He has little doubt that the other players only remember his voracious eating from last night, since David is of the opinion that it is the only visibly eccentric aspect of his true personality.

It is certainly not the first time that David has employed a personal trait to serve his persona. Lies are best buried on the stage with a shrapnel of truth. A

little source of light is enough to mesmerise the spectators in a dark auditorium if only the acting is par excellence!

The warm sun on the platform is yet to assume the identity of the ferocious, blazing beast come midday as David enjoys a warm sensation of caress with the tangent rays breezing past his emancipated soul.

In steps as light as natural, David struts over to the tea-stall in clear view of the glass window of his assigned compartment. In a voice betraying the deep sleep of the night before, he cheerily orders a large cup of tea and a *desi* toast. His eyes gleam in pretend hunger as the chef puts the two buns over the double headed omelette and whips the entire arrangement around so that the buns can soak in the residual oil and the heat of the burnt steel surface.

The very first bite is followed by a voice that jolts David, threatening to trip the airy persona that he has assumed on this particular occasion.

'We are travelling together, are we not?', enquired the voice.

Actions... David finds them to be a riposte as graceful as any fallacy of life itself.

'*Ore baba go!* God damn it!!', David exclaims, gulping down the little chewed concoction inside his mouth as if it were a handful of coals that he has devoured.

'Do you need water?'

'No, no, tea will do much better! *Jhaal, dada.* You cannot imagine how spicy this is! How many chillies have you put?', the chef is put at the stake.

'Yes, yes, have the tea. You'll be fine in no time!', the voice chimes in kindly.

The chef, busy serving the fleeting customers of the express train who are eager to get back to their respective seats, reacts faintly at the hot reproach. David apparently recovers himself after a

few swigs of the sweetened beverage in the disposable little earthen cup and finally looks into the eyes of the man to whom the voice belongs.

The eyes they are one of the kindest pairs David has had the privilege of looking into in his illustrious life.

It immediately reminds David of the good father Lucius before fleetingly conjuring what can very well be a fictional memory, a little picture that has been a part of his brain ever since he was a child.

David briefly sees his own father, rocking baby David months after he was born, years before the man's private frustrations would distance him irrevocably from the world of little David, which grew, ironically, as dark as the shades that were engulfing his father's place on this planet.

David has no way of confirming whether this memory is real or whether it is a permanent fixture erected by the craftier connivers in his brain which are still determined to convince him that good is not a mere figment of human imagination and that there used to be some of the same in his life too, before the narrative began to pan out the way it eventually did.

'I guess we *are* travelling together. I'm Ranjit. Dr. Ranjit Ghosh', the man beams genially, extending his right arm.

David takes the hand after awkwardly balancing the earthen cup of tea on the plastic lid of a glass canister full of baked assortments.

'I am Prakash Banik,' David replies, returning the amiable grin, 'It's really nice to meet you.'

'Likewise, my friend. First trip to the West Coast?'

David spreads his wings, 'Yes, as a matter of fact. I have a small time advertisement agency. Calcutta has become too stifling a place for business lately. I'm thinking of shifting and in my line of work, Bombay is where all the work is.'

David takes a ceremonial nip of the tea before nodding his head in contemplation. Dr. Ranjit Ghosh reacts as David expects, the infectious nod of the skull getting to him before he speaks up:

'I guess that is true! Kolkata's a tough nut to crack, especially if you are peddling something other than education or health!'

'The business of saving lives pays well now, does it, Dr. Ghosh?' David says with a sheepish grin across his lips. The doctor enjoys the banter enough to smile back.

'Well, I wouldn't mind exchanging careers if you were an assassin taking lives instead, but I wouldn't bet on someone whose greatest skill is, well, to advertise!', the doctor winks, sending a little drop of ice down David Mondal's case-hardened spine. In as many times in two days, this man has spoken something that instinctively makes David think of fate.

David feels a largely unfamiliar knot clenching inside his stomach. He is, quite clearly, running out of scripted lines.

#### MOTIVATION

During the assignment in Puri, David had been Surjo Modak, an effusive research scholar who was looking to enter into a Ph.D programme with a focus as delicious as 'Violence in Literature'.

Besides edifying his young, captivated audience comprising three budding students of Literature and a novice of Economics, he had managed to hijack their entire holidays, convincing them of the merits of pooling together funds to rent the lower floor of a tenement on lease instead of spending it all on sea front hotel rooms.

Hotels were tricky affairs where enjoyment was permitted but with riders that varied from maintaining a strict code of conduct to abstaining from certain dubious activities that were considered sub-moral at best.

The silent one might be denied his occasional joints of marijuana while the horny economics fellow would definitely need to call off any plan of procuring a lady-for-hire. The fat one would be rendered broke by the pricing of food in such costly hotels and the bright, friendly one would

be robbed of his idea of 'fun', trapped in the shackles of the capitalistic hospitality arrangements who were committed to serving the interests of the bourgeoisie with no real regard for the people who refused to conform to the set standards.

They needed, nay, they deserved to derive the maximum out of any arrangement they invested in. Not to mention the fact that the left leaning scholar Surjo Modak would never agree to stay in a 'hotel', and that he was the one who, as a cheerful toast to newfound friendship, would sponsor all the booze they could devour in the five days they were to spend together. It had been, as they say, an offer that was too good for the barely legal kids to refuse.

Surjo Modak had turned out to be a fascinating man. Insightful, friendly, liberal as far as mere money was concerned, he kept his holiday buddies happily drunk and fed on a palate-popping assemblage of vacationing delights. It had been a blessed five days and nights for those college kids, aided by the generosity of a dear *dada* who had been their guardian angel throughout, making Puri their very own version of Valhalla.

It had been perfect but for the fact that one of the six elderly women who had come on a pilgrimage to pray homage to the divine Lord Jagannatha of Puri and were similarly holed up two building down from the kids' in a one storey rental home, suffered a fatal fall from the rooftop in the wee hours of one particular morning.

Little did the kids know that these six were the ones who were in the coach beside the one they had occupied in the train from Kolkata, during which their beloved Suraj-da had befriended the four to show unto them a way of consuming the nectar of life through exalted hypotheses, blatant debauchery, a confounding mix of sex, drugs and alcohol that did not allow them to realise, even in their wildest dreams, that Suraj Modak was in fact, David Mondal – a scholar in the art of clandestine violence rather than that in literature.

Motivation is a determinant of nearly every action that David indulges in. Aided by a perfectly innocent setting, David would conduct a peerless symphony of

brutality. The ingenieur would be stationed beyond the curtains while David chooses to expose masked impressions of himself like the antagonist in an unfolding tragedy who is struck by the grandeur of events and the might of his act rather than the list of casualties prepared by a scholarly historian of facts at the end of it.

David can kill the person who dares call him a killer - a petty assassin with no regard for life whatsoever. He could kill that person but for the fact that murder for mere retribution is a habit which David has been a stranger to since the harrowing events of his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The sweeter aspects of the day he would turn sixteen were planned in blood by David, a teenager with missing innocence and a moral compass that seldom pointed north.

Inducted alarmingly early in the affairs of carnal desires, he was a fairly regular visitor to the flesh-pen in the *basti* behind the abandoned factory near Sonarpur. A few weeks before turning sixteen, David had visited the place, alone for the first time after several trips with his makeshift gang of 'friends' in the city. David had taken to sex like a fish takes to water, a heady plunge into an ocean of indefinable pleasure, marked by a familiar feeling of conquest which made him seek variety in terms of his objects of desire.

David had planned to visit the friendly Kaju, the sickly pimp who was as good-natured a fellow as they came. David was yet to see that side of Kaju which would make him shudder in retrospect and found him to be a rather affable fellow, peddling in girls in a community where pimps were generally tough guys looking to pick up a fight at the drop of a hat.

It had been David's misfortune that he failed to reach the area where Kaju would operate, intercepted several hundred metres before by a sly-looking fellow with a gash over his eyebrow. The little man had a tough grip on David's wrist, as he kept pulling him towards a little door on the side of a dark building, promising that they were many girls in that dark house who liked to *play* with little boys.

David had not panicked per se. He was offended at being called a *bachha*, a little kid by a man who was barely as tall as the teenaged kid that David was. But the man had a strong grip, his sinewy brown muscles bearing a coat of sweat, a gift of the sultry April evening, yet David was finding it hard to jerk his arm away and walk off.

It had been a curt selection of expletives that finally made the man stop in his tracks and look back at David. The man had a dirty, cruel gleam in his eyes that gave him the appearance of a genuine imp, sending a cold shiver down the little boy's spine. Although he had stopped, the man did not let go of David's arm and in that stance, shouted out the names of 'Bocha' and 'Nyara'. That in turn led to the presence of two thugs who slapped David around and even opened his pants in the busy evening hours of the red light district. Eventually, David had to run home in only his underwear. The imp had put his hand inside his underpants too, pulling his penis in a painful way while attempting to crush the balls against the inner muscles of his groin, pulling back his foreskin all the way. He did this a few times, almost making David get a sore erection that made the three men laugh and slap him around even harder.

David had spent the next few days locked up inside his rented shanty, surviving on glucose biscuits and water while the world chugged along. He finally conquered the fear and humiliation with a rousing rage that made him forgo hibernation one morning and visit Kaju, who not only lent a sympathetic ear but engineered a revenge that befit the crime.

It was, however, David, who chose to mark the day when they would execute their neat little plan. It would be the 4<sup>th</sup> of May when David would gift himself the best birthday present there could be.

The dark building that the imp was trying to get him into happened to be the abandon quarters of an NGO who used to operate from that space a few years ago.

They had been the unfortunate victims of a little crime that had resulted in several deaths, owing to the fact that they were trying to clamp down on the more violent atrocities inflicted on the sex workers who operated in the area. Their Samaritan acts had

helped them make more than a few enemies and one of them had ultimately decided to act on their threats.

The building had since been taken over by the imp who went by the name Raja Shah. He had made neat little partitions in the building and would rent them out to prostitutes whom he would also supply clients. He would keep an unfair percentage of the womens' income but Bocha and Nyara would make sure the women did not dare utter a single word of complaint.

Fourth of May being a Monday, business would be slow, especially post midnight. David and Kaju would sneakily get up to the room where Raja Shah would be sleeping with Bocha and Nyara dozing off, sitting on stools outside the door. The guards would be chloroformed, followed by their master. Then David and Kaju would haul the guards inside the room and get on with the planned proceedings.

The two did manage to subjugate the guards. But they had not expected their master to be in bed with one of the women that he held under his wing. The two were mercifully asleep and were quickly put to a deeper sleep by the avenging duo. The guards were brought in and David locked the door from inside, while Kaju swiftly walked up to the unconscious woman sleeping beside Raja Shah and promptly slit her throat. As blood began rushing out of the cut and flushed the bedsheet in front of a horrified David, Kaju, smiling, extended the large, bloody knife that he was holding, inviting David to begin the honours.

David could not do it. The sight of the helpless woman who was dying for no fault of her own was niggling at his insides, nullifying the desire for dear revenge. A sickening feeling it was as David remained motionless with the knife held aloft, while Kaju proceeded to raise the lungi of Raja Shah and expose his genitalia to the thirsty blade.

Yet David could not do it. He would keep standing motionless until Kaju, growing restless and nodding his head in a way that communicated both

sympathy and disappointment, seized the weapon from David's grip and went on to emasculate the master and his henchmen. The four heavily sedated victims were left to bleed out while the blood-

splattered avengers stole out of the building, just as the first train of the of sunless dawn whistled away into the dead darkness, down the train tracks that lay directly behind the house of the dying. [CC]

... To be continued ...

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キャリー・フィッシュマン  
ビリー・デヴィン・ウィリアムス  
アンソニー・ダニエルズ

監督アービン・カーシュナー  
製作ゲイリー・カーツ  
脚本リム・ブラケット  
\* ロレンス・キャスダン  
ストーリー ジョージ・ルーカス  
製作総指揮 ジョージ・ルーカス  
音楽 ジョン・ウィリアムズ  
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Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back poster by Noriyoshi Ohrai

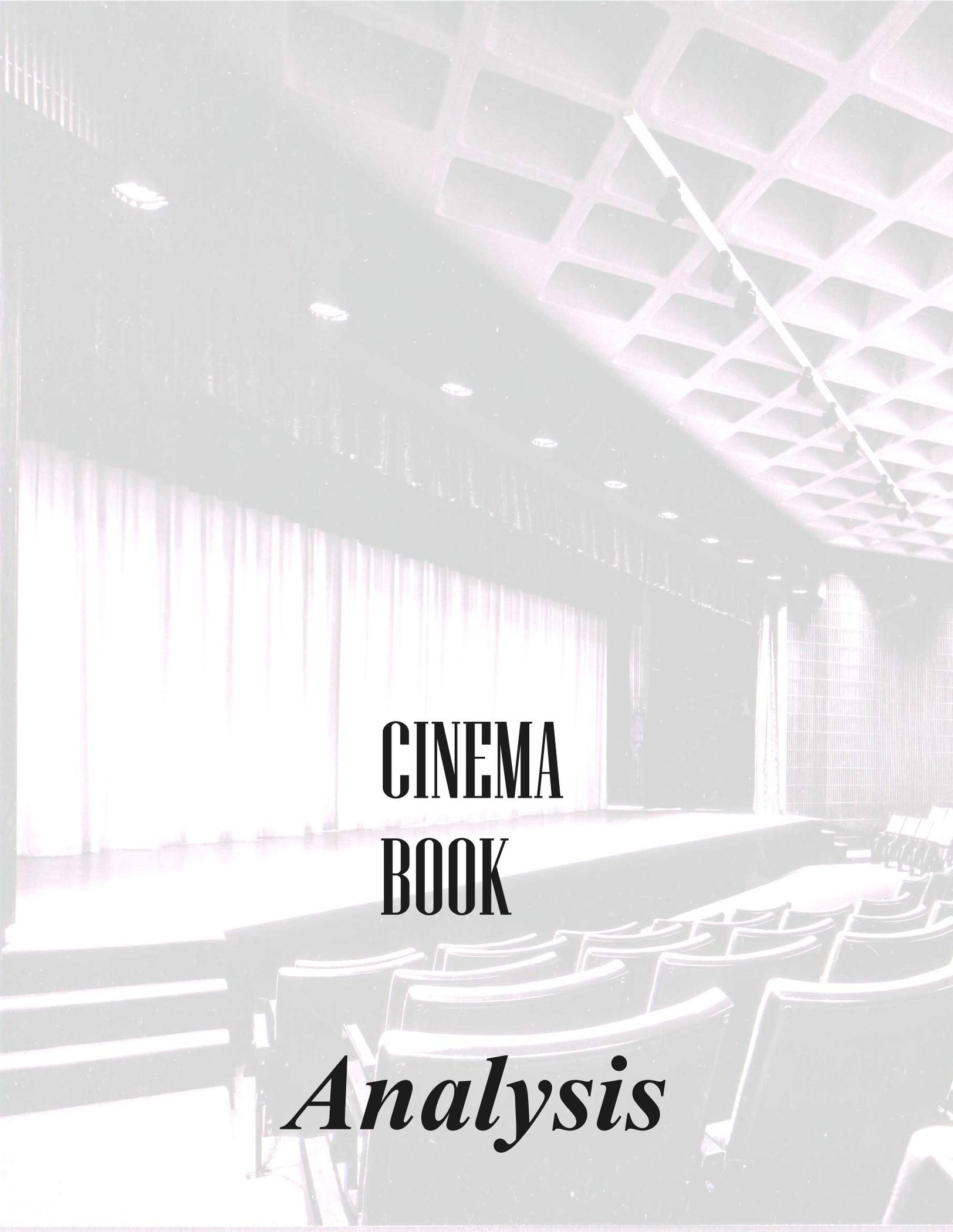


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*The Goonies poster by Noriyoshi Ohrai*

A photograph of a cinema interior, showing rows of seats in the foreground and a stage area with a large screen in the background. The ceiling features a grid of square acoustic panels and recessed lighting. The overall lighting is dim, creating a classic cinema atmosphere.

**CINEMA  
BOOK**

*Analysis*

## BOOK

# The war of Reason

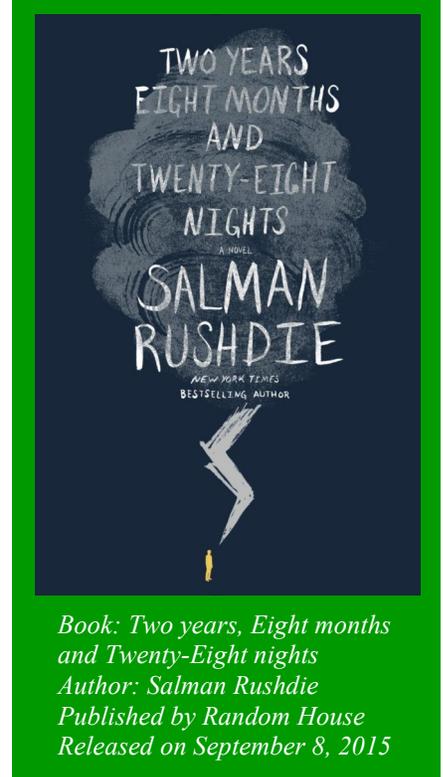
*Madhurima Basu*

In his recently released fiction, Salman Rushdie wishes to compare and show the absolute correlation of absurdity irrespective of the great passage time by looking at a particular age through the prism of a different time.

While we in the future tend to read the 1001 Arabian Nights as also an impossible tale of injustice, a narrative of tooth and nail survival against the tidal whims of an all-powerful who can only be enchanted by a vibrant web of narratives, the future has made the human race more 'formidable' as they became wary of stories instead of turning into kids at the mere prospect of being introduced to a cosmos of possibilities.

Ironically, as stories came to Shehrazade's safety in the classic Arabian epic, they became the prime cause of misfortune for the British-Indian author Salman Rushdie, one of whose books were deemed 'Satanic' enough for a handful of self-professed guardian of religion to engineer mass hysteria and violence & issue a fatwa of death against Rushdie. In an all-encompassing autobiography, Rushdie confessed in his 'Joseph Anton' that he was no longer fascinated by the overarching arcs of storytelling that marked the finest earlier works of his career. He had expressed his desire to look for the truth that is without a peer or a double - an argument which escapes nullification, holding up even in the face of the evolved mirrors of the future.

In that respect at least, Rushdie has failed in his potentially endless and in execution, a collage of



*Book: Two years, Eight months and Twenty-Eight nights  
Author: Salman Rushdie  
Published by Random House  
Released on September 8, 2015*

largely unrelated pieces of popular art. As simple as Rushdie had hoped to be, he ended up being carelessly obscure, fitting nearly 1001 nights (2 years, 8 months and 28 nights) worth of material in an economical 300 pages which, at times, end up reading like a poorly edited first draft that is only spared the guillotine because of the kernel of truth tucked among the barrage of contemporary references and artistic absurdity.

Even as Rushdie weaves a characteristically grandiose tale of djinns (good ones and bad), humans manifesting 'superpowers' as they find themselves to be descended from the fairy (djinn) 'Duniya' (literally, 'the world'), who had a turbulent affair in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the Muslim philosopher Averroes or Ibn Rushdn, who in turn, continues to have a post-death debate of sorts with Al-Ghazali, advocate of blind dogmatic 'faith' while Ibn Rusd stands for reason. Rushdie frames his own history as his story in the ancient roots comes a full circle in the New York of present where a cataclysmic storm has opened an ancient 'divide', letting four djinns of unreason ('descended' from Al-Ghazali) come to our world while a band of 'superheroes', the offspring of the charismatic djinn Duniya and Ibn Rushd, is rounded up by their ancient mother to fight the forces that has trespassed on earth.

The central theme that Rushdie sets out to tackle in his latest novel is the conflict over reason

and unreason, narrated from the point of view of an entirely different age in the future when mankind has realized the futility behind the concept of God & belief sans reason, managing finally to co-exist in peace. The utopia, of course, comes in a single shade of colour, unlike the chaotic past which may not have had peace but was the progenitor of dreams, of art and of imagination (or so Rushdie claims).

The book is a veritable roller coaster which appears to possess every nuance that Rushdie excels in. His trademark wry humour, ingenious development of words and keen observations marked by the 'reality' of the outlandish experiences narrated within contribute to the perceptible 'truth' of the entire structure. Rushdie carefully paints Geronimo Manezes, a 'down to earth' gardener, originally from Mumbai (like Rushdie himself), who wishes in the constant heat of nostalgic fervour that he could live the good life that he used back in his hometown. A shock awaits him as he suddenly finds himself levitating half an inch up in the air at all times (the result of the catastrophic storm) while simultaneously being pulled into a war which changes the very fabric of human existence, along with a handful of other 'humans' who have started to show traits of djinn-human hybrids that can put the best minds of Marvel and DC to shame, including a baby who also happens to be a lie detector and a 'femme fatale' whose fingers have started to generate 'lightning'.



Image courtesy: Ed Lederman/PEN American Center

Thus begins the war between forces of 'coherence' and 'incoherence', a final battle to settle the debate for good – perhaps a desperate realization on the author's part of the futility of debate while one camp keeps showing their dissent in kind. A larger than life, unbelievable battle worth an 'Avengers' storyline is exactly what the situation demands after being overtaken by murderous forces of blind belief.

Salman Rushdie's latest may not be a typical fodder for classics, having deliberately sidelined the grand narrative in favour of popcorn lessons in philosophy and a simpler symbology, Rushdie seems to be testing his waters before entering a brand new, potentially fascinating phase of his writing career. The child in him keeps working his mind even as Rushdie himself seems to be heading in a direction which had been practiced to perfection in the past by the likes of George Bernard Shaw, fusing coherence AND incoherence to grasp at the manifesting version of 'truth'. [CC]

*Top, right:*  
Salman Rushdie

# CULTURE CULT

*Wishes its readers a very happy and  
prosperous Diwali.*

*Let the world be filled with the  
light of Knowledge and the benediction of  
the Divine Goddess!*



## CINEMA

# A Colonial Wet Dream

*Shrestha Burman*



*Film: The Martian*  
*Directed by Ridley Scott*  
*Screenplay: Drew Goddard*  
*Based on the novel 'The Martian'; by Andy Weir.*  
*Release date: October 2, 2015*  
*Language: English*

Ridley Scott is no stranger to filming epic adventures conceived in space. The construction of the premise that 'The Martian' employs, clearly attempts to put it in the league of Ron Howard's 'Apollo 13' or Alfonso Cuarón's 'Gravity' with a futuristic twist. Surviving the treacherous terrains of mankind's final frontier is the primary point of drama in all these films and 'The Martian' utilizes the tropes therein to weave the tale of Mark Watney (Matt Damon), the human being who survives alone in Mars for 459 Mars days and even grows crops on the Martian surface, effectively 'colonizing' the red planet on behalf of the human race per one definition of the word.

Where it falls short of the two aforementioned classics on extraterrestrial survival is the curtailed emotional quotient, the lack of which has been made to compensate by the cheeky, red-blooded Americanized way of presenting affairs that restrict 'The Martian' to being a typical Hollywood popcorn affair with some good science thrown in, rather than a timeless, profound piece of cinema that it could have become in a markedly different setup.

A determinedly lighter piece of fodder, the premise of the film, adapted from Andy Weir's novel of the same name, has Mark Watney stranded alone on

Mars after he is presumed dead post a mishap involving the Mars-exploring crew of Ares III, who leave the planet, ditching their artificial habitat as a catastrophic storm is about to hit their base. Watney survives in a miraculous turn of events, establishing communication with NASA and embarking on the nearly impossible task of surviving in an uninhabited alien planet, which involves everything from creating a makeshift environment for a batch of Martian soil to grow crops on to resuscitating the human relic on Mars that have been left there by the numerous unmanned missions before, in order to aid his bid for survival.

A parallel narrative traces the actions of NASA and senior engineer Vincent Kapoor (Chiwetel Ejiofor) back on Earth, who embarks on finding the smartest way to organize a rescue mission to bring Watney back home before he runs out of resources to survive on.

The heightening of the crisis scenario is achieved with the aid of rather common predicaments that include close quarter implosion on the Martian surface (which contributes to the decimation of Watney's precious crops), that young, eccentric genius with the perfect plan, an emotionally motivated member of NASA believing in the seemingly outra-

geous blueprint of rescue and a band of rogue astronauts who feel bad enough for their 'mistake' and decide to go back to the red planet from the cusp of the Earth's atmosphere to retrieve the friend they had thought to have perished on Mars.

Even in a near future, NASA's history of failed launches is as much a reality as the pathological fascination for colonization. Thus, in another 'Hollywood-worthy' twist of crisis, they receive valuable but unlikely help from their Chinese counterparts in order to successfully begin the rescue mission. There is no better way to prove that the proverbial prostitute has a heart of gold than by making them help out an arch enemy in need!

The affably genial Matt Damon, with his sophomore sense of humour sans any credible 'wit', is a hard to believe character at best. The stilted characterization lets him create as much an impact as the recurring 70s disco tracks, a fascination of mission commander Melissa Lewis, which are apparently the only music left in Mars for Watney to listen to. The supporting actors such as Jessica Chastain as Lewis and Kate Mara as astronaut Beth Johansson, along with Ejiofor and Michael Peña and veterans such as Jeff Daniels or Sean Bean, the Ares III astronauts and those 'on the ground' assume the role of convincing compatriots who, by the sheer conviction that they propagate, make the larger than life, thoroughly unbelievable climax more 'real' than it actually succeeds in being.

Replete with careless colonial aspirations and a clear whiff of racism in the deviation of casting from the source material to clearly make it more 'American' a produce, the ill-presented but entertaining tale of survival 'The Martian' will go down as a largely insignificant Hollywood fare, eons behind the depth and vision of a 'Gravity' or 'Interstellar' and certainly not among the best of either Scott or Damon. It is a distorted adaptation of a book with sound science, made under the hawk eye of overzealous studio executives with enough clout and money to get on board real talent. [CC]

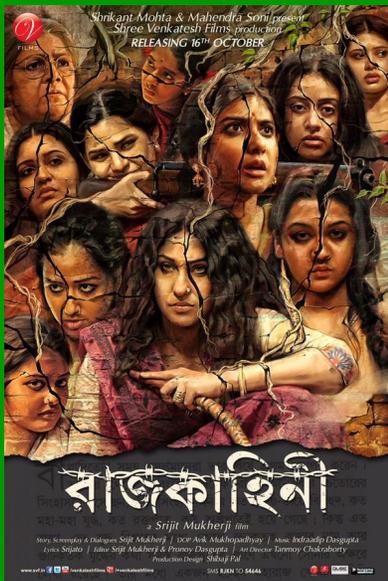


*Right: Stills from the film  
'The Martian'*

## CINEMA

# A subaltern tale of Royalty

Sundar Raghav



Film: *Rajkahini*

Writer/Director: *Srijit Mukherji*

National Release: *November 6, 2015*

Language: *Bengali*

Having had no shortage of Bengali friends attempting to shove in the face their ‘superior culture’, especially films, I have known for a while now that Indian cinema has historically been moulded and transformed into what it is thanks to the sincere effort of the Bengali creative forces as much as their pan-Indian counterparts.

Whereas the likes of Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak or Mrinal Sen command unanimous respect for their contributions to cinema in the past century, the closely dissected too has thrown up several new figures to idolise such as the late-great Rituparno Ghosh or the lyrical Buddhadeb Dasgupta. Then there are others, hailed by a majority of Bengali film buffs to be the next in the legacy of Ray and Ghosh, while a vocal ‘minority’ keep insisting that they have a long way to go before their names would deserve to be uttered in the same breath as that of the greats.

Among them, Srijit Mukherji is perhaps the most polarising filmmaker as far as my dear Bong friends are concerned. While some are ready to hail the national award winning director with accolades measuring up to his enviable box office collections, others are quick to write him off, claiming to see through the veneer of intelligence which are mere ‘gimmicks’ and identifying the ‘people pleasing’ tropes to get them into theatres while his PR machinery ride the wave and use the burgeoning resource and contacts to ‘book’ whatever awards

might be up for grabs.

For someone who understands Bengali via English subtitles, it may be hard to evaluate or analyse a ‘foreign’ language film as it stands, yet the profound language of cinema and humanity must not be belittled to gift exclusivity to the particular tongue.

As sweet a language as it is, I watched and appreciated Mukherji’s ‘Jatiswar’, ‘Chatuskone’ and ‘Nirbaak’ without reaping the benefits associated with understanding the linguistic charms of the dialogues and a chunk of the wit (as his ‘fans’ would tell me). And yet, the overwhelming depth of vision and canvas of ‘Jatiswar’, the delightful ingenuity of a ‘Chatuskone’ & the sheer (artistic) gall of a ‘Nirbaak’ were enough to leave me speechless. It had been the allure to witness something similar that prompted me to visit the theatres as soon as Mukherji’s latest, on partition, released on the national platform across several Indian cities.

Admittedly influenced by a celebrated chronicler of the horrors of the nation’s partition, Saadat Hassan Manto’s ‘Khol Do’ (Just open it) forms a type of prologue for the film. Srijit Mukherji’s ‘Rajkahini’ (The Royal Tales) depicts life in a Bengal brothel run by a ferocious matriarch Begum Jaan (Rituparna Sengupta). Even as the most downtrodden among the sea of subjugated celebrate the ushering of a new era of independence from their British overlords, little do they know that the festivities are soon to be followed by a violent share of the ‘spoils’, as destined by the random lines marked on the map of the subcontinent by the Radcliffe commission, entrusted with the task of dividing the

present Bangladesh from the East and Pakistan from the west of India.

Rajkahini brings an extreme subaltern perspective to the plight of the displaced. The coy Bengali bhadralok (gentlemen), to whichever social strata he might have belonged to, saw flight as the solitary resort. The same reaction cannot be expected of those who are already displaced from their respective homes and, in

the eye of the society anyways, have fallen further by attaching with the unmentionable trade. The 11 women of the brothel, however, do not view the house in the light that mere outsiders do. It is indeed their 'ashiana' (Shelter) which in the fantasy world of the little Bunchki (Ditipriya Roy) and the eldest scion of the brothel (Lily Chakraborty, who reads out excerpts from the Abanindranath Tagore book 'Rajkahini' throughout the film) their very own 'king' dom tucked inside the larger British empire. They will protect it like one protects a kingdom, even when the outgoing empire, egged on by fanatics, dictate that a line must divide the kingdom into two for lasting peace and security.

The diversity among the members of the brothel reflects the inherent diversity of the nation itself. The variety, whether in their tales of subjugation or the nature of the eleven women concerned, even the hues of their sexual orientations, is painted exquisitely by Mukherji. The impeccable acting by nearly every single member of the cast bearing testimony to the belief they must have had in their shepherd.

Supporting the brilliant Rituparna Sengupta, whose throw and body language would come as a pleasant surprise to those who have only known the actress via her handful of Bollywood appearances, are Sudipta Chakraborty, Priyanka Sarkar, Bangladeshi actress Jaya Ahsan and every other woman in the cast barring none. Although the film is a tribute to the feminine, having released on the eve of the Durga Pujas in Kolkata which celebrates the divine feminine picking up weapons to obliterate the evils of misplaced masculinity, the male set of actors are not far behind as far as matching up to the women are concerned. Whether it is Rudraneel Ghosh as the pimp and perhaps the only character in the film with capacity for true love or Kanchan Mullick, whom shame hits in a way only a God aiming for poetic justice can conceive, they leave a gash deep enough to bleed. Jisshu Sengupta is an absolute revelation as the psychopathic Kabir. The 'Jatiswar' star and a



*Up: Some of the women of 'Rajkahini'*

*Below: Rituparna Sengupta as the matriarch 'Begum Jaan'*



favourite of Rituparno Ghosh has rediscovered himself down to the tenth circle of hell and deserves every accolade that comes his way for 'Rajkahini'. Representing the two religions are Saswata Chatterjee and Koushik Sen, playing childhood buddies whom the religious clamour of 1947 have set apart. Their deliberations and observations bordering on the academic and ultimate surrender to the whims of the vocal majority reflect the actions of the two opposing sides of the larger political game at foot.

The decision of Begum Jaan and co. to not heed to the various threats of ouster and bodily harm ultimately results in a battle that simply cannot be won. The women put up a fight to write about, but the story of their tainted kingdom is not an easy one to preserve for the future since in the eye of society, they are not as 'worthy' as the brave Rajput characters in Abanindranath's 'Rajkahini'. Their suicidal bid for freedom and embrace of death is equated to Rani Padmini's 'Jauharvrat' that is often mistakenly described as sacrificing oneself in a pyre to retain 'chastity'. It is the refusal to let go of the acquired independence and dignity that their little kingdom of a brothel provides that compels the women who sell their chastity every single day and have already witnessed the worst of humanity, to fight and embrace death for the same reason that the great Rani Padmini did in her time.

The sight of the crumbling brothel and the burning copy of 'Rajkahini' is followed by a song, the choice of which is yet another stroke of genius by Mukherji. The director decided to incorporate the generally unsung part of the song (by Rabindranath Tagore) whose first stanza is 'popular' as the nation's adopted national anthem. It is a fitting conclusion to the unsung and unwritten tale of partition that Mukherji has told with such brilliance, making a 'mainstream' subaltern statement which is certainly one for the history books.

*Sohini Sarkar (right)  
and Sayoni Ghosh in  
Rajkahini*



It is being heard that Mukherji has been offered to remake his epic in Hindi (to be titled 'Lakir', translated as 'Line') for the entire nation this time. Whether or not the producers will rope in the genius Avik Mukhopadhyay for cinematography again or allow the first timer Mukherji to call all the shots and shoot sequences like capturing only half the faces of actors (Saswata Chatterjee and Koushik Sen) to drive home a metaphorical point is something for us to find out; yet it must be said that it is high time Bengal unfurled its wings slightly and let their beloved director make his play in the national arena.

We are waiting, Mr. Mukherji. [CC]

## CINEMA

# Blue shades of the Dark

Jacqueline Ristola

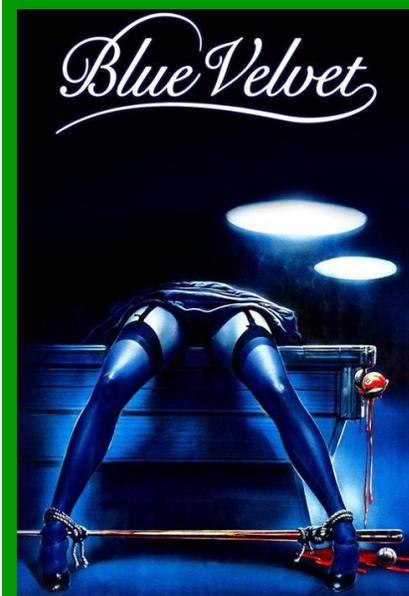
*"It's like saying that once you've discovered there are heroin addicts in the world and they're murdering people to get money, can you be happy? It's a tricky question. Real ignorance is bliss. That's what Blue Velvet is about."*

– David Lynch

Blue Velvet (1986) is a film that looks at the utter depravity of humanity and ventures to transcend it by realizing the redemptive power of love. It has been beautifully directed by David Lynch, who succeeds in making it a work that overwhelmingly demands discussion.

Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan) is a college student back home in Lumberton due to his father's illness. He begins tracking a mystery surrounding night singer Dorothy Vallens (Isabella Rossellini) and how the obsessive, sadistic Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper) controls her life through kidnapping her husband and son. While Jeffrey unveils the darkness lurking under this paragon of small town America, he also falls in love with Sandy Williams (Laura Dern), daughter of a police detective, while also having a passionate relationship with Dorothy.

The film opens with a scene depicting the normalcy and beauty of small town life, ending on a zoom into the grass, finding vile bugs underneath.



Film: Blue Velvet  
 Writer/Director: David Lynch  
 Year: 1986  
 Language: English

Throughout the film, Jeffrey finds the depravity lurking under the surface of his hometown, acting as a voyeur into the life of Dorothy, and experiencing firsthand the twisted nature of Frank. Later captured by Frank and his gang, Jeffrey is “taken for a ride” as Frank takes Jeffrey to his drug dealer’s den, run by a coded queer character and is posse of oddballs. After this encounter, Frank takes him to an abandoned lot and has him beaten, but not before forcibly kissing him while wearing Dorothy’s lipstick. While an earlier scene depicted Jeffrey witnessing Frank’s rape of Dorothy earlier (mixed with an element of castration), his entire “ride” sequence confrontation adds a strong queer element to Frank’s character.

In a final cat-and-mouse confrontation, Jeffrey initiates his first act of violence within the film, and kills Frank in Dorothy’s apartment. Immediately after he fires the gun, Sandy bursts into the apartment, panting and shouting his name. The film ends with Jeffrey and Sandy together, noting that Robins have come to feast on the bugs. Sandy explained to Jeffrey earlier in the film that she had a dream where Robins were symbols of love bringing light to the dark world. Her prophecy (which was told to Jeffrey in front of a church) seems to have come true. A relative of Jeffrey, however, remarks that she wishes she didn’t have to see the disgusting act

of the Robin consuming the bug. With deviancy crushed, the film ends with a montage just like it began, beautiful suburbia with its flowers and white picket fences, and with Dorothy finally reunited with her son.

The final act of Jeffrey shooting Frank is coded as an act of heteronormativity, Sandy panting and gasping, shouting his name right after he uses his phallic weapon. It symbolizes a sexual and violent act of normalcy exorcising deviancy. We must consider a queer reading. We see the queer illustrated as evil, perverted, corrupt, disgusting. Their expulsion forms what appears to be a happy ending. In the end, on the surface it would appear true harmony returns to the town, though it looks the same as ever. The ending, while seeming to appear that all is right in the world, still retains an unnerving element, a hint of creeping fear within. A man friendly waving while riding a fire truck feels so normal that it's weird. Is this film showing what happens when sexuality is confined, that it will inevitably explode? Perhaps it's this reestablishment of conservative norms that is the root of the problem.

While symbolizing sex, a union of heteronormativity to erase sexual deviancy, the climax also symbolizes an Oedipal killing of the father. As Laura Mulvey notes, Dorothy, Frank, and Jeffrey form an Oedipal family, Frank's abuse representing domestic violence itself. Various elements of the film help support this notion, from Frank calling out to his mother as he preys on Dorothy, to Jeffrey and Dorothy having sex, falling into the Oedipal notion of sons wanting to sleep with their mothers.

While I am still processing what Blue Velvet ultimately means, I am also grappling with the exploitation of actors for art. Roger Ebert has famously panned the film to its harsh treatment of Isabella Rosselini's character, a character who experiences the brunt of the depravity.

**Right, top:**  
Isabella Rosselini as  
Dorothy Vallens

**Right, down:**  
Dennis Hopper and  
Isabella Rosselini



Exploitation of actors is a question that always proves the most difficult for me to answer. I believe that art, like humor, can tackle any subject. I also believe that the torment Rosselini's character undergoes through is earned throughout the film. But is it exploitative regardless? I don't believe so in this case, but Ebert's concerns echo as a reminder that exploring the depravity of the soul requires craft that few often have the talent to pull off. Luckily, Blue Velvet rises above this, tackling the (sur)real with a deft hand, coldly gazing at the depravity that boils beneath the pleasantries of Americana. [CC]

## CINEMA

# Deconstructing the filicide

*Jagannath Chakravarti*

Bollywood has seldom shied away from condescendingly portraying the nation's lawkeepers on screen. It has often managed to strike that particular nail by introducing a glaring exception to the 'rule', a protagonist who is often a larger than life superhero figure with the will and the ability to cause an upheaval in the law enforcing departments.

However, seldom has Bollywood ventured to take a popular criminal investigation in consideration to script a distressingly faithful account sans the imposed sensations of artless cop shows, or filmmaking attempting to mimic the juicier version of the breaking news on news peddling networks.

The Aarushi Talwar case had managed to arrest the attention of the National Capital Territory and the entire nation as the whodunit got deconstructed in the chat rooms of news channels and household dinner tables alike. By the time the case attracted the tag of 'honour killing' on top of the befuddling murder mystery, the country had all but zeroed in on the parents to be the killers of the 14 year old daughter of the Noida dentist couple.

A court did vindicate said 'perception' in 2013 on predominantly circumstantial evidences (pending appeal). Talvar, directed by Meghna Gulzar and written & produced by the mighty Vishal Bhardwaj, attempts to retrace the steps of the crime and the ensuing investigation with painstaking attention to



*Film: Talvar  
Directed by Meghna Gulzar  
Written by Vishal Bhardwaj  
Released on October 2, 2015  
Language: Hindi*

detail and Rashomon-esque multiple versions of the crime to create something that may not be perfect, but certainly a first in the history of popular Indian cinema.

Talvar imagines the respective scenarios that could have taken place on the night of the murder, while unabashedly detailing the investigation that if rife with misplaced evidences, authoritarian red-tape and a criminal lack of forensic acumen, essentially ripping a hole into the pride that the nation's investigation bureaus tend to command by default.

A commendable work of art is meant to create opinions and spark debates – something Talvar managed to do by putting the very lifestyle of the upper echelon of the emerging Indian society in question. It manages to tell the side of the story that went principally unsaid in the banana courts of the larger reporting media. The film's success is clearly marked by the fact that it has rekindled the interest of the forgetful masses in the double murder by showcasing, as faithfully as possible, the events that occurred following the crime and methodology of the theories arrived at by the various investigative agencies.

The shade of 'bias', however, coming through in the fabric of the narrative is not only restricted to a overall sense of incredulity attached to the theory of filicide in an urban colony of India, it is also ap-



*Top:*  
Film Still

parent to the lead casting of Irrfan Khan as Arun Kumar the (representing CBI officer Arun Kumar) who believed in the parents' innocence. His investigation and theory it had been which indicated that it had been a drunken conspiracy of a group of domestic helps that led to the double murder involving Aarushi Talwar and the Talwars' servant Hemraj Banjade, and not the 'wrath' of the Talwars themselves, who, according to a version, killed the duo after catching their underage daughter and middle-aged servant in an intimate set-up. The argument of honour killing, conceptualized by the local police at first, is reintroduced by the revamped CBI team under the leadership of a new officer who, in the film, is a bumbling caricature with a rather comic penchant for speaking in 'pure' Hindi (played by Atul Kumar, representing CBI officer AGL Kaul) and the overall guidance of a new CBI chief (essayed by Shishir Sharma).

The climax is a moderated debate between the two teams which have investigated the case one after the other with polarising conclusions, a debate where it is to be decided whether enough unquestionable evidence have been collected to implicate the parents. The delectably engaging set-up has sparks flying as the team of Ashwin Kumar and his former boss (played by Prakash Belawadi) attempt to uphold their findings even though they are no longer the actual people who call the shots.

The seamless edit by A. Sreekar Prasad, the haunting score and tightly knit script by Bhardwaj and the meticulous direction of Gulzar is charmingly supported by the likes of Konkona Sen Sharma and Neeraj Kabi, who enact the grieving couple and their various simulated avatars to perfection. Irrfan Khan is as good as ever as Ashwin Kumar, delivering the punches with the precision of a seasoned veteran. Also notable is Sohum Shah as ACP Vedant Mishra, Ashwin's aide who does not subscribe to his superior's largely



**Top:**  
Neeraj Kabi (middle)  
and Konkona Sen  
Sharma (right) in the  
film

**Down:**  
Irrfan Khan in the  
film

questionable methods of reaching the truth.

A thriller that refuses to sugarcoat, 'Talvar' is an interesting watch no matter which direction you look at it from. The subjective truths in an investigation takes centre-stage as a tragedy becomes a carnival of crudity, where fact is selectively chosen and displayed to fit a particular narrative while a committed officer's Machiavellian means and

troubled personal life steers him far from the glory of revealing the 'truth', even as he appears to be the closest to it.

Whether the film will expedite the cause of the Talwar family is something that only time can affirm. What Talvar has already achieved is a rare distinction in Indian cinema as a truly artistic representation of a 'true crime' saga.

One merely wishes that in hindsight, a student of film would not hold the film's laughable attempts at fictionalisation, where the Talwars not only become Tandons but CBI becoming CDI by a stroke of the pen, to categorise Talvar as yet another 'inspired fiction' rather than a commendable investigation by a group of artists who decided to double as seekers of truth. [CC]



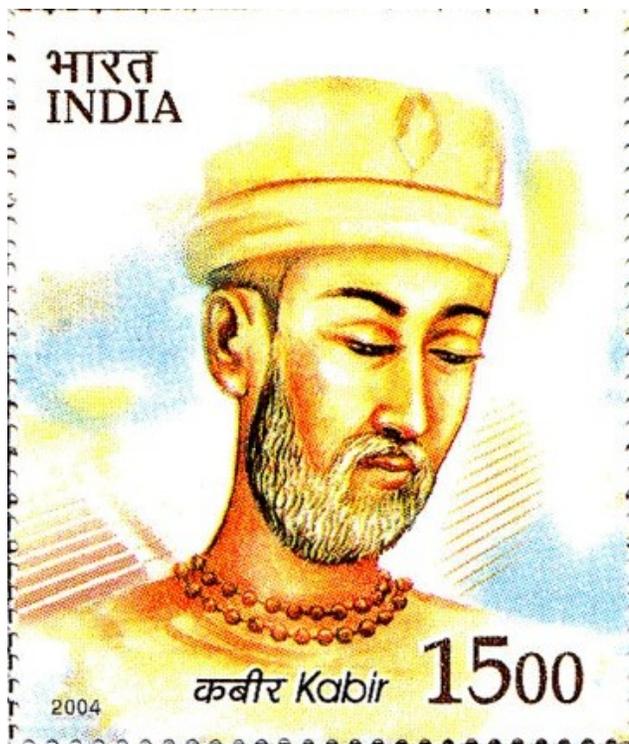


*A poster of the Godzilla series by Noriyoshi Ohrai*



*A column that proposes to switch theological **prisms** in each issue to understand **life** as we know it in a **light** unseen as yet. We present a series of songs by the Indian mystic poet and saint **KABIR**, translated from the originals by Nobel laureate **RABINDRANATH TAGORE***

## Songs of Saint Kabir



*Kabir: A commemorative postal stamp*

**O how may I ever express that secret word?**

O how can I say He is not like this, and He is like that?  
 If I say that He is within me, the universe is ashamed:  
 If I say that He is without me, it is falsehood.  
 He makes the inner and the outer worlds to be indivisibly one;  
 The conscious and the unconscious, both are His footstools.  
 He is neither manifest nor hidden, He is neither revealed nor unrevealed:  
 There are no words to tell that which He is.

**The river and its waves are one**

surf: where is the difference between the river and its waves?  
 When the wave rises, it is the water; and when it falls, it is the same water again. Tell me, Sir, where is the distinction?  
 Because it has been named as wave, shall it no longer be considered as water?

Within the Supreme Brahma, the worlds are being told like beads:  
 Look upon that rosary with the eyes of wisdom.

## Within earthen vessel are bowers and groves, and within it is the Creator:

Within this vessel are the seven oceans and the unnumbered stars.  
The touchstone and the jewel-appraiser are within;  
And within this vessel the Eternal soundeth, and the spring wells up.  
Kabir says: "Listen to me, my Friend! My beloved Lord is within."

## When He Himself reveals Himself, Brahma brings into manifestation That which can never be seen.

As the seed is in the plant, as the shade is in the tree, as the void is in the sky, as infinite forms are in the void--  
So from beyond the Infinite, the Infinite comes; and from the Infinite the finite extends.

The creature is in Brahma, and Brahma is in the creature: they are ever distinct, yet ever united.  
He Himself is the tree, the seed, and the germ.  
He Himself is the flower, the fruit, and the shade.  
He Himself is the sun, the light, and the lighted.  
He Himself is Brahma, creature, and Maya.  
He Himself is the manifold form, the infinite space;  
He is the breath, the word, and the meaning.  
He Himself is the limit and the limitless: and beyond both the limited and the limitless is He, the Pure Being.  
He is the Immanent Mind in Brahma and in the creature.

The Supreme Soul is seen within the soul,  
The Point is seen within the Supreme Soul,  
And within the Point, the reflection is seen again.  
Kabir is blest because he has this supreme vision!

## The moon shines in my body, but my blind eyes cannot see it:

The moon is within me, and so is the sun.  
The unstruck drum of Eternity is sounded within me; but my deaf ears cannot hear it.  
So long as man clamours for the I and the Mine, his works are as naught:  
When all love of the I and the Mine is dead, then the work of the Lord is done.  
For work has no other aim than the getting of knowledge:  
When that comes, then work is put away.  
The flower blooms for the fruit: when the fruit comes, the flower withers.  
The musk is in the deer, but it seeks it not within itself: it wanders in quest of grass.

### Tell me, Brother, how can I renounce Maya?

When I gave up the tying of ribbons, still I tied my garment about me:  
 When I gave up tying my garment, still I covered my body in its folds.  
 So, when I give up passion, I see that anger remains;  
 And when I renounce anger, greed is with me still;  
 And when greed is vanquished, pride and vainglory remain;  
 When the mind is detached and casts Maya away, still it clings to the letter.  
 Kabîr says, "Listen to me, dear Sadhu! the true path is rarely found."

### Do not go to the garden of flowers!

O Friend! go not there;  
 In your body is the garden of flowers.  
 Take your seat on the thousand petals of the lotus, and there gaze on the  
 Infinite Beauty.

### It is needless to ask of a saint the caste to which he belongs;

For the priest, the warrior, the tradesman, and all the thirty-six castes,  
 alike are seeking for God.  
 It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint may be;  
 The barber has sought God, the washerwoman, and the carpenter--  
 Even Raidas was a seeker after God.  
 The Rishi Swapacha was a tanner by caste.  
 Hindus and Moslems alike have achieved that End, where remains no mark  
 of distinction.

### O servant, where dost thou seek Me?

Lo! I am beside thee.  
 I am neither in temple nor in mosque: I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash:  
 Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in Yoga and renunciation.  
 If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me: thou shalt meet Me in a  
 moment of time.  
 Kabîr says, "O Sadhu! God is the breath of all breath."

### O my heart! the Supreme Spirit, the great Master, is near you: wake, oh wake!

Run to the feet of your Beloved: for  
 your Lord stands near to your head.  
 You have slept for unnumbered ages; this morning will you not wake?

## Where Spring, the lord of the seasons, reigneth, there the Unstruck Music sounds of itself,

There the streams of light flow in all directions;  
 Few are the men who can cross to that shore!  
 There, where millions of Krishnas stand with hands folded,  
 Where millions of Vishnus bow their heads,  
 Where millions of Brahmas are reading the Vedas,  
 Where millions of Shivas are lost in contemplation,  
 Where millions of Indras dwell in the sky,  
 Where the demi-gods and the munis are unnumbered,  
 Where millions of Saraswatis, Goddess of Music, play on the vina--  
 There is my Lord self-revealed: and the scent of sandal and flowers dwells  
 in those deeps.

## Between the poles of the conscious and the unconscious, there has the mind made a swing:

Thereon hang all beings and all worlds, and that swing never ceases its  
 sway.  
 Millions of beings are there: the sun and the moon in their courses are  
 there:  
 Millions of ages pass, and the swing goes on.  
 All swing! the sky and the earth and the air and the water; and the Lord  
 Himself taking form:  
 And the sight of this has made Kabir a servant.

## To what shore would you cross, O my heart? there is no traveller before you, there is no road:

Where is the movement, where is the rest, on that shore?  
 There is no water; no boat, no boatman, is there;  
 There is not so much as a rope to tow the boat, nor a man to draw it.  
 No earth, no sky, no time, no thing, is there: no shore, no ford!  
 There, there is neither body nor mind: and where is the place that shall  
 still the thirst of the soul? You shall find naught in that emptiness.  
 Be strong, and enter into your own body: for there your foothold is firm.  
 Consider it well, O my heart! go not elsewhere,  
 Kabir says: "Put all imaginations away, and stand fast in that which you  
 are."

## The shadows of evening fall thick and deep, and the darkness of love envelops the body and the mind.

Open the window to the west, and be lost in the sky of love;  
 Drink the sweet honey that steeps the petals of the lotus of the heart.  
 Receive the waves in your body: what splendour is in the region of the sea!  
 Hark! the sounds of conches and bells are rising.

Kabir says: "O brother, behold! the Lord is in this vessel of my body."

### **It is the mercy of my true Guru that has made me to know the unknown;**

I have learned from Him how to walk without feet, to see without eyes, to hear without ears, to drink without mouth, to fly without wings; I have brought my love and my meditation into the land where there is no sun and moon, nor day and night.

Without eating, I have tasted of the sweetness of nectar; and without water, I have quenched my thirst.

Where there is the response of delight, there is the fullness of joy. Before whom can that joy be uttered?

Kabir says: "The Guru is great beyond words, and great is the good fortune of the disciple."

### **He is dear to me indeed who can call back the wanderer to his home.**

In the home is the true union, in the home is enjoyment of life: why should I forsake my home and wander in the forest?

If Brahma helps me to realize truth, verily I will find both bondage and deliverance in home.

He is dear to me indeed who has power to dive deep into Brahma; whose mind loses itself with ease in His contemplation.

He is dear to me who knows Brahma, and can dwell on His supreme truth in meditation; and who can play the melody of the Infinite by uniting love and renunciation in life.

Kabir says: "The home is the abiding place; in the home is reality; the home helps to attain Him Who is real. So stay where you are, and all things shall come to you in time."

### **O sadhu! purify your body in the simple way.**

As the seed is within the banyan tree, and within the seed are the flowers, the fruits, and the shade:

So the germ is within the body, and within that germ is the body again.

The fire, the air, the water, the earth, and the aether; you cannot have these outside of Him.

O, Kazi, O Pundit, consider it well: what is there that is not in the soul?

The water-filled pitcher is placed upon water, it has water within and without.

It should not be given a name, lest it call forth the error of dualism.

Kabir says: "Listen to the Word, the Truth, which is your essence.

He speaks the Word to Himself; and He Himself is the Creator."

# WRITE FOR US

CultureCult is presently a monthly magazine of the Arts, Literature and Culture and we need you, the writers, amateur or otherwise, with a deep enough desire to express, to help us out in our little endeavour.

The initial call for submissions received more response than we had imagined but we are guilty as a glutton to read more from you.

If you liked our heartfelt effort and wouldn't mind terribly to extend a friendly hand, the doors are open for you.

We are accepting fiction as well as non fiction pieces. In our first phase of acceptance, the last date for submission in the fiction category is November 30, 2015.

The non fiction pieces may be submitted at any time.

Submissions can be mailed directly to [CultureCultin@gmail.com](mailto:CultureCultin@gmail.com)

**Before submitting however, PLEASE read the complete set of guidelines at [www.CultureCult.in/Submissions](http://www.CultureCult.in/Submissions)**



Highlights  
by Jagannath Chakravarti