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Open Doors

focus on India

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Aharbal Falls Ajay Raina



Ajay Raina
Director, Producer

Director's Biography

Born in Kashmir, Ajay is an award-winning documentary filmmaker with experience as writer, editor, producer and director. His feature film project *Araz* is supported by CNC for co-production under the Fonds Sud scheme. He is an alumnus of the prestigious Film and TV Institute of India (FTII), Pune, having graduated in 1991 with Film Direction specialisation.

Filmography

Tell Them, The Tree They Had Planted Has Now Grown (2002)
Wapsi (The Returning) (2005)
Between Border and The Fence. On Edge of a Map (2011)

Production Company's profile

Ajay Raina Films is a production company managed by Ajay Raina. Over the past 20 years, the company has produced many TV Programmes, corporate promotional films and documentaries.

Technical Information

Fiction / 100' / Digital / Colour

Production Status:
Production

Shooting Language:
Kashmiri

Shooting Start:
12/2011

Total Budget:
100'000 Euro

Funds Secured:
20'000 Euro

Production Company:
Ajay Raina Films

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(Ajay Raina)

Synopsis

At Aharbal Falls in Kashmir in the summer of 1989, a 7 year old boy contemplating suicide is saved by a girl about the same age. This is the beginning of their love affair. There is devotion, caring, and passion in equal measure. They do with each other what they see stranger men do with his mother, believing this to be love. These are dangerous times in Kashmir. Kashmiris are seeking their 'freedom' and are in a violent revolt against India. In an atmosphere of everyday curfews, terror and equally brutal counter-terror, when the fabric of a once pluralistic society has come apart, the child couple find solace in their secret companionship; but one night the boy's entire family is slaughtered by a group of killers. The orphan child is taken away from Kashmir to the plains of India. The lovers are parted.

About 15 years later the separated couple meet accidentally in Delhi. They start their affair from the point where they had left off. They are now more determined than ever that they will not let anybody take them apart. Promise me, he asks, "There will not ever be a third person between us." She replies, 'Yes'. In spite of the promises to each other they feel even more vulnerable to the people around them who will not just let them be. They do not know what to do to be azad of society's bindings. The two of them cannot seem to agree over which side Kashmir should go. They argue and fight and make love and yet dread the very thought of separation again. A solution presents itself before them and they accept it. He kills the first person by accident. The victim is a male colleague in her office in love with her. That he did it for her flatters her no end and gives their love another added dimension, and by the fact that she helped him erase all the traces of this first accidental murder, she becomes an accomplice. They go to great lengths to save each other from the threat of being found out. Also, having once tasted blood, killing again is not so difficult. Every fresh murder becomes the most exotic aphrodisiac to their passionate lovemaking.

Each murder they commit is unique in its ingenuity and meticulousness—an accidental fall, a fatal heart attack induced through fear, an electrocution, a false suicide, and a motor accident. Their isolation from the world around them only fuels their hunger for each other to a point of perpetual un-satisfaction. Every next victim binds them even tighter in each other's passionately obsessive hold; but it cannot be for long.

Director's Note

This is a minimalist thriller to be shot in a language of lost love, Kashmiri. It tries to articulate the protagonists' relationship with each other and Kashmir's troubled relationship with the rest of India. The anarchism of the two lovers is a reflection of the violence that they have internalized over 2 decades of violent conflict in Kashmir. Lovers generally love forever, or die for it, but seldom do lovers take someone else's life for their love to live. Delhi, where the young Kashmiri's of my film have taken refuge, is to them cold and incomprehensible, a deep abyss where crowds of people, move incessantly, nowhere, where one can get lost and find no solace.

Ajeeb Aashiq (Strange Love) Natasha Mendonca



Natasha Mendonca
Director

Director's Biography

Natasha Mendonca is a visual artist and filmmaker from Bombay, India. She holds a MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. Her recent work *Jan Villa* won the Tiger award for short film at The International Film Festival Rotterdam 2011 and the Ken Burns award for the best film at the Ann Arbor Film Festival, 2011.

Filmography

Madsong (2006)
Watercolors (2009)
Jan Villa (2010)



Mridu Chandra
Producer

Production Company's profile

Transient Films fuses experimental forms of cinema with old and new technologies. Mridu Chandra is a New York based filmmaker and producer with over a decade of experience in independent cinema. Her films premiered at Sundance Film Festival, aired on national PBS, screened for members of US Congress and the United Nations, and showcased at museums and film festivals worldwide.

Filmography Production

Brother Outsider: The Life Of Bayard Rustin, Nancy Kates & Bennett Singer (2003)
Poundcake, Rafael Monserrate (2009)
The Canal Street Madam, Cameron Yates (2010)

Technical Information

Fiction / 80' / HD / Colour

Production Status:
Pre-production

Shooting Language:
Hindi, English

Shooting Start:
05/2012

Total Budget:
105'000 Euro

Funds Secured: 10'000 USD

Production Company:
Transient Films

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Synopsis

Ajeeb Aashiq is a feature length experimental narrative about a transgender sex worker, Rani, who meets a gender ambiguous rickshaw driver, Amal, on a muggy night in Bombay. Their brief encounter leads to Amal chauffeuring Rani on her nightly trysts with clients. Their lives intersect in this contemporary portrait of Bombay city—a society in crisis—leading to a complex friendship that changes the course of their lives.

"Ajeeb" is an Urdu word for "strange or unexplainable," and "Aashiq" translates as "lover." This film is primarily a story of desire- a desire to live and love beyond one's reality in a world hell bent on making one face that longing for escape. The film plays out issues of class and gender in a thriving over populated Metropolis by night. The intimate space of the rickshaw paints a portrait of a city hanging in the balance, skewed by poverty and class divide, uniting both characters in their pursuit of a new utopia.

Shot on-location on the streets of Bombay, *Ajeeb Aashiq* is the gritty tale of Amal, who lives in a slum that outlines the garbage dump of the city. He takes a loan from Fatima, his lover, who is on the cusp of marrying another man. He uses the money to get his breasts removed illegally at a small local hospital. Since he has two months to pay back the loan he is always working various odd jobs that come his way; he works as a black marketer for Bollywood cinema tickets, and rides a rickshaw to help a friend out for a month. One night he gives Rani, a transgender sex-worker a ride in his rickshaw and develops a crush on her. Rani is depressive with a melancholic black hole of craving in her soul. She enjoys the attention from Amal but is cruel about his yearnings. A complex, tender friendship builds between them. Several interactions later, late one night, Amal finds Rani drunk in her room and steals all her savings to repay his loan. Shortly thereafter, Rani disappears and Amal is tormented by guilt and longing. Amid rumors of her having contracted HIV he sets out to find her.

Director's Note

Through process-based filmmaking *Ajeeb Aashiq* explores the lives of working class gender outlaws, sex-work, HIV, desire, and friendship. The film invests less in narrative progression. It allows the story to unfurl by exploring the physical and psychological landscape of all three main characters: Rani, Amal and Bombay city. The film is also a document about the creation of a fiction, which overtakes the proceedings at points only to recede again. It is as much about the making of this fiction, about finding the right characters to play the parts, incorporating their real lives into the film, as much as it is about the story itself.

Arunoday (Sunrise) Partho Sen-Gupta



Partho Sen-Gupta
Director, Producer

Director's Biography

Born in Mumbai (1965), he started his career in 1984 as an apprentice in the art department in studios of Mumbai. In 1993, he was awarded a scholarship to study film direction at the FEMIS, Paris. His first feature film, *Hava Aney Dey (Let the Wind Blow)* premiered at the Berlinale 2004. *Arunoday (Sunrise)* is his second feature. He lives and works in the UK and in India.

Filmography

Le Cochon (1995)
Hava Aney Dey (Let the Wind Blow) (2004)
Shakti Timeless (2005)

Production Company's profile

Writer-director Partho Sen-Gupta and producer Rakesh Mehra founded Independent Movies in 2002, to produce the award winning *Hava Aney Dey (Let the Wind Blow)*, which premiered at the Berlinale in 2004. It has since been developing various Indian art film projects including *Arunoday (Sunrise)* and *Fallen Hero* (developed with the help of the Hubert Bals Fund).

Technical Information

Fiction / 100' / Digital / Colour

Production Status:
Production

Shooting Language:
Hindi, Marathi

Shooting Start:
10/2011

Total Budget:
169'000 Euro

Funds Secured:
7'000 Euro

Production Company:
Independent Movies Pvt.

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(Partho Sen-Gupta)

Synopsis

Once upon a time not long ago, night after night police detective Joshi roamed the back streets and the cheap cabaret bars in search of his six-year-old daughter, Aruna, who one day, ten years ago, had not come home after school. Everywhere he went a strange elusive figure was present. Joshi tried very hard to catch him but could not succeed. Every night he returned home late to his defeated wife, Leela, who since the loss of their daughter, lived in a different reality. Joshi looked after her and cared for her with a lot of love. He had promised her that he would find their daughter.

Naina, a 6-year-old girl, was brought by traffickers to a brothel and entrusted to Komal, a teenage prostitute. As the days went by, Komal and the young girl became close, living a childlike existence amidst the horror that surrounded them. One day, Joshi led a raid on the brothel but the pimps hid the girls. Joshi again felt the presence of the figure.

Babu, a 16-year-old boy, would wait outside the Police Station, but when asked why he was there he would not say anything. And one day when he did have something to tell them, the cops did not believe him. Soon thereafter, Joshi and his police team were sent to investigate the murder of Babu's father. There too, Joshi found the same elusive figure. Now he knew where to find it.

Joshi waited outside its lair, which was called Paradise. He saw the figure arriving there with little Naina. Joshi followed them inside, where he found many enslaved girls. Finally, he found the elusive figure with his six-year-old daughter Aruna in a room. He killed it and escaped with his daughter. But the figure was not dead; he multiplied and many figures stared after the fleeing father and daughter.

Joshi finally kept his promise to wife and reunited his broken family on a beautiful beach.

Director's Note

Sunrise is a tragedy telling a universal story of the loss of a child, of parental grief. The protagonist, Joshi, distressed by the disappearance of his daughter, takes us into his dreams, nightmares and memoria. The characters in this space are real people that he may have known in his life but they behave in a manner that may be his subjective perception of them. The situations are sets of dissociated memories that he has experienced or perhaps, as he would have liked them to happen. But he does not always control the narration and sometimes he too is lost inside it. Sometimes the other characters take command. But in the end, Joshi must take us to the catharsis.

Burqa Boxers Alka Raghuram



Alka Raghuram
Director, Producer

Director's Biography

Alka Raghuram is an independent writer/director. She has made three short films, *The Ant and The Monkey*, *Panchali*, and *Tired of Dancing*, and the 40-minute documentary *Black Waters*, a documentary memoir, about the effect of the 2004 tsunami on the people of Andaman and Nicobar islands off the southeast coast of India.

Filmography

Panchali (2003)
The Ant and The Monkey (2007)
Black Waters (2008)

Production Company's profile

Junoon pictures will produce *Burqa Boxers*, and is developing the fiction film, *The Conqueror*, by Alka Raghuram.

Technical Information

Documentary / 75' /
Digital / Colour

Production Status:
Writing & development

Shooting Language:
Hindi

Shooting Start:
10/2011

Total Budget:
60'000 – 90'000 Euro

Funds Secured:
10'000 Euro

Production Company:
Junoon Pictures

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(Alka Raghuram)

Synopsis

In a culture where beauty, delicacy, refinement and submission are the prized traits to the ultimate feminine career fulfilment, marriage, young Muslim girls learn boxing at a little gym in Kolkata, India. *Burqa Boxers* tells the story of these warriors determined to knock out a few stereotypes. It will be the story of three young women Amina, Shayra, and Khadija as they train for the state amateur boxing championship. Some of the families support their daughters' ambitions while others don't. Amina wants to fulfill her father's dream of being a fighter, though he himself would rather see his son carry the torch. Shayra whose name means "Poet", helps her aunt run a tailoring shop. She goes to school in the day, and trains at the gym two or three times a week. Her aunt, who feels the responsibility of bringing her up "Properly" for marriage, would be horrified to hear of her niece's extra curricular activities. But Shayra calls herself the poet of blood, gore, and broken noses, and is determined to thwart all plans of matrimony for the "Ring".

Khadija is the "Breadwinner" of the family, and proud of it. She works as a domestic help in the house of a schoolteacher who educates her and encourages the pursuit of boxing as a way to earn college scholarship in the government's sports quota for women.

The documentary will follow these characters as they pursue their passion for boxing while dealing with the expectations society has of them.

For me, as a storyteller, "Why boxing?" is the central question in its most literal sense. What does, boxing, a sport, so extremely subversive, offer them? Is it the permission to be aggressive? The training to channel one's fury; to play to win, and unabashedly seek victory? There are so many dimensions, socio-economic, psychological, and emotional, to this question, that it can't but impact one's attitude towards negotiating life and self. I want to find out how they define themselves, and reconcile their traditions with their dreams. And the answer; a mosaic of the girls' stories, their trials, travails and successes will be *Burqa Boxers*, the documentary.

Director's Note

Gloved hands hit speed bags. Young bodies run and stretch; they moan, shout and curse. Girls undergo a dramatic transformation as they jump into the ring and train, physically, mentally and emotionally, to punch, fight and win. I imagine *Burqa Boxers* as a study in contrasts and extremes, in the themes it explores; in the imagery it evokes, and in the sounds it produces – of repression, and controlled violent expression. While it is a political story, challenging society's attitudes towards oneself. In telling it, I want to keep in mind that it is high in action, physical and psychological, and the players have an agenda: to win. I want to capture that spirit.

Char... The Island Within Sourav Sarangi



Sourav Sarangi
Director, Producer

Director's Biography

Sourav Sarangi, born in 1964 studied geology but later joined FTII, a reputed film school in India to learn film editing. Currently he is involved in international co-productions as an independent producer and director. The few documentaries and fictions Sourav made won awards and accolade worldwide.

Filmography

Tusu Katha (The Tale of Tusu) (1997)
Bhangon (Erosion) (2006)
Bilal (2008)

Production Company's profile

Son et Lumiere is a reputed film and video production house located in Kolkata, India. It has several independent documentaries and television productions to its credit. It also has an efficient technical infra-structure.



Stefano Tealdi
Co-producer



Signe Byrge Sørensen
Co-producer

Technical Information

Documentary / 110' /
HD / Colour

Production Status:
Production

Shooting Language:
Bengali

Shooting Start:
08/2010

Total Budget:
226'930 Euro

Funds Secured:
98'000 Euro

Production Company:
Son et Lumiere

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Co-production Companies:
Stefilm International
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Synopsis

Meet Rubel, a 14 years old boy who lives in the border and says, " People must move as the river moves". The river eroded his home, in fact the entire village, school, green-fields and the large banyan tree where they used to play.

Years later his family shifted to a tiny and fragile island called Char. The river goddess created this island for her homeless sons and daughters with the soil she took away. But Char is considered as no-man's land taken over by the armed border police. The vagrant community living in Char must be checked each time they want to return home. Rubel smuggles rice from India to Bangladesh to survive in this barren zone. He dreams for a better life. And in utter desperation he boards a train and lands up in South India, over two thousand km away from Char to find job. But there is no job for him.

Meet Sofikul, who once used to be Rubel's neighbour. Sofi is now 10 years old. His father was shot dead while smuggling cows. Little Sofi loves to run! And runs he well crossing the border carrying a sack full of rice weighing almost his own-self while his sleepless mother awaits at home. She shivers at each sound at night and sounds of bullets are not rare here. The families are all scattered but the kids meet on their endless journey while crossing borders. Their little feet defy fatigue and despair hardly touches their smiles.

In summer wind blows strong in this changing landscape, the clouds roll. The river swells up in Monsoon. Fenced by the river on all sides in Char the landless nomads try to bring back their settled lives lost in the past. They build their huts, sow seeds, clear the dense forest grass and even set up diesel pumps to irrigate the parched earth. Teashops are crowded in the night with television sets run on discarded car batteries.

And at some distance stands the colossal barrage built by India in great socialist spirit to change people's lives within its territory and not let it go Bangladesh. The grand plan did not help Rubel and his brother, sister and parents and the people who live by riverside for ages. They lost their lands to hungry tides of the river goddess. Today Rubel has only a small dream; he wants to join a school across the river on the mainland where cars move on gas and electric lamps burn much brighter. His parents had to part with all that; for them the Char was the Promised Land. I travel with Rubel to the edge of the island where it is cracking. Will this island called Char erode too?

Director's Note

Everything is a subject, everyone a character, but I can make films when I feel like being in an unknown zone, lot more to explore and express.

Quite true that Char, the border is-land is different from the main-land. I found it fascinating in many ways. Here everything moves in a cyclic rhythm; the clouds, the river, the ever-changing landscape. Along move the lives of people but through moments of loss, despair and hope which has a sense of linearity and longing.

And an invisible border to cross where stories are born! The elusive waters of river Ganga hold those stories. I was tempted and started exposing those moments with a movie camera... for me this is the best way.

Jat Panchayat (The Judgement)

Satish Manwar



Satish Manwar
Director, Producer

Director's Biography

Satish Manwar completed his post-graduation in dramatics from centre for performing arts at Pune University. He has written, produced and directed plays in Marathi. *Cigarettes, Alvida, Bar Bar* are some of them. *Gabricha Paus* is his first feature. Currently he is working on *Tuhya Dharm Koncha? (What's your Religion?)* a feature film project.

Filmography

Cycle (2007)
Gabricha Paus' (The Damned Rain) (2008)
Tuhya Dharm Koncha? (What's your Religion?) (in pre-production)

Production Company's profile

Manwar Films is a film production which started to produce films by Satish Manwar. Till date it has produced short film *Cycle* (2007), and *Tuhya Dharm Koncha? (What's your religion?)* a Feature film project supported by Hubert Bals fund is in pre-production stage. Satish Manwar is also involved as a producer for documentary *Feel in the Blanks* (2002).

Technical Information

Fiction / 120' / 35 mm / Colour

Production Status:
Writing & development

Shooting Language:
Marathi, Hindi

Shooting Start:
03/2013

Total Budget:
243' 435 Euro

Funds Secured:
0

Production Company:
Manwar Films

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(Satish Manwar)

Synopsis

Jhingri belongs to Nomadic Tribe from Maharastra, India. The tribe is stamped as thief by the British government. As a Social group these tribes have their own judicial system. Judges of their court sometimes are considered as thieves by police, but for them, they deliver Justice. Jhingri is one of the victims of this System. Her husband mortgages her for money, her father sells her for money and when her former husband makes a plea against her, the child in her stomach is considered as property of her husband.

Director's Note

Jat Panchayat is about social systems, judiciary systems and power systems. Every system consists of rules and regulations and these changes from groups to groups. It's about human nature and conditions. The structure of the film is like a road movie and it will explore the life style of gypsies from India.

Lasya (The Gentle Dance)

Anup Singh



Anup Singh
Director

Director's Biography

Anup Singh was born in Tanzania, East Africa. He graduated in literature & philosophy from the Bombay University India, and in 1986, in direction from the Film & TV Institute of India. His award-winning first film *The Name of a River* was a homage to Ritwik Ghatak, a journey celebrating 'homelessness' and the possibilities of independent cinema in modern India. His next feature, *Qissa*, starts this November.

Filmography

Lasya (The Gentle Dance) (1988)
Ekti Nadir Naam (The Name of a River) (2002)
Qissa (The Ghost is a Lonely Traveller) (in pre-production)

Co-production Company's profile

Heimatfilm was founded in 2003 in Cologne by Bettina Brokemper and her partners from Embassy of Dreams, Munich. Heimatfilm focuses on developing and producing feature films and television projects for German, European and international audiences. Beyond this, Heimatfilm engages in international co-productions, and organizes service productions in Germany for foreign companies.

Filmography Co-production

The City Below, Christoph Hochhäusler (2010)
Bal - Honey, Semih Kaplanoglu (2010)
Lemon Tree, Eran Riklis (2008)



Johannes Rexin
Co-producer

Technical Information

Fiction / 90' / 35 mm / Colour

Production Status:
Writing & development

Shooting Language:
Hindi, Marathi

Shooting Start:
06/2013

Total Budget:
2'048' 112 Euro

Funds Secured:
0

Production Company:
Heimatfilm

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Synopsis

As the city of Mumbai is steadily flooded by the raging monsoon rains, a beggar-child is fatally hit by a truck. Her young mother, Amba, determines to fulfill her promise to the child and find the father who had deserted them a long time ago. She sets off with the child's body on a journey through raging nature and bizarre and ruthless encounters in a pitiless city.

Amba is joined on her quest by her 45 years old mother-in-law, Hansa, and Mahesh, 33, a petty drug-dealer obsessed with Amba.

This journey through flooded streets, memories and dreams of what could have been has Amba seething with violent hatred against the imposing city.

Swaying between sleep and delirious awakening, horrified by the daughter's decaying corpse in their arms, but refusing to abandon it, they walk on. Mahesh follows relentlessly behind, often fighting with Amba to turn back. He says she has finally allowed the city to scare her and what she secretly desires now is simply to find a home and shelter again. She is not seeking her husband for her daughter, but for her own selfish reasons. Mid-way through the journey, Hansa, badly injured and feverish, has to give up. Hansa has always believed that if you truly accept the city, its viciousness as well as nurturing, the city accepts you too. This is what she has always tried to impart to Amba. Near the end of the journey, Amba finally washes her daughter's body in a pool of rain water and clothes her in a new sari. Then, she turns to Mahesh and offers herself to him. She wants to thank him for his care, his love and his walking protectively along with them this tremendous distance. And she tells him that he is wrong: she is seeking her husband because she made a promise to her daughter. She also believes that because he was not there to take care of them - that is the final cause of her daughter's death. Now, she says, she seeks her husband because he owes her a new child. She will convince him that he has to make another child with her. That's all that she wants from him. This is a moment of compassionate understanding for Mahesh.

Amba walks on alone and now, as she looks about her at the teeming, energetic city, she realizes that the city is not very different from what she is: an inexorable craving to survive and prevail. She takes hold of her dead daughter's hand and slowly, gently she begins to dance - as her daughter used to dance. Amba dances across the streets of Mumbai to what she knows might not be her final destination.

Director's Note

Water, its violence and gentleness, its surface glimmer and secretive depths is the elemental image of the film. Amba watches as the violence of street life ravages her and her family. It is only slowly that she begins to realize that the reverence of life lies not only in enduring, but prevailing over all kinds of violence, especially the bitterness and cynicism she has allowed to live like poison within herself. By overcoming violence without and self-hatred within, she seems to be leading to the emergence and creation of a new era, where a simple beggar-woman comes to understand the nature of a big city as not very different from her own desire to survive and celebrate.

Samaadhi (The Penance)

Sidharth Srinivasan



Sidharth Srinivasan
Director, Producer

Director's Biography

Sidharth is an independent filmmaker based in New Delhi. His debut short *Swamohita* premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2000, when he was 23 years old. Written, produced and directed independently, *Pairon Talle* had its World Premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival 2010 to great acclaim, and was one of TIFF Co-Director Cameron Bailey's *Daily Picks*.

Filmography

Swamohita (The Tightrope Walker) (2000)
Divya Drishti (The Divine Vision) (2002)
Pairon Talle (Soul of Sand) (2010)

Production Company's profile

Sidharth established Reel Illusion Films in 2000 as an independent outfit committed to pushing the cinematic envelope, whilst striving to tell truly Indian stories that resonate with an audience for quality World Cinema. The company recently sold multi-platform North American rights of *Pairon Talle* to the Global Lens 2011 and Benelux rights to the Hubert Bals Fund (IFFR).

Filmography Production

Mondo Macabro (2001)
Hell's Ground, Omar Ali Khan (2007)
Down Terrace, Ben Wheatley (2010)



Pete Tombs
Co-producer

Technical Information

Fiction / 90' /
Redcode RAW (4K) / Colour

Production Status:
Writing & development

Shooting Language:
Hindi

Shooting Start:
01/2012

Total Budget:
356'466 Euro

Funds Secured:
34'000 Euro

Production Company:
Reel Illusion Films

Co-Production Company:
Boum Productions

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Synopsis

The elderly woman had been languishing for some time now. Many years before, her husband had gone to offer prayers at the nearby temple, never to return. He abandoned his wife and left behind two perplexed little children. The elder child – a girl - grew up to become an outwardly self-assured individual, the sole breadwinner of the family. But in reality she was deeply troubled, seizing every opportunity she could to escape her drab predicament via loveless sexual encounters. In stark contrast, her shy and introverted brother was reduced to an existence of repressed servitude, incurred from year upon humiliating year of nursing his ailing mother.

That night, the old woman knew her end was near. She beckoned her son and whispered her dying wish to him: to achieve Kashi Labh - to breathe her last in the city of Varanasi, the holiest of Indian pilgrimage sites, and be cremated there. Casting her ashes in the waters of the sacred river Ganges would absolve her of sin and remove her soul forever from the unrelenting cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

Mother and children made the long journey to Varanasi and took up lodging in a palatial but dilapidated hotel called Moksha Dham (Home of Salvation). It was an ancient guesthouse that afforded its patrons the morbid hospitality of checking in to die. But rather than breathe her last, the elderly woman suffered a vicious seizure and went into a coma. It was as if she had played a cruel joke at her children's expense, locking herself up in a cavernous closet, thereby forcing the family's deepest, darkest skeletons to come tumbling out. The daughter was of the firm opinion that their mother needed the gentlest of nudges to push her over to the "other side". But her younger brother would stop at nothing to see the glint of life in his mother's eyes again. Even if it took him to the very edge of madness, embracing ghoulish pollution and the most sinister of profane rituals.

An epic struggle between flesh and fatalism ensues in the city of life and death. While an old woman languishes in eternal slumber, neither dead nor alive, her children will provoke past, present and future, life and death, body and soul, with catastrophic consequences...

Director's Note

Samaadhi is an attempt to reconcile my two long-standing desires as a filmmaker – to make a truly "Indian" horror film, and to explore the dynamics of a family through the prism of a minimalist chamber drama. I wanted to understand very Indian notions of lineage and ancestry, mortality and impermanence. By having these themes play out in an ancient city where life and death, the sacred and profane, are flip sides of the same coin, I hoped to make a rooted genre film. Thus, *Samaadhi* is a film that is both poetic and provocative, visceral and sensuous and – ultimately - is a film capable of engaging the viewer's faculties and eliciting an emotional response.

Sebastian Wants to Remember

Vasant Nath



Vasant Nath
Director, Producer

Director's Biography

Vasant Nath graduated from the University of Cambridge in Sociology in 2003. He assisted Oscar nominated director Deepa Mehta before working in Mumbai as a creative assistant, specializing in writing screenplays. He has been a freelance writer and director since 2008 and is working towards making his first feature. Vasant is also an avid photographer.

Filmography

Shanu Taxi (2006)
Sukrit's Sundays (2007)
Checkmate (2011)

Production Company's profile

VAVA Arts is the banner under which Vasant intends to create new narrative content in line with the changing trends of India's independent film industry.

Technical Information

Fiction / 100' / 35 mm / Colour

Production Status:
Writing & development

Shooting Language:
English, Hindi

Shooting Start:
03/2012

Total Budget:
109'202 Euro

Funds Secured:
0

Production Company:
VaVa Arts

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(Vasant Nath)

Synopsis

Sebastian, 65, an eminent photographer, has a stroke that takes away his memories. His wife Rose, 60, is saddened that Sebastian has forgotten her completely and does her best to help him recover.

During his recovery, Sebastian isolates three photographs that seem to hold significant meaning for him: images of a buffalo calf, a flamboyant Queen and a young Padri. All three were clearly photographed by Sebastian but their context and significance remains a mystery to Rose. Then, one day, Sebastian suddenly uncovers a photograph of a woman that has an even greater effect, sending him into a fit of restlessness that grows day by day. Despite his enfeebled condition, Sebastian begins to set out looking for the woman in the photograph; not caring that on his own, he could not get further than his colony gate. For Rose, the languorous, seductive photograph of the unknown woman is suggestive of a life that Sebastian had kept secret till then. She realizes that pursuing an explanation for it could open a Pandora's box of unpleasant discoveries. However, after watching Sebastian endanger himself repeatedly for its sake, Rose has to consider the difficult choice of resurrecting Sebastian's old car and driving him to where he took the woman's picture. Nobody, including Sebastian's old friends, knows who the woman is or where the photo was taken. However, Rose can see that each of the other three photos clearly relate to something from Sebastian's forgotten past that he wanted to remember. So, after digging up some clues, she takes him on this unusual treasure hunt, half-hoping to discover the reason for Sebastian's infatuation, half-hoping that it wears off along the way.

The journey is not without difficulties. The travelers are old and their vehicle is even older. To Rose's frustration, Sebastian's most difficult traits – his stubbornness and recklessness - were not annihilated by his stroke and manifest unpleasantly as they get further and further from home. Each new clue they uncover sheds light on the life of a man neither of them knew anymore.

Over the many hundred km of a road journey from New Delhi to India's Western extremities, the couple come face to face with each other's true selves as never before. Up against some shattering revelations from the past, their future stands in jeopardy. Their only chance is to remember the solid foundation of love that has brought them so far - but that is something not for Sebastian alone, but for both of them to recall.

Director's Note

Sebastian Wants to Remember was born four years ago, in an effort to write an original screenplay that did not fit into any boxes already extant in the Indian film industry. The goal was to tell a fresh Indian story that deals with contemporary Indians set in locales that are together representative of India's diversity. The screenplay has been drawn from themes that are very familiar to me, and the story plays out over landscapes and locales that I have spent much time in as a child. The themes of Old Age and Memory are central to the story, and my familiarity with both comes from a close bond with a grandparent who suffered from Alzheimer's disease.

The Trapper's Snare

Shanker Raman



Shanker Raman
Director

Director's Biography

Shanker Raman is an award winning cinematographer having worked professionally over the last 15 years on several documentaries, shorts, feature films and TV commercials. After completing his bachelor's in Physics he went on to major in Cinematography from the Film and TV Institute of India, Pune. *The Trapper's Snare* is his third feature as a writer and first as Director.

Filmography

Frozen (2007)
Peepli Live (2010)
Patang (The Kite) (2011)



Rucha Pathak
Producer

Production Company's profile

Chasing Tales is a production company run by Aamir Bashir & Shanker Raman. *Harud (Autumn)* is their debut feature produced with the support of Hubert Bals Fund. Directed by Aamir Bashir, it has traveled to major international film festivals. It won the Don Quixote Award at Fribourg International Film Festival (2011). *The Trapper's Snare* is their second feature.

Filmography Production (all projects)

Harud (Autumn), Aamir Bashir (2010)
The Trapper's Snare, Shanker Raman (2012)

Technical Information

Fiction / 110' / 35mm / Colour

Production Status:
Writing & development

Shooting Language:
Tamil, Sinhala, English

Shooting Start:
12 / 2011

Total Budget:
750'000 Euro

Funds Secured:
10'000 Euro

Production Company:
Chasing Tales

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(Shanker Raman)

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(Rucha Pathak)

Synopsis

The Trapper's Snare is the spiritual journey of 15 year old Sundaran, his experiences and realizations, and his rite of passage into adulthood. The only child of a Tamil tribal family in Sri Lanka, Sundaran's parents are bird trappers. His father, Shaktivel, is a demon, absorbed in either setting up snares or indulging in drink. Shankari, Sundaran's mother is gentle, soft spoken and dotes on her son. Trapped by the dominance of her husband, she hand crafts cages to house the ensnared birds and sells them at the local marketplace.

Sundaran has been in and out of sickness all his life. Having recovered from another bout of malaria, he accompanies his father for a hunt in the woods. Under his father's strict watch, he reluctantly lays a snare for the first time.

In the evening he finds a swallow caught in the snare, with its leg broken, flapping about helplessly in pain. Soon the bird dies.

Crushed by the bird's death, Sundaran falls sick again. He suffers from fever and severe coughing fits. It is increasingly clear to Shankari, that under the assaulting gaze of her cold heartless husband, her son will not survive.

The civil war is raging. Sinhala and Tamils, Buddhists and Hindus. A life size monument of the Buddha has come up overnight in the town square. It has led to protests by the minority Tamil community, angered by the destruction of their houses of worship.

Amidst all the madness of protests against the erection of the statue, Shankari notices her son enraptured by the face of Buddha. Sensing a way to save her son from the diabolical Shaktivel, Shankari, in a supreme act of sacrifice and defiance, gives away Sundaran to a Buddhist monastery. Ordained as a novice monk, Sundaran, now known as Bhikku Rahula, leads an orderly and disciplined life at the forest monastery. It seems the suffering of young Rahula is finally over. But not for long.

His friend and companion Issa, kills himself, tormented by self-doubt. A frightened Rahula, runs away to find his mother in the town square, only to be caught in a freak explosion decapitating the statue of Buddha, killing his mother and severing his right arm. Rahula recovers, rescued by a prostitute, Sita, who runs a brothel for the handicapped. Rahula is sucked into this world, a microcosm of hell, until a clumsy, coital experience with Sita, makes him examine his desire for love and companionship.

The film is a meditation on the significance of what one is able to or willing to leave behind.

Director's Note

My experience with filming in conflict areas, triggered questions about religion, identity and the value of human life. Sri Lanka has witnessed immense suffering as a result of the civil war. It made me wonder what might have spawned violence in a place, which has preserved the original teachings of the Buddha in practice and in text form.

The Buddha showed the way to the end of suffering.

My Hindu tradition indicates that suffering is purely a consequence of past actions, while my rational mind argued that I am fully responsible for the outcome of my life.

So what causes suffering? Is it fate? Or is it a matter of choice?

Thread (Le Fil)

Lilium Léonard



Lilium Léonard
Director

Director's Biography

Lilium Léonard is both Indian and French. She grew up in Paris where she studied Film theory at La Sorbonne University before returning to India to specialise in Film direction at the Film and Television Institute of India. *Thread*, her diploma film, won the Best Short Film Award at the Third Eye Asian Film Festival (Mumbai) and at the Asian Hot Shots Film Festival (Berlin).

Filmography

Nisha, the Mark of the Cow (2008)
Thread (2009)
Rasika (2011)

Technical Information

Fiction / 90' / HD / Colour

Production Status:
Writing & development

Shooting Language:
Hindi, English
and other Indian languages

Shooting Start:
Summer 2012

Total Budget:
300'000 Euro

Funds Secured:
0

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(Lilium Léonard)

Synopsis

The Surya circus travels around rural India offering to the common people to forget all their worries as they watch the incredible and the spectacular spring out of the pit of an arena. However, it is far from the tumult and the limelight of the stage that lies the most uncanny performance of the fairground community: it is in their daily scores as costume designers for the circus that the two contortionists, Nisha and Sandhya display the most striking image of the tie that links them both.

Nisha and Sandhya are as inseparable and indivisible as their stage characters whose bodies every night mingle. Their bond is such that it extends to the perfect coordination of their each and every move and the girls seem to melt in one another when they stitch a piece of cloth together. They live happily in the circus until the youngest, in search of her identity and willing to assert her individuality, shows signs of independence.

Sandhya dreams of recognition and wishes that a spectator will take her out of the circus boundaries, back to the outside life she has forgotten all about. Like most of the circus artists, Sandhya was bought from her family to serve the fairground community. Nisha, who deliberately joined the circus, knows that one cannot escape from this adoptive family which reduces its children to slavery. She witnessed in her youth, the murder of an artist who tried to escape and kept it a secret. When Sandhya came to the circus, Nisha took her under her wing to soothe her pain and from a simple seamstress, she became a contortionist performing side by side with her apprentice.

But as Sandhya moves away from Nisha towards an impossible dream, Nishais haunted by the ghost of her past abandonment that led her to the circus. The relationship of the inseparables holds to a string when Nisha decides to stitch herself to Sandhya to refrain her from leaving the encampment. Thinking she is thus saving her from a certain death, she risks losing her own self in the process, but their fusion is such that it ultimately survives this mutilation. Without knowing it, the two young girls write together a new legend of the circus: by accepting to be stitched to Nisha, Sandhya shatters the moral of the community who abandons the monstrous couple. Overwhelmed with their new found freedom, they walk side by side towards a village they see in the distance, without noticing that the thread bounding them loosens a bit more at each step to finally disappear, carried by the wind.

Director's Note

Thread comes from my encounter with film and India. Of all of my film projects it is the one which reflects the most my professional goal in the desire to embrace my country of origin. In India, everything and its contrary seem to coexist in an emotional maelstrom which drives us inevitably towards existential questions. It is this feeling of being overwhelmed with diverse emotions which questions our perception that I would like to explore. With this film I intent to question the meaning of life in an innocent yet visceral way to create a fantasy tale which will bring us back to the primitive fear of separation and abandonment only to transcend it.

Vidhvastha (Devastated)

Ashish Avikunthak



Ashish Avikunthak
Director, Producer

Director's Biography

Ashish has been making films for the past 15 years. His films have been shown worldwide in film festivals, galleries and museums - Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, along with Rotterdam, and Berlin film festivals. His first feature *Shadows Formless* premiered at Festival del film Locarno in 2007. He has a PhD in cultural anthropology and now teaches at University of Rhode Island.

Filmography

Shadows Formless (2007)
Vakratunda Sawha (2010)
Katho Upanishad (2011)



Moloy Mukherjee
Producer

Production Company's profile

Ashish Avikunthak Production has produced half a dozen of short films and two feature films since 1995. In the course of the last 15 years has invested about Euros 100,000 in the making of films that break the boundaries of imagination in Indian cinema. At the moment the company is involved with the making of 4 feature length films, which it hopes to release in the next 4 years.

Filmography Production

Shadows Formless (2007)
Vakratunda Sawha (2010)
Katho Upanishad (2011)

Technical Information

Fiction / 85' /
Super 16 mm / Colour

Production Status:
Production

Shooting Language:
Hindi

Shooting Start:
12 / 2011

Total Budget:
99'500 Euro

Funds Secured:
60'000 Euro

Production Company:
Ashish Avikunthak Productions

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(Ashish Avikunthak)

Synopsis

Anniruddh Pandey, a middle-aged police hit man (encounter-specialist) with the Mumbai police force. He has conducted close to 100 extra judicial killing of men belonging to Muslim mafia in Mumbai. He has been suspended from the police force because of human right violations. He is now going through an existential crisis. This is reflected with his relationship with his young girlfriend - Neha, with whom he has a dehumanizing sexual relationship. They meet in seedy hotel rooms and have sex. In between the conversations Anniruddh occasionally boasts- how he kills Muslim men falsely labeling them as mafia operatives. He vividly recounts in graphic details how he tortures them and then disposes them. After an aggressive argument Neha leaves him. One evening Lance Naik Amarinder Singh Bhatu - a Sikh soldier of the Jat Regiment of the Indian Army forces into the Anniruddh house. Even before opening his mouth Amarinder Singh starts brutally hitting Anniruddh with his rifle butt. And then hand cuffs him. He chides Anniruddh about the way he kills innocent Muslims in Bombay. Instead Amarinder Singh brags in explicit details how he killed Muslim men in Kashmir, how he raped young Muslim girls, and had sex with dead mutilated bodies. He says he learnt how to kill when he saw Hindu men burning alive his father, grandfather and his brother in the Delhi riots of 1984. He was 6 years old. Amarinder Singh then rapes Anniruddh. He subsequently takes the knife of his army rifle and blinds Anniruddh. And Anniruddh faints. Amarinder Singh goes into the bathroom. Removes his uniform. He shaves of his beard. He shaves his head. He looks into mirror, starts chanting mantras from Gurbani (Sikh holy book) and shoots himself in his head. Neha returns to Anniruddh's house to help him and see's that he looking for his revolver to kill himself. She then takes him out through the streets of Mumbai till they reach an empty level crossing where she leaves Anniruddh and a fast train runs him over.

Vidhvastha is a psycho-political film that symbolically explores penetrating violence by the state in Indian contemporary society onto the intimate spheres of individuals.

Director's Note

The film is pivoted on three spectacular forms of violence that have pervaded contemporary Indian society - extrajudicial killings; anti-insurgency violence; the communal riots. My film is a metaphoric examination of these forms of violence and its impact on the consciousness of individual perpetrators of that violence. This is a political film in the truest sense that brings the spectre of violence into the making of contemporary India. I don't offer hope, because I do not see hope. Violence begets violence and the only recourse that I offer is self-destruction. This might a bleak film, but that is because the future is bleak.

Festival del film Locarno

3 - 13 | 8 | 2011

Open Doors

6 - 9 | 8 | 2011

Friday 5th August

Open Doors Welcome Drink
By invitation only

Saturday 6th August

Meetings one to one Cinéfondation (Club Open Doors)
Open Doors Workshop (Palavideo)

Sunday 7th August

Meetings one to one Open Doors (Club Open Doors)
Carte Blanche Colombia (Palavideo)

Monday 8th August

Meetings one to one Open Doors (Club Open Doors)

Tuesday 9th August

Round Table (Forum - Spazio Cinema)
Open Doors Award Ceremony (Forum - Spazio Cinema)

To complete the Open Doors program and to create bridges between the Festival's audience and Open Doors, a selection of Indian films will be presented in the *Open Doors Screening*.

For more informations: opendoors.pardo.ch

The Festival would like to thank

Ateliers du Cinéma Européen (ACE)
ARTE
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Cinéfondation, Festival de Cannes
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European Producers Club (EPC)
Producers Network, Marché du Film, Festival de Cannes
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Open Doors Selection Committee:

Olivier Père
Martina Malacrida
Nathalie Soldini
Sunil Doshi, India consultant for Open Doors
Meenakshi Shedde, India consultant for Open Doors
Jean-Michel Frodon, Journalist