

28nff

National Film Festival 1981

28th National

Film Festival

April 1981

Compiled and edited by the Directorate of Film Festivals. The views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Directorate.

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Jury for Feature Films

V. Shantaram (*Chairman*)

Basanta Choudhury
B. V. Dharap
Bimal Dutt
Sunil Gangopadhyay
R. N. Krishna Prasad
Ravindranathan Nair
Arthur Pais
Purnendu Sekhar Pattrea
Jayoo Patwardhan
T. S. Ranga
Kantilal Rathod
Mriganka Sekhar Ray
Shobhana Samarth
N. Seshadri
K. B. Tilak
G. Venkateshwara Rao

Jury for Short Films

B. D. Garga (*Chairman*)

Utpal K. Banerjee
P. D. P. Rao

Citation

The award for the best feature film of 1980 is given to the Bengali film *Aakaler Sandhane* for "brilliantly recreating the tragedy of the 1943 Bengal famine and focussing on the disturbing continuity of the conditions which created it, for the cinematic excellence of the film which explores human experience at different levels and for the consummate artistry with which the complexity of the socio-economic situation is fused into a poignant statement".

Award for the Best Feature Film

AAKALER SANDHANE

Swaran Kamal and Rs. 50,000 to the producer, Dhiresk Kumar Chakraborty
Swaran Kamal and Rs. 25,000 to the director, Mrinal Sen

Primarily a businessman, Dhiresk Kumar Chakraborty embarked upon a career in film production and distribution in 1974. He has the distinction of having distributed films like *Shatranj ke Khilari*, *Shodh*, *Aakrosh* and *Albert Pinto ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hai*.

With 25 years of film-making, nineteen features and several documentaries behind him, Mrinal Sen is one of the most celebrated film directors in the country. He has made films in various Indian languages and received several national and international honours. 1981 has been a year of awards for him: the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival, the Padmabhusan, and now the national award for the best film, for the fourth time.



Citation

The award for the second best feature film of 1980 is given to the Malayalam film *Oppol* for "boldly presenting a woman's love for her illegitimate child, for sensitive handling of complex situations and for offering social acceptability to the mother and child, thereby giving a new perspective to the values prevalent today".

Award for the Second Best Feature Film

OPPOL

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 30,000 to the producer, Rosamma George
Rajat Kamal and Rs. 15,000 to the director, K. S. Sethumadhavan

A journalist for the past fifteen years, Rosamma George has made her debut in the field of film production with *Oppol*.

Beginning his career in films as an assistant to the late K. Ramnoth and T. R. Sundaram, K. S. Sethumadhavan has made about seventy films in Sinhalese and several Indian languages. He has won many national and state awards.



Citation

The award for the best feature film on national integration of 1980 is given to the Gujarati film *Bhavni Bhavai* for "tracing the history of the social evil of untouchability through a popular folk drama form, for synthesizing diverse performing arts into socially relevant communication, for depicting the untouchables' fight for their rights".

Award for the Best Feature Film on National Integration

BHAVNI BHAVAI

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 30,000 to the producer, Sanchar Film Cooperative Society Ltd.

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 15 000 to the director, Ketan Mehta

A graduate of the Film & TV Institute of India, Ketan Mehta produced some prize winning plays in English and Gujarati and made a couple of documentary films. He has also worked for TV as a producer. *Bhavni Bhavai* is his first directorial venture in feature films.



Citation

The award for best direction of a first film of 1980 is given to Utpalendu Chakraborty for his work in the Bengali film *Maina Tadanta* for "depicting with realistic vigour the exploitation perpetrated on the tribals and the landless, for portraying the spirited fight of the downtrodden and for showing great maturity in the conception and presentation of the theme in his maiden venture."

Award for the Best First Film of a Director

MAINA TADANTA

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 10,000 to the director, Utpalendu Chakraborty

School teacher, short story writer and novelist, Utpalendu Chakraborty worked for many years with the tribals of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. His controversial documentary *Mukti Chai* on political prisoners aroused a great deal of interest in India and abroad.



Citation

The award for the best direction of 1980 is given to Mrinal Sen for his work in the Bengali film *Aakaler Sandhane* for "exploring the inevitable conflict between urban and rural cultures, for displaying in almost every sequence masterly handling and complete command over the medium".

Award for the Best Direction

MRINAL SEN

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 20,000

With 25 years of film-making, nineteen features and several documentaries behind him, Mrinal Sen is one of the most celebrated film directors in the country. He has made films in various Indian languages and received several national and international honours. 1981 has been a year of awards for him: the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival, the Padmabhushan, and now the national award for the best film, for the fourth time.



Citation

The award for the best screenplay of 1980 is given to Mrinal Sen for his work in the Bengali film *Aakaer Sandhane* for "effectively combining terse and pithy dialogue with the creation of well-defined, lively characters to convey a poignant story which leaves a lasting impression".

Award for the Best Screenplay

MRINAL SEN

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 10,000

With 25 years of film-making, nineteen features and several documentaries behind him, Mrinal Sen is one of the most celebrated film directors in the country. He has made films in various Indian languages and received several national and international honours. 1981 has been a year of awards for him: the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival, the Padmabhusan, and now the national award for the best film, for the fourth time.



Citation

The award for the best actor of 1980 is given to Balan K. Nair for his performance in the Malayalam film *Oppol* for "an extremely virile and sensitive portrayal of a man who is constantly puzzled by the behaviour of his wife, for conveying the flashes of anger and frustration he suffers and depicting the ultimate acceptance of his wife's past with a mellowed tenderness which reveals the virtuosity of a great artist."

Award for the Best Actor

BALAN K. NAIR

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 10,000

Balan K. Nair started his career as a stage artist and entered films only in the early seventies. He has acted in nearly a hundred films.



Citation

The award for the best actress of 1980 is given to Smita Patil for her performance in the Hindi film *Chakra* for "a sterling role as a middle-aged woman from the slums of Bombay, for depicting her stoic acceptance of an unkind fate and at the same time continuing to dream of a better future, which never arrives, with profound expressiveness and brilliant dialogue delivery".

Award for the Best Actress

SMITA PATIL

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 10,000

Smita Patil made her debut in Shyam Benegal's *Nishant*. A talented and sensitive actress, she has also worked in Bengali, Gujarati and Marathi films. Her role in Benegal's *Bhumika* brought her the national award for best actress some years ago.



Citation

The award for the best child artist of 1980 is given to Aravind for his performance in the Malayalam film *Oppol* for "portraying the complex role of a lonely child who is a victim of social ostracization for no fault of his own, for bringing out the terrible emotional trauma with little dialogue and a superb economy of gesture".

Award for the Best Child Artist

ARAVIND

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 5,000

Aravind is a second standard student in a Cochin school.



Citation

The award for the best cinematography (colour) of 1980 is given to Ashok Kumar for his work in the Tamil film *Nenjathai Killathe* for "brilliantly creating the salient features of each character with the help of superb camera control and effective use of lighting and for significantly contributing to the mood of the film".

Award for the Best Cinematography (Colour)

ASHOK KUMAR

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 10,000

Ashok Kumar holds a diploma in photography from the Allahabad University and a diploma in motion picture photography from the Institute of Film Technology, Madras. Having worked with directors like L. V. Prasad, K. Vishwanath, P. N. Menon, Bharathan and Mahendran and photographed over sixty films in different South Indian languages, he has won the Kerala State Award for best cameraman three times.



Citation

The award for the best cinematography (black and white) of 1980 is given to Sivan for his work in the Malayalam film *Yagam* for "depicting the grim and tense mood of the film, admirably depicting mellowed moments in the film with charm".

Award for the Best Cinematography (Black and White)

SIVAN

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 10,000

A professional photographer, Sivan's photographs have been published in leading national and international journals, including the Times, Newsweek and Life. He worked as a still photographer in Ramu Kariat's *Chemmeen*, produced documentaries and feature films and also directed a documentary. *Yagam* is his first directorial venture in feature films.



Citation

The award for best audiography is given to S. P. Ramanathan for his work in the Tamil film *Nenjathai Kilalathe* for "a highly sensitive use of sound to capture perfectly the rhythm and mood of each sequence".

Award for the Best Audiography

S. P. RAMANATHAN

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 7,500

S. P. Ramanathan joined A.V.M. Studios as an assistant in the sound department in 1947 and worked there till 1964. In 1971 he joined Prasad Studios as a recording engineer. This is the third time he is winning national award for best audiography.



Citation

The award for the best editing of 1980 is given to Gangadhar Naskar for his work in the Bengali film *Aakaler Sandhane* for "a sensitive use of images, for gradually building up the tempo of the film in a well-knit pattern; for never permitting a slackening of pace and for underlining the whole film with a subdued sense of drama".

Award for the Best Editing

GANGADHAR NASKAR

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 7,500

Gangadhar Naskar joined the editing department of New Theatres Studios in 1948 and worked later with noted editors, including Hrishikesh Mukherjee. Starting as assistant editor in Mrinal Sen's *Baishey Sravana*, he has edited all of Sen's subsequent films. He received the national award for best editing in 1979 and 1980 for Sen's *Parasuram* and *Ekdin Pratidin*.



Citation

The award for the best art direction is given to Meera Lakhia for her work in the Gujarati film *Bhaini Bhavai* for "perfectly creating the glamour of a royal palace juxtaposed with the grim austerity of hutments, for successfully providing a period touch down to the smallest detail, for providing a stamp of authenticity to the film".

Award for the Best Art Direction

MEERA LAKHIA

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 7,500

Meera Lakhia was trained in graphics from the J. J. School of Arts, Bombay and is working now as a scenic designer at the Space Application Centre, Ahmedabad. She writes short stories in Marathi and has won an award for poster design from the Lalit Kala Akademi, Gujarat. She also designs sets and costumers for the theatre.



Citation

The award for best music direction is given to Satyajit Ray for his work in the Bengali film *Hirak Rajar Deshe* for "brilliant experimentation with different forms and modes of Indian music and for creating a mood of fantasy in a pleasing and harmonious style".

Award for the Best Music Direction

SATYAJIT RAY

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 10,000

Indisputably one of the major directors of the world, Satyajit Ray has directed twenty-two feature films, four documentaries and two short films to date. A complete artist, he scripts, directs and scores his films, besides handling the camera, editing and designing sets, costumes, credit titles and even the publicity material on his films. Apart from the numerous national and international film honours to his credit, he has been awarded honorary doctorate degrees by the Oxford, Delhi and Jadavpur Universities. In addition to his contribution to film literature, he writes regularly for children and edits a children's journal.



Citation

The award for the best male playback singer of 1980 is given to Anup Ghosal for his singing in the Bengali film *Hirak Rajar Deshe* for "a wonderful range of voice and the sense of rhythm imparted to the songs rendered by him".

Award for the Best Male Playback Singer

ANUP GHOSAL

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 10,000

Trained in classical as well as other forms of music, Anup Ghosal came into the limelight with his singing for Satyajit Ray's *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*. He is at present one of the most popular singers in Bengal, in films and otherwise.



Citation

The award for the best female playback singer of 1980 is given to S. Janaki for her singing in the Malayalam film *Oppol* for "the serenity and pathos with which each rendering is imbued and for adding a new dimension to the theme of the film".

Award for the Best Female Playback Singer

S. JANAKI

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 10,000

A trained classical singer, S. Janaki sang her first Tamil song for the film *Vithiyin Villayattu* in 1957. She sings in several South Indian languages. She also won the national award for playback singing in the Tamil film *16 Vyathinile* some years ago.



Citation

The award for the best Assamese film of 1980 is given to *Anirban* for "depicting man's attachment to life through the story of an unfortunate married couple, through severe agony and funeral pyres, for providing a touch of realism by a delicate representation of a piece of lower middle class existence".

Award for the Best Assamese Film

ANIRBAN

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 15,000 to the producer, Preeti Saikia
Rajat Kamal and Rs. 7,500 to the director, Bhabendra Nath Saikia

Bhabendra Nath Saikia has a doctorate in physics from London University and was until recently a reader at Gauhati University. An accomplished short story writer, he won the Publication Board Award of Assam as the best writer of 1970-72 and the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1976. At present a member of the Executive Board of the Sahitya Akademi, the Indian National Council for Cooperation with UNESCO and the Advisory Board of the National Book Trust of India, he was also a member of the Sangeet Natak Akademi. His first film *Sandhyaraag* won the national award for the best Assamese film in 1978. *Anirban* is his second film.

Preeti Saikia was associated with the production of Bhabendra Nath Saikia's *Sandhyaraag*. *Anirban* is her first major production.



Citation

The award for the best Bengali film of 1980 is given to *Hirak Rajar Deshe* for "an allegorical representation of the victory of good over evil, embellished by superb acting and haunting music".

Award for the Best Bengali Film

HIRAK RAJAR DESHE

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 15,000 to the producer, Information & Cultural Affairs Department, Government of West Bengal
Rajat Kamal and Rs. 7,500 to the director, Satyajit Ray

Indisputably one of the major directors of the world, Satyajit Ray has directed twenty-two feature films, four documentaries and two short films to date. A complete artist, he scripts, directs and scores his films, besides handling the camera, editing and designing sets, costumes, credit titles and even the publicity material on his films. Apart from the numerous national and international film honours to his credit, he has been awarded honorary doctorate degrees by the Oxford, Delhi and Jadavpur Universities. In addition to his contributions to film literature, he writes regularly for children and edits a children's journal.



Citation

The award for the best Hindi film of 1980 is given to *Aakrosh* for "its severe indictment of an establishment and a society that permits injustice, for presenting a bold theme in a cinematic style which makes it both socially and aesthetically significant".

Award for the Best Hindi Film

AAKROSH

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 15,000 to the producer, Devi Dutt

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 7,500 to the director, Govind Nihalani

Starting his career as a sound assistant in his late brother Guru Dutt's *Pyasa*, Devi Dutt looked after the production and distribution of all his later films. He has produced documentaries and advertising short films and worked as production controller in Shyam Benegal's films. *Aakrosh* is his first feature production.

Trained in cinematography from the S. J. Polytechnic, Bangalore, Govind Nihalani worked in Bombay with V. K. Murthy and Pramod Chakravarty before he joined Shyam Benegal for his *Ankur*. He has since photographed all of Benegal's films. He has also photographed and directed documentaries and advertising short films and co-produced Satyadev Dubey's *Shantata Court Chalu Ahe*. He has also been in charge of the second unit in Richard Attenborough's film on Gandhi. *Aakrosh*, his first directorial venture in feature films, won him the Golden Peacock at the VIII International Film Festival of India.



Citation

The award for the best Malayam film of 1980 is given to *Yagam* for "presenting the dilemma of a romantic revolutionary who understands the futility of his misadventure at the cost of some rare moments of happiness, for successfully building up the sense of impending doom underlining the human relationships throughout the film".

Award for the Best Malayalam Film

YAGAM

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 15,000 to the producer, B. Chandramani Bai
Rajat Kamal and Rs. 7,500 to the director, Sivan

B. Chandramani Bai is a managing partner of a firm which runs a fully equipped outdoor film unit. *Yagam* is her first production.

A professional photographer, Sivan's photographs have been published in leading national and international journals, including the Times, Newsweek and Life. He worked as a still photographer in Ramu Kariat's *Chemmeen*, produced documentaries and feature films and also directed a documentary. *Yagam* is his first directional venture in feature films.



Citation

The award for the best Punjabi film of 1980 is given to *Chann Pardesee* for "presenting a story of human passion in cinematic terms, representing a departure from the usual trends prevalent in Punjabi cinema".

Award for the Best Punjabi Film

CHANN PARDESEE

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 15,000 to the producers, Swarn Sedha, Baldev Gill and J. S. Cheema

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 7,500 to the director, Chitrartha Singh

A theatre enthusiast, Swarn Sedha joined hands with two other theatre enthusiasts to produce *Chann Pardesee*, their first venture.

J. S. Cheema has been associated with stage production since 1970. He was also associated with the Department of Indian Theatre, Punjab University, and worked for the Punjab State Drama Repertory.



Baldev Gill did a course in dramatics at the Department of Indian Theatre, Punjab University and worked for the Punjab State Drama Repertory as an actor.



Chitrartha Singh came to the cinema via the theatre. He worked in the theatre groups of B. M. Shah and Om Shivpuri. After obtaining a diploma in film direction from the Film & TV Institute of India, he worked as an assistant to Lekh Tandon. *Chann Pardesee* is his first directorial venture.



Citation

The award for the best Tamil film of 1980 is given to *Nenjathai Killathe* for "artistically portraying the gradual development of a girl from adolescence to womanhood, for depicting in a gentle moving narrative her emotional suffering and how she overcomes them".

Award for the Best Tamil Film

NENJATHAI KILLATHE

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 15,000 to the producer, K. Rajagopal Chetty
Rajat Kamal and Rs. 7,500 to the director, J. Mahendran

K. Rajagopal Chetty, a veteran producer, distributor and exhibitor, was president of the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce, Madras, and member of the working committee of the Film Federation of India.

J. Mahendran worked as a journalist and as editor of *Tughlak*, before taking up screenplay writing. Has also enjoyed considerable success in the theatre. He directed his first film *Mulum Malarum* in 1978. *Nenjathai Killathe* is his fifth film.



Citation

The award for the best Telugu film of 1980 is given to *Harischendrudu* for "an exposure of the manoeuverings and misdeeds of politicians and for contributing significantly to the development of political cinema in India".

Award for the Best Telugu Film

HARISCHENDRUDU

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 15,000 to the producer, U. D. Murali Krishna
Rajat Kamal and Rs. 7,500 to the director, U. Visweswar Row

Playwright, producer and director, U. Visweswar Row is secretary of the South Indian film Chamber of Commerce and managing director of the South Indian Film.Export Promotion Council. He has also been associated with a number of film organizations in various capacities and government committees as a member. He has produced about twenty-five films. He won the national award for the best Telugu film last year for his *Nagna Satyam*.

U. D. Murali Krishna is a student of engineering. *Harischendrudu* is his first production.



Dada Saheb Phalke Award for 1980

P. JAIRAJ

Swaran Kamal, Rs. 40,000 and a shawl



The Dada Saheb Phalke Award for 1980 is given to P. Jairaj for his outstanding contribution to the cause of Indian cinema. His forte was portrayal of historical characters like Chandrasekhar Azad, Amar Singh Rathor, Durgadas Rathor, Prithviraj Chauhan, Rana Pratap and Tipu Sultan, which inspired generations of cinegoers.

Born on September 28, 1909 in a cultured family in Hyderabad, Jairaj grew up in an intellectual atmosphere and took a deep interest in art, literature and music.

His debut film was *Jagmagati Jawani* in 1929 made by Mama Warekar, the famous Marathi playwright. But the first released film was his second film, *Raseeli Rani* (1930), in which he played the male lead. His first talkie was *Shikari* (1932) with Seeta Devi. He was with Bombay Talkies for a while and later moved over to Prakash Productions. He has acted in over two hundred films and appeared opposite glamorous leading ladies from Devika Rani, Suraiya, Shobhana Samarth, Nargis, Nirupa Roy to Chand Usmani and Shakila.

He has been associated with the production of musical shows for the benefit of the Army, Navy and Air Force and charities to collect funds for national causes. He also takes an active interest in the propagation of classical music and dance.

Citation

The award for the best information film of 1980 is given to *Daldal* for its "powerful indictment of a social malaise—bonded labour—very sensitively handled and well researched".

Award for the Best Information Film

DALDAL

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 5,000/- to the producer,
Krystyna Khote

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 5,000/- to the director,
Pradeep Dixit.

Krystyna Khote has been producing documentary and educational films for over twenty years for Films Division, State Governments and public and private corporations.

Pradeep Dixit holds a diploma in screenplay writing from the Film & TV Institute of India. He has worked for TV as a script writer and has directed eight documentary films so far.



Citation

The award for the best educational/instructional film of 1980 is given to *Mariculture* for its "diligent research and meticulous execution".

Award for the Best Educational/Instructional Film

MARICULTURE

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 5,000/- to the producer,
Films Division, Government of India
Rajat Kamal and Rs. 5,000/- to the director,
C.J. Paulose

C. J. Paulose holds diplomas in film direction as well as editing from the Film & TV Institute of India. He worked for TV as editor and producer before joining the Films Division. His films have won a number of national and international awards.



Citation

The award for the best promotional film of 1980 is given to *Oil Offshore* for its "visual excitement and controlled handling of a difficult subject".

Award for the Best Promotional Film

OIL OFFSHORE

Rajat Kamal to the producer, Prem Prakash
Rajat Kamal to the director, Satya Prakash

Starting his career as a newsreel cameraman, Prem Prakash moved on to the production of short films. His shorts have won him international recognition and awards. He heads the bureau in the Indian region for VISNEWS and is the chairman of TVNF, both TV news feature agencies.

Trained in TV documentaries in India and abroad, Satya Prakash has produced, directed and photographed a large number of educational and information TV films.



Citation

The award for the best experimental film of 1980 is given to *Arrival* for its "searing imagery and outstanding sound-track".

Award for the Best Experimental Film

ARRIVAL

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 5,000/- to the producer,
Fims Division, Government of India
Rajat Kamal and Rs. 5,000/- to the director,
Mani Kaul

After obtaining a diploma in screenplay writing and direction from the Film & TV Institute of India, Mani Kaul has made four feature films and several documentaries. He was awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship in 1974-76. He also teaches at the Film & TV Institute of India.



Citation

The award for the best newsreel cameraman of 1980 is given to Mahesh Pratap Sinha and Rajgopal Rao for their work in the item *Tragdy of Gendi* in the Indian News Review No. 1657 for "displaying a keen news sense".

Award for the Best Newsreel Cameraman

MAHESH PRATAP SINHA and RAJGOPAL RAO

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 5,000/-

Prior to joining the Films Division in 1973, Mahesh Pratap Sinha worked at Filmalaya Pvt. Ltd. as assistant cameraman.

Rajgopal Rao holds a diploma in cinematography and worked as assistant cameraman at Premier Studio, Mysore in 1973-74. He has been with the Films Division since 1974.



Citation

The award for the best Indian news review of 1980 is given to *News Magazine No. 3 (Day of the Dark Sun)* for "capturing the high drama of an historic event—the total solar eclipse".

Award for the Best Indian News Review

NEWS MAGAZINE NO. 3 (DAY OF THE DARK SUN)

Rajat Kamal and Rs. 5,000/- to the producer,
Films Division, Government of India

Special Commendations

The Short Film Jury specially commends the films *The Chola Heritage*, produced and directed by Adoor Gopalakrishnan, for "its outstanding photography of the Chola sculpture" and *Pampa*, produced by the Films Division, Government of India and directed by P. C. Sharma, for "its sensitive handling of a purposeful theme, encouraging initiative in a child".

Awards Withheld

The Feature Film Jury has withheld the awards for the *Best Children's Film* and the *Special Jury Award* as no film was considered suitable for these awards.

The Short Film Jury has also withheld the award for the *Best Animation Film* as no film was considered deserving of an award.

CINEMA OF COMMITMENT

One of the criteria that bedevils assessments of the cinema is that of "social relevance"—at best, an ambiguous term. Films are often judged for their content, rather than for their technique. It is doubtful whether such a criteria is at all tenable. No rigorous critical theory allows for such a drastic separation of form and content. In a well integrated work, form and content are inseparable, two sides of the same coin. Content after all, determines form, and form mediates content. You cannot have one without the other, without devaluing the work, without undermining your basis of judgement. Fortunately, at least some of the final judgements this year transcend the limitations of such ill-defined and loose criteria as "social relevance".

However, it must be acknowledged that this dichotomy between form and content is sadly very much apart of our contemporary cinema. Much too often, in our "other" cinema, social relevance is realised, and judged, in terms of narrow ideological commitment—with predictable results. More often than not, in the "committed" cinema, ideology takes precedence over art, content over form, and message over medium. Here, the scripts and screenplays are schematic rather than organic, the characters stereotypical rather than typical, and the situations illustrative rather than interactive. Whatever kind of ideological commitment, whatever the kind of "ism" professed, the end result, inevitably, is a reductive cinema, a cinema that falsifies life, a cinema of cliches. What I am talking about is a failure of craft, of technique, in short, of the failure of art in much of our "socially relevant" cinema. After all, it needs concrete artistic skills to create the spontaneity, the complexity of felt experience. It needs artistic imagination to allow an ideology or vision to grow organically out of the skillful and compelling arrangement of dramatic interactions. Finally, it needs artistic insight and imagination to remain true to life, even when this runs counter to, and modifies a set ideological framework. It is much easier to attitudinize and sermonize in the cinema—and this, entirely to its diminution as a mode of deep and complex communication. The "committed" cinema like the medieval morality play, tends to begin with a set ideological scheme, projects protagonists as unidimensional representatives of Virtue and Vice, puts them through the mill of schematized and simplified Experience, and winds up with the Message it had in mind all along. Quite simply, then, whereas a work of artistic integrity compels you to look at the world with fresh eyes, the "committed" cinema puts you to sleep.

Even so, the "committed" cinema demonstrates quite a wide spectrum of standards. *Aakrosh* probably sees it at

its best. The script is about a disturbingly authentic situation, the structure is organic, (as a thriller made to appeal,) and even though the directorial style tends to revert to the stereotypical, the issues and resolutions of the film make it a compelling event. At the other end of the spectrum is *Maina Tadanta*.

Maina Tadanta was awarded, the best first feature film award, a category introduced for the first time this year. Very much a one-man effort, this Bengali film, credits its story, script, music and direction to Utpalendu Chakrabarty. Perhaps this versatility impressed the jury enough to nudge out competition from other first films like *Aakrosh*, *Bhauri Bhauri*, *Chakra* and *Sazaye Maut*.

Briefly, the film is about a tribal boy who is forced into bonded labour by a minor infringement, grows into manhood as a loyal minion, rebels when he is asked to turn against his own people, is hounded and framed for his temerity, develops ulcers in jail, and finally dies of starvation. Fair enough, and moving enough. Such things do happen in our country. But the handling of the subject is inept.

There seem to be almost as many episodes as there are shots in the film—brief, accidentally framed shots with some vague action thrown in. Besides, the dimly realised

Aakaler Sandhane



episodes are widely disparate in time. One cannot easily detect the shifts in the time scale, or when the numerous flashbacks begin or end, or why they are there in the first place. Time-lapses are indicated by the most puzzling shots—the camera pans half-heartedly across clouds in the sky, or tilts halfway up a rock, sometimes simply because they are conveniently there. Also one often wonders in the film whether the cameraman knew what he was doing or whether the action simply got out of hand. Because every once in a while you get the feeling that either the actors strayed out of camera and lighting range, or that the camera was ineptly positioned so as to obscure the central action. As far as the actors go, they were either extremely raw or just not told what to do. Too often it looks as if a take bombed, but was kept in for lack of an option. At the appropriate moments of "high" emotion, the actors respond routinely with hysteria—nothing like a good gut reaction when the emotion is unclear. In any case stock emotions dominate the film, running the full gamut between the maudlin and the melodramatic.

Yes, a viewing will confirm these excesses of enthusiasm, or negligence, if you will. A generous audience might even celebrate its spirit of amateurism. But one can perhaps not doubt the film maker's sincerity or engagement with disturbing social issues.

Mercifully, the other first film to be given an award, *Bhavni Bhavai*, is bedeviled by none of these ailments. Directed by Ketan Mehta, the film was adjudged this year's best film on national integration. I am not sure how exactly "national integration" has been interpreted, or how this film does more for such integration than the other contenders for this award, but *Bhavni Bhavai* has certainly much to commend it as a film.

Meera Tadata



For one, it is a significant breakthrough in Gujarati cinema, a cinema largely marked for its weak imitations of the Bombay formula film. Secondly, it is a first, successful venture by the Sanchar Film Cooperative—one of the few film co-operatives in the country—and will hopefully give the movement a much-needed boost. Thirdly, as "committed" cinema, it demonstrates a refreshingly different approach to a subject which has unfortunately become clichéd in our "other" cinema.

At a camp of dislodged Harijans, an old man begins to relate a tale through song, and we are at once transported into a farcical, fantasy world—the world of a decadent but all-powerful king, with the intrigues of his court, the machinations of the high-caste subjects and the exploitation and humiliation that is inflicted on the untouchables of the kingdom. The film alternates between this whimsical but familiar world, and the contemporary world of the Harijans, and in alternating the story of the fantasy with the choral comment of the songs in the present, the film appropriates the form of a folk-theatre idiom—the 'bhavai'. The inspiration is invigorating and Ketan Mehta's film is fully infected with the zestful and comic spirit of the bhavai. Feisty performances by Naseeruddin Shah, Benjamin Gilani, Om Puri, Smita Patil and Suhashini Mulay, to name a few, add to the exuberant, positive feel of the film. In addition, the styling of the sets and decor by Meera Lakhia invest the film with a rare and refreshing panache, and the cinematography responds by measuring up to it fully.

One just wishes that Mehta could have extended his range of slapstick and used it with more discrimination. One also wishes that he could have handled his scenes at the camp fire with more variation, and more realism. Because it is plainly evident that he is more comfortable in the comic, fantasy mode than in the naturalistic one—the latter tending to be diffuse and straining to be earnest.

It seems to me that the one major flaw in the film is the forced imposition of industrial smoke stacks and the stock-footage montage of the National Movement at the end of the film. One can see the connections that the director is trying to make, but it appears too late to be integral to his film, and it is not part of the organic whole. Although the film is not very much the worse for it, the forced ending is a good example of the negative compulsion of ideological commitment in the cinema. This apart, with the fresh and engaging approach of *Bhavai Bhavai*, the committed cinema seems to have turned a corner.

However, it is Mrinal Sen's latest film which marks a watershed, a turning point in Indian cinema. For the first time, in *Aakaler Sandhane* our committed cinema turns a probing light on itself, becomes self-aware, and it does so in a superbly cinematic way.

Aakaler Sandhane is also a personal milestone in Sen's film career. After 25 years of "committed" film making, it takes courage and candour to critically examine, to confront that commitment, to acknowledge its shortcomings and to emerge from the encounter with a changed but more mature, more complex and deeper sense of

commitment. And that is precisely what Sen has done. He has tested his faith in the crucible of experience, and he has accepted the verdict.

Aakaler Sandhane is too complex a film to describe in such a short space. It is much easier to mention some of the things the film is about. At the simplest level, it is about a film crew that arrives on location in a small village to shoot a feature set in the Bengal famine of 1943, in which 5 million people starved to death—and it is about the crew's premature departure from the village, to complete the film in the studios. At another level, the film is about the disturbing connections between the past and the present—there are people in the village who remember the famine of 43 and there are people who relate the recreation of the past with the present. On yet another level, it is about the planes where village and city intersect, the ways in which the visiting filmmakers alter and affect the local villagers. At its heart the film is about the making of a fantasy till reality confronts it head-on. Lastly, it is about the excitement and disappointments of film making, it is a tribute to films.

At the end, there is a sobering vision of what film can and cannot hope to do, and the resolve to continue, albeit in a

Chakra



different way, is as strong as ever.

As a film, both in terms of form and content, *Aakaler Sandhane*, towers about this year's contenders like a colossus, and has deservedly swept the major awards—bagging prizes for the best feature film, the best director, the best screenplay and the best editing.

However, it remains a moot point as to whether *Aakaler Sandhane* will have a salutary effect on trends in the committed cinema or whether it will be regarded as plain heresy.

That leaves us with the award for the second best feature film. Instituted for the first time this year, it seems to me, from the choice of this year's winner, that the rubric is little other than a euphemism for the award it has

replaced—for the best film with mass appeal wholesome entertainment and aesthetic value—whatever that meant. *Oppol* is a stickily sentimental family drama centered around the relationship of an illegitimate child with his young, doting mother. I am not at all sure whether such fare is manna for the masses, but the film certainly does not merit critical attention.

In retrospect, 1980 will go down in film history as the year of *Aakaler Sandhane*, of *Aakrosh*, of *Bhavni Bhavai*. It will go down as the year in which some, among the committed cinema, artistically came of age, in separate and different ways.

—Siddhartha Basu

Oppol



THE FAMILIAR FORMULA

The seventies were the best years of our regional cinema, a decade of exploration and a time of high critical standards. When notions of quality were uncompromised by ill-conceived ideas of 'wholesomeness', when a film-makers' work was to be judged on its intrinsic merit and not its avowed purpose. These were its guiding principles and its major strengths. In these years the 'other' cinema actually developed into an 'alternate' cinema. In the forefront of this 'new wave' were language films of great promise—and the regional cinema was born.

If one were to go by this years award winners, then clearly the new decade is marked by a different set of standards. The strengths of the past have begun to be regarded as elitist, effete and too 'intellectual'. The new credo of the 80's is fashioned only to the extent to which it can gather the crowds. So ring in the old, ring out the new.

The brief summer of the 70's has quietly come to an end. Melodrama, mush and sentimentality have overwhelmed our regional cinema once again. And this time the purge takes place in the name of 'good' entertainment. There are important exceptions like *Aakrosh* and *Hirak Rajar Deshe* but they are exceptions. For the rest, there is the time honoured money-spinning formula of the 'family social'. There are changes in the packaging of this formula, but only in the superficial technical gloss. At its core there remains cloying sentimentality and tearjerking pathos.

Thus the Malayalam *Yagam* vacillates between the lyrical recreation of life in a conservative Brahmin family, and the by now mandatory political pitch. Consequently both family drama and the political theme are less than credible.

At the heart of this tale is a sensitive young poet whose restricting environment leads to his growing involvement with political extremism. The film reveals little concern with details of motivation—the young rebel could just as well have turned extremist from boredom as from any genuine disillusionment with the system.

To add to our general discomfort the director, Sivan, takes frequent recourse to the most maudlin sentimentality, meant to embody the human face of radical change. What it does is to dilute the intensity and achievement of the sacrifices (*yagam*) made by individuals in the pursuit of their political ideas, and make them seem like costly and wasteful blunders.

Anirban (Assamese) is the second film by Bhabendra Nath Saikia, one of the major creative writers in Assamese. The film is based on a short story written by the director and tells of the trials and tribulations in the life of a middle class couple. Actually sensitive to the social milieu of a small town, the film simultaneously tries to come to terms with issues of metaphysical import that are meant to be taken as the final

concern of all humans.

There is however the problem of a literary mind interacting with the language of cinema that tends to allow the director to indulge himself in a particular fashion. The end product could best be called a 'literary film'. *Anirban* is one such, overloaded with symbols, some overt and obtrusive, others less so. Consequently the film fairly labours under their burden and is unable to speak the language of cinema with any fluency. This apart, Saikia's film shines with earnestness and he extracts compelling performances from actors who are essentially newcomers to the medium.

Dedicated to the "cause of better Punjabi cinema" Chitarratha Singh's *Chann Pardesee* has gathered together some of the best acting talent in the country. The story that he unfolds before us is an old-fashioned one, a blood and thunder tale of Love, Lust, Dark Secrets and Revenge. In another context this would be called an "action-packed family drama".

On the positive side there are the polished performances by Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Om Puri and Rama Viji. They bring to their parts intelligence and understanding, qualities that are immediately communicated to the audience. The film is mounted on a scale that would do credit to the grand moghuls of Bombay: songs, stunts and dances abound. If that can be counted as an achievement, then *Chann Pardesee* is a landmark in Punjabi cinema. By any other standards of evaluation it is a pedestrian effort. The plot winds its way across a familiar and well trodden course. There is rape, revenge, blackmail—in short, the very stuff of high celluloid drama. And unfortunately, little else.

Nevertheless, even the storm and thunder of the drama of *Chann Pardesee* is poor preparation for the bizarre complexity of *Harishchandrudu* (Telugu). Only here there is an

Nargis Khatke



attempt to give the 'family drama' a somewhat contemporary flavour. This is done by recourse to a simple expedient: the villain of the piece is a greedy, lustful politician whose power-hungry predations bring destruction, destitution and ruin upon his entire family.

Harishchandrudu's is a Manichean world where there is only black and white, and grey is a dirty word. If it is meant as a damning portrayal of our political system and our politicians, it is overly simplistic and schematic. The theme politic in fact seems only a peg on which director U. Visweswar Row has hung the weepy sleeve of another family drama. And this from a director who has been awarded the national award the second year running.

Last year Tamil cinema gave us the refreshingly different *Pasi*, raising new hopes all around. Mercifully the promise held out has been sustained. In sharp contrast to the general trend in Indian cinema, this year's Tamil film too has a young woman at the heart of the film.

Nerjathai Killathe tells with warmth and feeling the story of a high-spirited young athlete and follows her through adolescence, love and betrayal. Suhasini as the young girl brings an artless charm and a disarming adolescent freshness that it heartwarming.

Nerjathai Killathe is not a film of great significance. But it possesses certain elementary attributes that make it stand out in the present circumstances—sensitivity, sophistication of ideas, and finally, good taste. Director Mahendran brings a mature hand and refined sensibility to work on this contemporary story of a young woman's search for identity. This he does without crassness or pathos, and for that alone we are grateful. If this film is the early offspring of the



celluloid union of Art and Commerce that we hear so much of these days, then it is certainly a welcome one.

Satyajit Ray's most recent film *Hirak Rajar Deshe* is a whimsical tale that essentially works at two levels. At one level it is musical film for children. It bubbles with extravagant sets, resplendent costumes and a musical score that does wonders for the spirit. From his earlier film for children, Ray resurrects Goopy and Bagha. Armed with a boon of three magical powers, Goopy the singer and Bagha the drummer, romp impishly through the film—part 'sutradhar' and part angels of mercy and justice. At another level the film works as a political parable.

As satire *Hirak Rajar Deshe* works much like Chaplin's 'Great Dictator', and is Ray's most directly political film to date. The Raja of Hirak is a ruthlessly exploitative tyrant who surrounds himself by fawning sycophants whose greed for money and power helps them to justify even the most reprehensible. Knowledge and learning have been forbidden by royal dictate, only the Raja's sayings are legitimate. Science too is a handmaiden of authoritarianism, aiding tyranny in the fiendish task of brainwashing the populace. The feeling of familiarity that Ray's film evokes about our recent past is anything but accidental.

In the ultimate analysis however, *Hirak Rajar Deshe* fails to work completely, either as a film for children or as a political parable. As a film for children the parody of a degenerate political system makes the film far too complex and subtle to be altogether successful. And as a political parable Ray's vision of the struggle against tyranny is too fantastical to be acceptable. For him the struggle against injustice triumphs only through the magical intervention of Goopy and Bagha, albeit aided by the peasants, the workers, the students and liberal intellectuals. The solution does not emerge from within the system. It is this failing that finally dilutes the political message of the film.

Perhaps the single most impressive film amongst the regional award winners this year is *Aakrosh*, cinematographer Govind Nihalani's first feature film. As a film *Aakrosh* works for many reasons, not the least of which is Vijay

Yagam



Tendulkar's story and screenplay. Tendulkar's story has an intrinsic strength and he tells it with a felt conviction. He has no qualms about his stance, which never descends to the empty posturing of a fashionable radical. The scenario is realistic, and one that suggests an awareness of the complexities of existence, and evinces a passionate response to events that are played out all too often in the daily drama that unfolds in our rural areas.

Hirak Rajar Deshe



A world of injustice and exploitation, where words like dignity and self-respect are devoid of any practical significance—this is the world of Lahanya Adivasi. Tendulkar does well to locate these in a framework that pays equal attention to the social, political, economic and moral dimensions. This is what makes the film both credible as well as meaningful. Even the portrayal of villainy brings home to us the very banality of the evil in our lives. The rapists here wear no horns, they are ordinary people, although members of a certain exploitative class.

Nihalani's treatment of a powerful theme is couched in the idiom of a suspense thriller. This is an effective skeleton on



which the director is able to flesh out his concerns, without necessarily resorting to tub-thumping overstatement. At the same time this strength is also its weakness. The thriller in *Aakrosh* finally detracts from the intensity of the experience of Lahanya Adivasi, leaving us with the somewhat dissatisfied feeling that the director is shying away from taking the issues into the open. But this apart *Aakrosh* is certainly the most powerful film in this year's selection of regional awards, and is the one film that leaves one both satisfied and provoked.

Nevertheless our genuine satisfaction at seeing a good film can hardly compensate for the fact that 1981 has been a very poor year for our regional cinema. What is even more chastening is that the films do not even allow us the luxury of hope. At least five of the films are firmly embedded in the familiar trap of our commercial cinema, and consequently share all its worst features. While one cannot deny these films their existence, we can certainly abstain from giving them the benefit of critical acclaim—even in the name of providing an impetus to "good films, with mass appeal."

—Sanjay Kak

AAKALER SANDHANE

Bengali/Colour/1980

Direction & Screenplay Mrinal Sen/*Production Company* D. K. Films Enterprise/*Producer* Dhiresk Kumar Chakraborty/*Story* Amalendu Chakraborty/*Photography* K. K. Mahajan/*Art Direction* Suresh Chandra/*Editing* Gangadhar Naskar/*Music* Salil Chowdhury/*Leading Players* Dhritiman Chatterjee, Smita Patil, Sreela Majumdar, Gita Sen, Dipankar Dey, Rajen Tarafder, Radhamohan Bhattacharya

A film crew comes to a village to make a film about a famine which killed five million people in 1943. It was a man-made famine, a side product of the war, and the film crew will create the tragedy of those millions who died of starvation.

The film documents the convivial life amongst the film crew and the hazards, problems and tensions of film-making on location. The actors live a double-life and the



villagers, both simple and not-so-simple folk, watch their work with wonder and amusement.

But, as the film progresses, the recreated past begins to confront the present. The uneasy co-existence of 1943 and 1980 reveals a bizarre connection, involving a village woman whose visions add a further dimension of time—that of the future. A disturbing situation, indeed, for the famine-seekers.



AAKROSH

Hindi/Colour/1980

Direction & Photography Govind Nihalani/*Production Company* Krana Movies Enterprise/*Producer* Devi Dutt/*Story & Screenplay* Vijay Tendulkar/*Editing* Keshav Naidu/*Audiography* Hitendra Ghosh/*Music* Ajit Varman/*Leading Players* Om Puri, Smita Patil, Naseeruddin Shah, Amrish Puri, Bhagyashri Kothnis, Arvind Deshpande, Mohan Agashe, Achut Potdar, Nana Palsikar

In the ominous silence of a dark moonless night, Lahanya Bhiku, a young tribal, lights the pyre of his wife, Nagi, whose dead body was found in an abandoned well near the village. As the flames rise, Lahanya is handcuffed and led away to the district prison; his old father and young teenage sister watch in silence. He is charged with the murder of his wife.

Bhaskar Kulkarni, a young middle-class lawyer at the threshold of his career, has been appointed by the State to defend Lahanya. This is Bhaskar's first important independent assignment and naturally he is anxious to win. He begins his investigations in right earnest, but is faced with a very strange situation right from the start. Lahanya

does not speak. He does not answer any of his questions. Bhaskar visits Lahanya's father, his sister, the villagers—everyone is silent.

Unknown to him, Bhaskar is being constantly watched and followed. Apparently unconcerned, the power elite of this district town continue to play their game of cards.

After a series of inexplicable incidents, Bhaskar comes to know the real story. In a shattering climax, he witnesses a unique gesture of protest by Lahanya. For Bhaskar it is a moment of truth.



ANIRBAN

Assamese/B & W/1980

Direction, Story & Screenplay Bhabendra Nath Saikia/*Producer* Smt. Preeti Saikia/*Photography* Indukalpa Hazarika/*Editing* Nikunja Bhattacharyya/*Audiography* Pijush Kanti Roy/*Music* Akhtar Khan/*Leading players* Bhola Kotoky, Runu Devi, Sangeeta Saikia, Utpal Chakravorty, Ananda Mohan Bhagawati, Babita Sarma, Kamini Barua

Rajani is a teacher in a primary school. He and Bhagyabati have been married a few years; but they have remained childless. The first baby was still-born and two children born later did not survive long after birth. They are now resigned to their fate.

As Rajani had been absenting himself from school due to his wife's poor health, the unsympathetic authorities give him the sack. He is forced to sell the land left by his father to a lawyer in the town. The lawyer also asks Rajani to tutor his young son. Things begin to look up somewhat for Rajani and his wife.

Bhagyabati is once more with child and this time the child survives. The baby, Nisha, is a source of great joy to them while she grows into her adolescence.

Rajani is getting old. One day, unable to solve an arith-

metical problem, he seeks help from Dibakar, his old pupil now studying in a college. Dibakar calls at his house when he is out and is received by Nisha. She feels drawn to the young and handsome boy. Dibakar begins to pay regular visits, guiding her in her studies. Soon people start talking about them and Rajani asks Dibakar to stop his visits.

Nisha is no longer her former merry self. She has lost the urge to go on living. She falls ill and dies. Rajani and Bhagyabati are childless again. In their desolation Dibakar is the only tangible, meaningful link to the memory of Nisha.

A few years later Dibakar gets married. The last scene shows old Rajani as a tutor to the five-years-old son of Dibakar.



BHAVNI BHAVAI

Gujarati/Colour/1980

Direction & Screenplay Ketan Mehta/Production Company Sanchar Film Cooperative Society Ltd./Photography Krishnakant "Pummy"/Editing Ramesh Asher/Art Direction Meera Lakshia/Music: Gaurang Vyas/Leading Players Naseeruddin Shah, Smita Patil, Mohan Gokhale, Om Puri, Dina Pathak, Suhasini Mulay, Benjamin Gillani

The 'Bhavai', a dying form of folk drama in Gujarat, synthesizes diverse performing arts into socially relevant communication. The film is based on one such ancient 'Bhavai' tale which tells of the exploitation of the untouchables.

A large group of the untouchables are migrating. Their houses were burnt down the previous night. An old man starts a stroy to console the restless children.

Long ago when the caste system was deeply entrenched, the lowest of the castes were dubbed untouchables. The upper castes enforced all kinds of restrictions and the untouchables were forced to wear a particular garb: a broom-like tail to wipe off their footprints, a clay spitoon around their neck, a third sleeve as a symbol of submission and only unwoven yarn as a headdress.

The narrator sings: Once upon a time there was a King who had two wives, but no children. The people were poor and hungry. The King is jubilant when the Old Queen gives birth to a son. But the New Queen conspires with the astrologer and the new born prince is declared unlucky and certain to bring death to the King. Two

soldiers put him in a box and dump it in the river. The child is found by an untouchable called Malo, who adopts him and calls him Jivo. Malo's house is burnt down in caste feuds. He migrates to the town and starts working on a well that the King is getting constructed to propitiate the planets. Jivo grows up into a handsome young man. He is spotted by the two soldiers and recognised. The news reaches the New Queen. She conspires with the astrologer again. The astrologer announces the need for a human sacrifice to bring water into the well and proclaims Jivo to be the right choice. Jivo surprises the King by setting some conditions. He demands that the garb of the untouchables be removed or else he will kill himself before the sacrifice. The King has to agree. Jivo is brought for the sacrifice. The two soldiers arrive on time and save Jivo by revealing the conspiracy. The narrator rounds up the story with a happy ending.

But the narrator's son intervenes at this point and proposes an alternative ending: Jivo is brought for the sacrifice. The soldiers do not come on time. Jivo is beheaded. The water still does not sprout. Malo, enraged at the inhumanity of it all, jumps into the well and dies. Before dying he curses the King.



CHAKRA

Hindi/Colour/1980

Direction & Screenplay Rabindra Dharmaraj/*Production Company* Neo Films/*Producers* Manmohan Shetty, Pradeep Uppoor/*Photography* Barun Mukherjee/*Art Direction* Bansi Chandragupta/*Editing* Bhanudas/*Music* Hridayanath Mangeshkar/*Leading Players* Smita Patil, Naseeruddin Shah, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Ranjit Chowdhry, Anjali Paigankar, Dilip Dhavan, Sevita Baji, Suhas Bhalekar

Young Benwa and his mother, Amma, live in a decrepit hut on a Bombay pavement. Amma dreams of escape from this miserable existence, of a shack of her own. Benwa's hero is Looka, the slum overlord—a god to his urchin admirers.

The film begins with a flashback. Amma is seen happily married to Sunka and they lead a peaceful life in a remote village. But the local money-lender has an eye on her and one day, while Sunka is away, attempts to rape her. Arriving on the scene, Sunka kills the money-lender in a fit of rage. They flee the village with their child and arrive in Bombay penniless. They start working as labourers on a road building site. Sunka is caught stealing tin sheets from a railway goods yard to build a shack for his family. He attempts to escape but is shot dead.



Time passes. Amma is now living in a slum off a busy highway in Bombay. She is helped by Looka, who is also her lover. Amma's other lover is a truck driver, Anna, who stops by occasionally between trips and with whom she plans to settle down.

Looka wants Benwa to join up with him, but Amma is not willing. Looka is exiled from Bombay, Benwa gets a job shining shoes, Amma gets pregnant by Anna. But their life is disrupted again when Looka reappears. His style of living has taken its toll and he is now reduced to a shadow of his former self. He needs drugs to alleviate the pain, but has no money to buy them. This leads him to kill a chemist. The police track him down to Amma's hut. Both Looka and Benwa are badly beaten up and arrested. During the scuffle, Amma has a miscarriage. Meanwhile the slum where they live is condemned. A bulldozer arrives to raze their dwellings to the ground.



CHANN PARDESEE

Punjabi/Colour/1980

Direction Chittratha Singh/Production Company G.G. Widescreens/
Producers Smt. Swarn Sedha, Baldev Gill, J.S. Cheema/Screenplay
Ravinder Peepat/Photography Manmohan Singh/Editing Subhash Seh-
gal/Audiography Bhanu Gupta/Music Surinder Kohli/Leading Players
Raj Babbar, Rama Vij, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Amrish Puri, Om Puri,
Rajni Sharma, Sushma Seth

Nek and Kammo, two lovers, work on the land of a jagirdar. The jagirdar's evil eye fall on Kammo. He sends his man, Tulsu, with a proposal to make her his mistress. When she refuses, the jagirdar rapes her, while Nek is away, with the connivance of Tulsu and she conceives. Kammo decides to commit suicide, but Tulsu dissuades her.

On his return Nek is granted some land by the jagirdar in order to marry and settle down. An overjoyed Nek does not give Kammo a chance to speak till they are married. In due course Kammo bears a son.

On a festive night Nek overhears Dayala talking loosely about Kammo. When he questions Kammo, she has no alternative but to tell the truth. Enraged, Nek goes to attack the jagirdar, but is beaten up and thrown in the canal. He is saved by a gang of dacoits. He returns to kill the jagirdar, but it is Dayala who gets killed. Nek is arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment.



An innocent Kammo suffers for twenty long years. Her son, Lali, is grown up now. Nimmo, the lively daughter of a hawaldar, is in love with Lali. But he is attracted to a girl in his college. The girl, Channi, is no other than the jagirdar's daughter. So Kammo has to tell Lali that he cannot marry Channi as she is his sister.

Nek, free now after completing his term, attacks the jagirdar's house and is shot by the police. He is saved by a girl who comes into his life as an angel.

The jagirdar is left with no money to marry off his daughter. Lali sells his land and comes forward with the money for Channi's marriage. Tulsu tries to run away with the money. The jagirdar kills him, is arrested and sent to jail.

Channi's 'doli' is going out. Nek strikes for the last time, when he realises that Channi is the girl who saved his life. Shattered, he is about to leave, when he is confronted by Kammo and Lali. Finally, Nek accepts both of them.



HARISCHENDRUDU

Telegu/B & W/1980

Direction & Screenplay U. Visweswar Rao/*Production Company* Viswa Sarathi Movies/*Producer* U. D. Murali Krishna/*Photography* Mohan Krishna/*Editing* R. Hanumantha Rao/*Music* T. Chalapati Rao/*Leading Players* M. Prabhakara Reddy, Jayachitra, Krishnan Raju, Rajagopal, N. V. S. Prasada Rao, Baby Poomima

Parameswara Rao, an unscrupulous politician, hankers after sex, power and possession. He has no consideration for his friend Harischendrudu, his ailing wife Bhanumathi, and his only daughter Vijaya. He does not even spare the maid-servant, Manikkam.

Parameswara Rao mortgages his property to stand for election. Harischendrudu sponsors a young leader, Suresh Kumar, against him. Suresh Kumar wins and Parameswara Rao takes revenge on Harischendrudu by setting fire to his house. Harischendrudu's daughter Malathi dies, his son Chiranjeevi and wife Satyavathi are severely burnt.

Harischendrudu starts operating a crematorium on lease to earn a living. He starts by cremating an unclaimed dead body.



One day he is shocked to see Vijaya's dead body brought to his crematorium, and he also learns of the death of his own son. They were engaged to get married and now their bodies are buried in the same pit.

Parameswara Rao is hard pressed for money. To appease his creditors, he sends the maid-servant Manikkam to his bed. She escapes and now she wants to leave Parameswara Rao. He begs her to stay and she relents.

He is then evicted by the creditor and takes shelter in a dilapidated temple with Manikkam. There he repents of his misdeeds and, finally, dies.

Nobody comes forward to help Manikkam to perform the last rites. Ultimately she drags the dead body to Harischendrudu's crematorium. But even he refuses to cremate him. He throws the dead body into the sea.



HIRAK RAJAR DESHE

Bengali/Colour/1980

Direction, Story, Screenplay, Costumes & Music Satyajit Ray/*Producer* Information & Cultural Affairs Department, Government of West Bengal/*Photography* Soumendu Ray/*Editing* Dulal Dutta/*Art Direction* Satyajit Ray, Ashok Bose/*Leading Players* Tapan Chatterjee, Robi Ghosh, Utpal Dutt, Santosh Dutt, Soumitra Chatterji.

Granted three wishes by the benign King of the Goblins, Goopy and Bagha can get food and clothes for the asking, hold people spellbound with their singing and drumming, and travel to any place in the twinkling of an eye by putting on their magic slippers.

Married to the two daughters of the King of Shundi, Goopy and Bagha have been leading an uneventful life when they receive an invitation from the King of HIRAK who is celebrating his accession to the throne.

Named after the diamond mine that is its main source of wealth, HIRAK is a police state ruled by a tyrant king. A crazy inventor has just built a brainwashing machine which turns dissenters into loyal subjects by having rhymed couplets fed into their brains.

The king has also ordered the closure of the only school in HIRAK, run by an idealist teacher named Udayan.



Learning helps one to distinguish between right and wrong, and this the king doesn't want. Sensing that he may be captured and brainwashed too, Udayan goes into hiding and plots to dethrone the king.

Singing their way around the country, Goopy and Bagha chance upon Udayan in a mountain cave. Udayan learns that Goopy and Bagha have been invited to HIRAK, and tells them the real story about HIRAK and its ruler.

The three decide to team up and bring about the downfall of the tyrant.

The planned uprising nearly fails when Udayan is captured by the police, but Goopy and Bagha, aided by their magical music-making, finally succeed in freeing Udayan and thwarting the king. Victory is achieved by them with the help of the peasants, the mine workers and Udayan's young pupils.



MAINA TADANTA

Bengali/B & W/1980

Direction, Production, Story, Screenplay, Art Direction & Music Utpalendu Chakraborty/*Production Company* Abhishek Productions/*Photography* Pantu Nag/*Editing* Bulu Ghosh/*Leading Players* Nilkantha Sen Gupta, Reba Ray Chowdhury, Manoj Mitra, Malabika Chakraborty, Rudraprasad Sen Gupta

Bhola Shabar, the unruly son of a poor tribal widow, enjoys roaming in the reserved forest with his girl friend, Chinta, daughter of a clay-modeller. One day he is beaten up by the forest guard and brought before the local landlord for justice. With a view to tame the little savage, the landlord employs him as a servant. Estranged from his mother and his girlfriend, he feels lonely, but wins the confidence of his master for his services.

The landlord trains him up to serve all his interests. He even teaches him how to handle a rifle and one day asks him to use it in order to evict the Santhals who plough the land that the landlord has taken on lease from the forest department. Bhola refuses to obey his master; for one thing, he is a friend of the poor Santhals; for another,

Bhola has decided to elope with Chinta who is about to be married off to a man of her own caste. But when Chinta comes, Bhola loses courage. He gives vent to his anger by beating up the forest guard who is caught in the act of making indecent advances to a Santhal girl. This lands him in jail. Released, he comes back to his village, a ghost of his former self, suffering from gastric ulcer. Because he is jobless, he has to depend on his old mother who frantically searches for food. When finally she manages to get some rice, she finds her son lying dead in the forest. The forest guard and the village counsellor send the dead body to the police station, suspecting it to be a case of suicide. The post-mortem report confirms that it is really a case of death due to starvation.



NENJATHAI KILLATHE.

Tamil/Colour/1980

Direction, Story & Screenplay J. Mahendran/Production Company Devi Films Private Ltd./Producer K.Rajagopal Chetty/Photography Ashok Kumar/Editing A. Paul Duraisingh/Audiography S.P. Ramanathan/Art Direction A. Ramaswamy/Music Ilayaraja/Leading Players Suhasini, Pratap, Mohan, Sarat Babu

Viji, an athlete, practices daily in the early hours, unaware of Ram, also a keen athlete, who keeps following her. Viji's brother, Chandrasekhar, makes fun of her enthusiasm for sports. Her sister-in-law dislikes her.

The friendship between Viji and Ram soon turns into love and, though Ram is not well off, Viji readily agrees to marry him.

Pratap, a close relative of Viji, yearns in silence for her. When Ram's parents ask for Viji's hand for their son, Chandrasekhar's wife sullies Viji's name. A weak-kneed Ram also believes the story.

Viji is forced by her brother to marry Pratap, but this union is a failure. Pratap fails to get her love and affection. Ram marries a rich girl and comes to live in a flat next to Pratap's. Viji is jealous of Ram's new found happiness.

Despite his love for her, Pratap gets no response from Viji. Broken-hearted, he decides to leave for Calcutta. When Ram learns this, he invites Viji to her flat and she finds that his wife is an invalid. Viji realises her folly and rushes to the airport.



OPPOL

Malayalam/Colour/1980

Direction K.S. Sethumadhavan/Producer Smt. Rosamma George/Story & Screenplay M.T. Vasudevan Nair/Photography Madhu Ambat/Editing T.R. Srinivasulu/Art Direction Kitho/Music M.B. Srinivasan/Leading Players Balan K. Nair, Sanakaradi, Jos Praksah, Menaka, Kaviyur Ponnamma, Master Aravind, Master Sivaprasad, Master Joshi

Oppol is the story of six-year-old Appu—his dreams, aspirations and disappointments. For him his Oppol (elder sister) Malu is the embodiment of everything that is good and his grandmother, Narayani Amma, just the opposite. A source of happiness to him is Thami, the cowherd boy. Kunjan Nair, a regular visitor to the house, is the only person who takes him out.

Lots of things the grown-ups talk about and do are quite puzzling to Appu. He is also scared of his grand uncle, who always stands outside the gate and never enters the house.

Returning home one day after school he finds that Malu is missing. He learns from Thami that she left with Kunjan Nair. He runs to the temple, where he finds Malu standing beside a tough looking man, both garlanded. Everybody is surprised to see Appu there. Kunjan Nair saves the situation saying that Appu is the child of Malu's deceased elder sister and it is Malu who brought him up after her death.



Govindan Kutty, the groom, volunteers to take Appu with them. Appu wonders what hold this stranger has on Malu and he never lets her out of sight. The boy intrudes on the intimate moments of the couple. Govindan Kutty is irritated; Malu is in a dilemma.

Appu learns how to shoot arrows from Nambi, a tribal boy. He tries to use it on Govindan Kutty as Rama did, to eliminate the demons, with disastrous results. Malu is very cross with him and turns her full attention to Govindan Kutty.

Appu feels neglected and runs away. Malu starts a frantic search for him. Finally Nambi finds him in a delirious state in a cave.

Now Malu has to make a crucial decision—whether to stay with her husband or leave him. The truth comes out, Appu is Malu's son. Malu leaves the house with Appu.



YAGAM

Malayalam/B & W/1980

Director & Photography Sivan/Production Company Saritha Films/Producer B. Chandramani Bai/Story N. Mohan/Screenplay K.S. Namboothiri/Editing Suresh/Art Direction Surendran/Music M.G. Radhakrishnan/Leading Players Babu Namboothiri, Premji, John Samuel, Jalaja, Kalpana, Sreelatha

Unni, a middle-class Namboodiri youth, is more of a poet than a revolutionary. Disillusioned with the social set-up and frustrated at the inadequacies of the political movement of which he is apart, he is slowly drawn towards an extremist group which has taken to violence. He discontinues his studies, much to the disappointment of his widowed mother and other members of his family.

Unni obeys all party mandates in spite of his own misgivings about them. Even the cold-blooded liquidation of a fellow-worker accused of vacillation does not deter him.

A notorious landlord of the locality is the victim of the group's first "action". His comrades help Unni to escape as he is in charge of the second "action", while most of the activists are nabbed by the police.

Unni reaches Madurai, the scene of the next "action". He stays in the house of Muniswamy, a poor factory worker.

He picks up a friendship with Muniswamy's little daughter, Kannamma, who reminds him of his own sister.

The plan of the "action" is to blow up the railway bridge the moment the train, aboard which the minister is travelling, enters the bridge. He leaves behind a comrade to set off the explosion, because he must make good his escape from the city before the news of the sabotage spreads.

It is the night of the Karthika celebration—the Festival of Lights. Back at Muniswamy's house to pick up his things, he finds little Kannamma at the foot of the stairs eagerly waiting for her father to return from the suburban factory.

Then he learns that Muniswamy is coming by the same train they have arranged to blow up. He goes back in a desperate bid to stave off the explosion. But it is too late.



The Year of the Two-Reelers

To go by the awards, it has been a year of rather longish short films, supported in turn by strong corporate financial backing. This bespeaks an extremely welcome sign of creative commitment for endeavours that have little or no motivation in commercial gain, in so far as the exercise is not in support of consumer crusades. The award-winning films, with the honourable exception of Mani Kaul's ascerbic exposition in motion, alas give little evidence of such a backing having led to a more daring approach, in concept and form.

In the context of the Indian film scene, specially in the commercial screening of films, the short film is not a paying proposition for anyone, not even for the soft-drink, toothpaste and whitening-cream manufacturers, who have never gone further than including ad films as only part of the major package campaign which is heavily dependent on the static image, the words of a printed page and the ubiquitous hoarding. At another level, government has discovered that the only way to ensure that its own short films are screened is by invoking its rule-making powers and making it mandatory for theatre owners to donate a certain amount of time before a feature film to them. Even this does not guarantee that the film will be seen by the people who have learnt to pay attention to the screen only when the credits of the main picture flash on the white expanse, and their favourite stars pirouette in the style they have paid to see.

It would almost seem that short films are being produced as a symbol of defiance against the total lack of interest in them. In the straight jacket that these factors impose, it is not too surprising that the year's films show little innovation. Perhaps we really need an organisation on the lines of the National Film Board of Canada to elevate the short film into an end in itself, not a mere trailer or a heart-rending proof that the film maker wanted to continue, but ran out of cash and raw stock.

To dwell on the truism of the genre, a short film is not merely a limitation of length. The limit of time imposes a new set of rules, a new language altogether with its own grammar and syntax, its own idioms, and even its own clichés. It is a heady set of restrictions that have brought out, in the past, a rare excellence in Indian film makers. Two memorable instances from the past have been the searing verité of *Burning Stone*, a Films Division award winner of yesteryear that jolted the intellect with its ruthless, unvarnished insight into the soul-traps of the coal-fields, and the internationally honoured instructional film on pisci-culture which made the artificial fertilisation of fish roe and nurturing of the fishlings into a thing of exquisite visual beauty. The present lot of shorts do not

match these two, but in their own way, speak immaculately of the brave Indian short film maker.

As a group, *Daldal*, *Arrival* and *Tragedy of Gendi* share a common thematic endeavour in social comment, but the treatment that each director or creator has brought to bear on the subject proves an index more of his motivation than of his talent. In addition, *Gendi* provokes strong questions on the ethics of photo-journalism in the context of existing laws of jurisprudence. But within this, the three films also give a very wholesome example of the range of approaches that can be brought to bear on a subject that can so easily lull the artist into inane philosophising, with platitudes and clichés outmanoeuvring originality and integrity.

Daldal gives a visual summary of the crux of the Gandhi Peace Foundation's disturbing research on the continued existence and proliferation of bonded labour in this country, even after 34 years of independence. It reflects a happy menage a trois of cinema verité, the classical "soothradhar" of the natya-shastra and the dramatisation of the neo-realistic feature. But for certain offences by the sound track and a typical blandness in the cinematography, which tries its damndest to make space two-dimensional, *Daldal* is a potent and effective denouncement without many platitudes, with a minimum of simplification and fortunately, without a trace of patronising self-congratulation on behalf of the government.

The sharp commentary has a startling and refreshing crispness that cover up for lapses in the cinematography and the amateur cast of the re-enacted incidents. "India ... this two faced land—where independence is

Daldal



celebrated, and bonded labour too" are the opening words. It goes to director Dixit's credit that he manages this contrast throughout the film. In a series of quick cameos (in the opening scene, the words are State: Gujarat. The Accused: Chandu. The offence: his desire to be free, as images flash of a man tied at a stake and flogged close to death) Dixit presents a shattering montage on the life and times of 27 lakh helpless latter-day slaves, their lives not their own, their labour their chain of bondage and their children not-so-fatted calves destined for sacrifice at the same altar of the same primeval god of poverty.

The government efforts, the passing of laws, do not seem to have any effect, and the bright rays of occasional crusades—which are honestly presented—become the exceptions proving the strength of the rule. A man wants to sell his son to get money to bury his dead mother. The child whimpers. The nation asks: why not borrow from a nationalised bank? "Will they give me the money just now?" "No. But the landlord will". The rays of hope are meritorious in their own right, like Amasingh, a former bonded labourer and now a member of parliament. But all the Chandus overshadow his achievement. They still remain in bondage.

Dixit's dexterity comes to the fore in the conception of the commentator, the reporter on the spot, the nation's conscience, so to speak. But he is not an intruder, and his presence perhaps is the factor that brings a jolting realism to the re-enactments that dramatise the real-life incidents.

The Tragedy of Gendi dwells on another national malaise—currently known as bride-killing. The two news-cameramen, Sinha and Rao, re-create a murder that took place in Samodh, a village 12 km from Jaipur, on 12 February this year. A man came and reported that his wife and infant son had fallen into a well and were dead. The police recovered the bodies, found they had been murdered, and logically arrested the man, his father and

mother for killing her because she did not bring an adequate dowry. The re-enactment is dramatic as it goes, an illustrated magazine article which contains forensic information, social comment and food for thought. It however raises a very serious question of journalistic integrity and ethics. It is not made clear, but the film's endeavour leads one to believe that the two cameramen want to highlight the 'realism' in the situation, that the dramatis personae in the film are the actual persons involved in the crime. Two aspects need to be questioned. If these are the main suspects, what is the propriety of making them re-enact the alleged crime? If they are not, then the entire exercise becomes one of prejudicing the case on police information even before a court of law has held them guilty beyond the shadow of a doubt. Is this a trial by the public and not by the law? Who gave the film makers the right to be judge, whatever the provocation and however heinous the crime? And lastly, have the rights of the suspects (and even convicted criminals have basic rights) been violated? This is extremely tricky ground, and needs thinking over before eager and enterprising film makers make a mockery of justice under the crusading guise of expose. Mani Kaul's *Arrival* makes its social comment in cinema's own language, borrowing little from the grammar of the written word. Produced by Mushir Ahmad with Purush Baokar at the camera and M. J. Baburao at the sound controls, *Arrival* finds Kaul in a dazzling display of bravura cinematography. Kaul—perhaps one of India's only two or three experimentors who are trying to create for cinema a language and vocabulary all its own, without roots and bindings in the more established art forms of theatre and prose—has so far led the lonely existence that is the fate of men who are the first of their kind. In *Arrival*, Kaul establishes for his critics that he is a superior and refined craftsman steeped in the classics of currently known concepts of form, and if he dares venture into the abstracts of the beyond, it is not to escape the rigours of the traditional.

In a honed collage, superbly rounded off with a compatible soundtrack, Mani Kaul machineguns the audience with a series of images that highlight the contradictions of the urban ethos of our times. It is a contrast and a one-ness that Kaul establishes between the metaphors of hungry men moving the city for food, and of the vegetables, the condemned goats and sheep in the abattoir. Mechanisation, repetition that numbs and deadens awareness, on a remarkable turn-about become stinging adjectives that carry Kaul's angry blast at the reduction of the human into a commodity.

The images are full of colour, ironically even full of life though he is filming the macabre routineness of death in a slaughterhouse. Kaul experiments with motion and movement, both of the camera and within the frame. Perhaps to the fans of his alter-ego, of the iconoclastic alchemist seeking the secrets of cinema, this is not agree-

Arrival



able, but Kaul has nonetheless made his point. *The Day of the Dark Sun*, by the Films Division, records the sensation of an extra-terrestrial drama of biblical magnitude—the total solar eclipse seen in India after many a decade. As wits said when the eclipse was a day away "Indians will take a holy dip and shut their eyes in fear as the world enjoys the most beautiful phenomenon open to man's eye". Very few Indians could really see the fully eclipsed sun displaying its wonderous luminous corona and the rare diamond ring effect as the moon disk passed across the face of the white ball of fire. Using many cameras, the Films Division team give a fair picture of the scientific activity that followed the eclipse, and a near complete record of the eclipse itself, from first contact through totality and onto the end. The high drama comes through, as does much of the awe and the suspense and the cultural impact. But the film has its flaws, unfortunately in the one aspect which cannot be corrected till the next eclipse is seen many years from now. The fault may lie in the lens or the raw stock, but the corona itself comes out very pale, and the diamond ring less than sparkling. One has seen better segments on the same eclipse.

Mariculture reminds one of the information-packed beauty of an earlier film almost on the same subject. Director Paulose obviously has done considerable research in the manifold activities that have been launched to harvest the riches of the seas and the rivers to better advantage, he brings to his job an eye for detail and a sensitivity for colours, shapes, texture and movement. The film is really engrossing as it details exotica for the expert and the layman (whose contact with sea food is only at the table) beginning with how to 'grow' fish in a pond, on to the breeding and care of prawns and the harvesting of sea-weeds in an intriguing process that comes closest to the idler's dream of growing rich doing nothing. The tedium in the film results from the film maker's desire to encompass everything in one short

Mariculture



film. Too ambitious a project, the over-view is grand, but leaves one hungering for more of each separate morsel. *Oil Offshore* is the story of oil, a fascinating subject in itself, and the story of the national search for more of it. This is of interest to anyone who lights a stove, or travels by a bus, for oil is getting scarce and its import threatens bankruptcy. Director Satya Prakash documents the national search for oil and gives a crash course in the technology of this search, as culminating in an off-shore rig in the Mahanadi basin on the Orissa coast. He takes the viewer to the air, and on to the rig, buffeted by high winds and dangerous waves, conveying much of the excitement, some of the rigours and much of the hope that moves the men in their strange machines. It is a travelogue of a nation's journey into self-sufficiency. And that is heady.

The Chola Heritage by Malayam cinema's pathfinder, Adoor Gopalkrishnan, is an academician's lecture-hall talk for laymen, profusely illustrated with slides. That is the danger when dealing with the static lines of history, specially of architecture. It is spell-binding if you are interested in history, particularly the history of south India. It is positively encyclopaedic for those interested in the Chola empire. But to the layman, who does not know that the Nataraja statue that decorates his drawing room is perhaps the finest of bronzes on earth, the film promises an eye-opening introduction to the roots of Indian civilisation.

Pampa on the other hand is a lively, frisky film with the camera hop-step-and-jumping to keep pace with the energetic young heroine as she takes brush to hand and paints with inspired frenzy. The young girl is a charming personality and even when the off-screen narration displays adult predilections and weaknesses in pomposity, our heroine does not. This is a girl so easy to identify with, even if only in wish fulfilment. Director Sharma and cameraman H. R. Doreswamy obviously love children.

—John Dayal

New Magazine No. 3



ARRIVAL

English/Colour
Direction Mani Kaul/Production Films Division, Govt of India/
Photography Purush Beekar/Editing K. M. Nayak/Sound M. J. Beburao/
Music Raghunath Seth/Words Lalita Kaul/Voice Luku Sanyal

A candid study of the bustling metropolis of Bombay and the faceless crowds that constitute its labour force.



DALDAL

Hindi/B & W
Direction & Screenplay Pradeep Dixit/Producer Krystyna Khote/Photography Ram Agarwal/Editing Sayeed Jawed/Music Sudhir Moghe

A commentary on the malaise of bonded labour, based on incidents reported in "A National Survey of Bonded Labour" by the Gandhi Peace Foundation.



MARICULTURE

English/Colour

Direction C. J. Paulose/Production Films Division, Govt. of India/Script B. K. Bhan/Photography S. R. Naidu/Editing I. M. Vakil/Sound D. S. Saini/Music Satish Bhata/Words Neethi Ravindran/Voice Romesh Thapar

The film stresses the need to augment the dwindling resources of the sea—to shift from mindless exploitation to scientific culture. It underlines the role played by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute in this field.



OIL OFFSHORE

English/Colour

Direction & Editing Satya Prakash/Producer Prem Prakash/Photography R. K. Bose/Music Cedric Narsimharaj

The film is on offshore oil exploration on the eastern coast—in the Bay of Bengal, off Orissa—undertaken by Oil India Limited. It covers the different stages of the project and underlines the magnitude of the task.



INDIAN NEWS REVIEW NO. 1657
(Tragedy of Gendi)

English/B & W
Production Films Division, Govt. of India/Photography M. P. Sinha,
Rajgopal Rao/Chief Editor V. D. More/Recordist A. V. Bhashyam/Music
K. Narayanan/Words & Voice Zul Vellani

The newsreel covers a dowry murder in the village of
Samodh in Rajasthan.



NEWS MAGAZINE NO. 3 (DAY
OF THE DARK SUN)

English/Colour
Production Films Division, Govt. of India/Made by N. S. Thapa, M. S.
Pendutkar, C. K. Madhav Rao, C. Ramani, B. S. V. Murthy, B. K.
Parthasarathy, Saïyed Ahmad, M. A. Narvekar, M. S. P. Haran, R. G.
Chendwankar, K. Narayanan

The film covers the total solar eclipse on the 16th Febru-
ary, 1980 and the religious rituals and scientific investiga-
tions performed on that day.



THE TALKING, SINGING THIRTIES

"You ain't heard nothin' yet", said Al Jolson in the world's first talking feature film *The Jazz Singer*, premiered in New York in October 1927. Throughout 1928, Bombay's film trade press hungrily reported accounts of Hollywood's experiments with sound. The end of the silent film seemed at hand, but this may not have caused too much distress at a time when the Indian film, despite some impressive achievements, always ran a poor second to foreign films in India. (Only 15% of the features released in India in 1926-27 were Indian.)

In 1929, Madan Theatres of Calcutta premiered the American *Melody of Love*, the first talking feature to be shown in India. Soon afterwards, the vast resources of Madan Theatres were pressed into building a soundproof stage on the outskirts of Calcutta, thus initiating the race to be the first Indian film production company to make a sound film. Madan Theatres did indeed win the race by producing the first sound short early in February 1931 (though according to some accounts, this honour was shared with a rival company, Krishna Movietone, who premiered its talking shorts on the same day). But the more substantial achievement of making the first talking feature belongs to Ardeshir Irani and another film company, Imperial of Bombay. On March 14, 1931, as Madan Theatres was regaling a Calcutta audience with a new programme of 31 talkie shorts (including such items as *Lady worshippers at the temple of Shiva*, a dance by *The Corinthian Girls*, and a speech by the physicist and nobel laureate C.V. Raman), Imperial released *Alam Ara* in Bombay. Madan Theatres followed with *Jamai Sasthi* in Bengali five weeks later. The sound era had arrived.

For a film industry that had to struggle against the competition of imported films in the 1920s, the coming of sound brought several important results. Chiefly, the use of an Indian language offered a natural protection against the foreign film, and brought about a phenomenal growth in production. In the year of *Alam Ara*, 22 other Hindi films were made, but also 3 in Bengali and one each in Tamil and Telugu. The next year, in 1932, the production of sound features continued to grow (though the silent film was still far from extinct), and Marathi and Gujarati films had joined the babel of tongues. By 1933, the number of Hindi talkies alone had grown to 75, and in the last year of the decade, the total number of films produced was 171. In these nine years, the Indian film industry had made films in 17 different languages, including Burmese, Arabic, Persian and even Malay. In the conditions of unbounded optimism that characterised the Indian film industry in the 30s, "You ain't heard nothin' yet" seemed almost an understatement.

The coming of sound and the consequent rise of regional cinema completely altered the production structure of Indian films. In the heady, pioneering days of the 1920s, little production companies had sprouted in the unlikely places, even in Gaya and Nagercoil. Inevitably, lacking technical facilities and experience, many of these ventures were fly-by-night operations, and many perished as quickly as they had sprung up. The recording and synchronising of a sound track, however, called for greater technical skills and resources, and probably discouraged many would-be investors who might have been inclined, in an earlier time, to have a bash at making a film. As the '30s ground on, the production of talkies came increasingly to be concentrated in the hands of the "big" studios in Calcutta, Bombay, and later in Madras, each one with its own language specialisation (though the Hindi market remained a prime target and accounted for the fact that most movies were made in double, or even triple, language versions).

In order to understand the ethos of film making in the '30s, it is useful to get to know some of the personalities who manned the three major studios during this period. The premier production house for Eastern India was New Theatres, founded in 1930 by B. N. Sircar. A building engineer by profession, and the son of the Advocate-General of Bengal, Sircar soon discovered an aptitude for the role of a cinema impresario. Two not very distinguished silent films notwithstanding, by 1931 Sircar had built and equipped a sound studio and laboratory in

Achut Kanya



Calcutta, and began recruiting a nucleus of talent that would soon propel New Theatres to the forefront of the sound cinema industry. Perhaps because Sircar was content to be an impresario and did not direct or act himself, he was better able to attract men of exceptional talent and ambition to work with him. One of the first to join was Debaki Bose—he too had a not very remarkable beginning directing silent films, but working with sound, he found his metier almost immediately. His first venture was *Chandidas* in Bengali which, released in 1932, caused a sensation throughout Bengal. Seeing *Chandidas* today, the ecstatic response of 1932 is a little difficult to understand but it does, I suppose, take a feat of the imagination to put oneself in the position of a spectator of that period. In any event, by the mid-1930s, when the practice of making double-language versions had become more general, Debaki Bose had emerged as a director of all-India standing.

The real star of the New Theatres stable was an endearingly flamboyant character called "Prince" (P.C.) Barua. Like Sircar and Bose, he too had dabbled in the silent film with no notable success, but he was catapulted to fame with *Devdas*, which he directed in both its Bengali and Hindi versions. Once again, the phenomenal success of the Hindi *Devdas* (in which Saigal played the title role) is today somewhat difficult to comprehend; it appears maudlin and sentimental to a fault, and Saigal's performance (this was his first film) is simply dreadful. Yet, it is a sobering thought that the ingredients of *Devdas*—the romantic-tragic hero, the languorous tones of unrequited love, the hero's slow decline to dissipation, and death—seemed to have fulfilled the expectations of its middle-class audience at the time to perfection.

Prince Barua went on to make a number of other popular successes, most of which he not only directed but wrote

Karma



and played the lead in as well. Both on screen and in the popular versions of his private life, Barua lived up to the heroic image which he had done so much to create. In Calcutta he lived to the hilt the role of a self-indulgent prince—he would be seen driving around the city in a custom-built Fascinni with a tame leopard on the back seat! He was reputed to be a crack shot, with over fifty tigers in his 'bag'. On one occasion, he wanted to shoot a rhino; upon being told that rhino-shooting was prohibited and carried a fine of five hundred rupees, he promptly paid the fine first, and then went out and bagged his rhino! More than any other single person, it was Prince Barua who gave shape to the screen image of the doomed hero in its standard Indian version, and Barua himself, with his broad forehead, his slight build and consumptive chest, and not least, his hard drinking (which eventually killed him), expressed the romantic-tragic ideal to perfection. Barua died in 1951, but his best work was already accomplished by 1940, so that like all the other great names of this period (except Shantaram), he belongs solely to the distinctive decade of the 30s.

Meanwhile, in Bombay, Himansu Rai had founded Bombay Talkies in 1934. Rai had embarked on a film career a decade earlier by persuading the Emelka Film Company of Munich to collaborate on a (silent) film about the Buddha's life. Rai raised funds for location shooting in India, and Emelka agreed to do the rest. *The Light of Asia* eventually opened to a grand reception all over Europe, but it failed to recoup its Indian investment from the Indian market, and Rai turned increasingly to Europe both for inspiration and funds. Two further Indo-German films followed, both successful. Then, in 1930, Rai launched his first sound film, *Karma*, this time with British money and crew. Starring Devika Rani (who was by now his wife) and himself *Karma* was begun on location in Partapgarh, and completed in Hindi and English versions on sound stages in England. I hesitate to say this, but

Karma seems trivial and utterly devoid of merit today — yet, the success of its Hindi version attracted Indian investors and catapulted Devika Rani to stardom and fame. More important, it allowed Bombay Talkies to be launched the following year.

By 1935, Bombay Talkies was the best equipped studio in the country. Franz Osten, the German director who had worked on three of Rai's previous films (though not *Karma*) joined the staff, along with a few others from Germany (notably, the cameraman Josef Wirsching) and England, and over four hundred Indian artists and technicians. The next year, Bombay Talkies premiered *Achut Kanya*, beautifully photographed by Wirsching and lovingly directed by Osten, and this was only the beginning of a string of successes. For a decade, Bombay Talkies' output (roughly three films a year) set standards of technical values and a gentle, fluid treatment of theme that were the envy of film makers everywhere else in the country. I am tempted to believe that Osten and his technicians had a lot to do with setting the technical standards, but most accounts of this period have tended to say very little of their role.

Himansu Rai died in 1940, and Devika Rani carried on in his place till she retired in 1945. With the post-war years, Bombay Talkies changed beyond recognition, and though the company lingered on until 1952, it had already, a decade earlier, lost its creative impetus. In one respect, however, Bombay Talkies lived on through the results of its training programme—Ashok Kumar, Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar and K. A. Abbas had all started their careers unpretentiously with Bombay Talkies in the 30s.

The Prabhat Film Company, founded in Kolhapur in 1929, started out with none of the advantages of New Theatres or Bombay Talkies. It began unceremoniously in a tin shack, with no capital resources and no facilities of any kind. Shantaram had learned his craft the hard way, as an apprentice and odd-job boy on the studio floor. Together with Damle and Fatehlal, he was determined to make up in spirit and determination what they lacked in material resources. The safest subject for any film company to tackle in those days was mythological and devotional themes, and Prabhat's first few silent films, if not particularly noteworthy, nevertheless encouraged their makers to further efforts. In 1932, Shantaram made *Ayodhya Raja* in Marathi and then in Hindi, and immediately won wide recognition. The following year, Prabhat moved to Poona, and could now afford to build its own spacious studios, complete with a zoo that housed tigers and elephants!

In 1936, Damle and Fatehlal made *Sant Tukaram* which won an award at Venice. Shantaram followed with a number of bold, innovative 'social' films, whose thrust seemed to be a forceful rebuttal of the New Theatres brand of 'pessimism'. Prabhat had come to represent a

very distinctive genre of film making by the end of the decade.

Shantaram eventually broke with Damle and Fatehlal and left Prabhat to form his own production company in 1941. Like Bombay Talkies and New Theatres, Prabhat too appears to have reserved its best years for the 30s. Yet, of all the towering figures who emerged in this period, Shantaram alone went on to continue his successes in another age, another climate of film making, after the war.

Devdas



It is worth noticing a few other aspects of the Indian film in the 30s: we have already noted that the arrival of the talkie had brought about a drastic change of personnel and a new production structure in the industry. The change was best exemplified by the new faces who were recruited to play the female leads. Because of the traditional stigma attached to the performing arts in India, it had always been very difficult to persuade 'decent' Hindu girls to appear on stage or the screen. The Parsi Theatre had merely adopted the convention of folk drama and used men dressed up as women, but this could not be a satisfactory solution for the early silent screen. As a result, the cinema recruited Anglo-Indian and Christian girls, who did not share the prejudices attached to the performing arts. The best known names among the actresses of the silent era, even though they were made to sound Hindu, were really Christian—Sita Devi (Renee Smith), Sulochana (Ruby Meyers), Madhuri (Beryl Claessen), Lalita Devi (Bonnie Bird), Indira Devi (Effie Hippolet)—such was the nature of the charade. But this solution ceased to work with the talkie, when an ability to speak with the right accent in an Indian language became important, and most of these names disappeared. (Sulochana—Ruby Meyers—was one notable survivor.)

Sant Tukaram



Furthermore, an actress' ability to sing became of paramount importance, and the search for new talent led naturally to the red-light district and nautch-houses of the major Indian towns. Here, the talent scouts were on the look out for a pleasing face (and figure), an acceptable Hindi-Urdu accent, but above all, singing talent, and it is from these places that the majority of talkie films found their heroines. Two women, above all, stood out as exceptions to this pattern—Devika Rani of Bombay Talkies and Durga Khote of Prabhat, both Brahmins, both urbane, sophisticated and westernised; and both of them went on to fashion a completely new image of the screen heroine, complete with all the familiar ingredients of star-gloss.

During the 30s, however, the star system had not quite developed yet. The producer and director were the dominant figures, the real stars, and they appeared thus to the

public as well. Debaki Bose and Barua, Shantaram, Irani and Himansu Rai were all, in their own right, always in the public eye. The lead roles were played by men and women who were employees of a studio, and the real star system as we know it today, did not begin to emerge until the big studios broke up in the 1940s, and actors and actresses became free-lancing talents, highly-paid, but inevitably, insecure, temperamental and blown up out of all proportions to their real worth.

Lastly, it is a useful corrective to any critical judgement of these films to recall the conditions, particularly with regard to sound recording, in which they were made. The usual practice was to shoot in a (partially) sound-proofed studio and to record the sound track directly. While a player delivered his lines in a carefully circumscribed position, a four-man orchestra would be perched on a raised wooden platform above camera range but aligned with a microphone suspended over the actors' heads. This 'live' mixing of the sound track while shooting imposed colossal restraints on the filmed action—even the 'natural' sounds of the outdoors would be provided on an indoors stage by four or five deft 'effects-men' crouching just out of sight of the camera, and making a distinctly human cacophony of bird whistles.

The camera too lost some of its mobility by having to be draped with blankets to damp the motor noise, and what with the cooing of pigeons in the studio loft, the rumbling of distant trains, and the inherent difficulties of executing a perfect sound 'take', it was often much more than a mere technical feat to produce a full-length talkie.

By the end of the first decade of the talkie, a whole production culture had passed into oblivion. Already, immediately after the Second World War, it was almost as difficult as it is now to recapture the sense of optimism, the heady adventure of pioneering a new art form in the 30s, as it is today.

—Pradip Krishen

CHANDIDAS

Bengali/B & W/1932

Direction Debaki Kumar Bose/*Production Company* New Theatres Ltd./*Photography* Nitin Bose/*Sound* Mukul Bose/*Music* Raj Chand Boral/*Leading Players* Durgadas Banerjee, Umasashi, Arun Mullick, Manoranjan Bhattacharya, K. C. Dey

The film is the story of a Vaishnavite poet-saint of the sixteenth century. Chandidas, the disciple of a strict Brahmin priest, falls in love with an untouchable girl. As a result, the untouchable community is terrorised by the highcaste villagers. The lovers also suffer emotional conflicts. But somehow they remain undaunted in their resolve to stay together. Chandidas finally breaks all class barriers and goes away with his love to begin a new and free life of his own.



KRISHNAKANTER WILL

Bengali/B & W/1932

Direction Jyotish Banerjee/*Production Company* Madan Theatres Ltd./*Photography* Jatin Das/*Leading Players* Ahindra Chowdhury, Nirmalendu Lahiri, Dhira Bhattacharya, Seubala, Santi Gupta

Krishnakanta, a rich zamindar, disinherits his wayward son, Haralal, and leaves his fortune to his nephew, Gobindalal, in his will. Rohini, a girl widowed in her childhood, is persuaded by Haralal to substitute a fake will in his favour. In exchange he promises to marry her. But when he refuses to honour his promise, Rohini tries to put the real will back into the safe and gets caught. Gobindalal saves her from the old man's wrath. Gradually he finds himself attracted to her and starts neglecting his loving wife, Bhramar. When Krishnakanta learns this, he changes his mind and makes Bhramar the inheritor. His pride hurt, Gobindalal deserts his wife and goes away with Rohini. Bhramar's misery is now complete. Her father looks for Gobindalal and sends emissaries to find him. Nisakar, one of them, traces them in a far off place. Rohini, meanwhile bored by the life they are living, chances upon Nisakar who seduces her. She is done to death by Gobindalal for her unfaithfulness. Bhramar falls ill. Gobindalal's conscience finally gets the better of him. He comes back—but only to reunite with his wife on her death. The film is based on a novel by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.



KARMA

English/B & W/1933

Direction J. L. F. Hunt/*Production Company* Himansu Rai Indo-International Talks Ltd., Bombay, Indian & British Productions Ltd., London/*Producer* Himansu Rai/*Story* Dewan Sharar/*Screenplay & Dialogue* Rupert Downing/*Photography* Desmond C. Dickinson, Emil Schunemann/*Editing* Challis Sanderson/*Music* Ernest Broadhurst/*Leading Players* Devika Rani, Himansu Rai, Dewan Sharar, Sudha Rani

A Young queen of one state is in love with the prince of a neighbouring kingdom whose king has evil designs on the queen's territory. While the two lovers pine and sigh, intrigues are set in motion, on the one hand to usurp the Maharani's kingdom and on the other to finish off the prince. Also interwoven in the story are exotic and popular scenes of tiger-hunts, cobras, snake-charmers, religious rituals, etc.



DEVIDAS

Hindi/B & W/1935

Direction & Screenplay Pramathes Chandra Barua/*Production Company* New Theatres Ltd./*Photography* Bimal Roy/*Editing* Subodh Mitter/*Music* Timir Baran/*Leading Players* K. L. Saigal, Jamuna, Rajkumari, A. H. Shore, Raju, Nemo, Biswanath Bhaduri, K. C. Dey

Devdas, son of a rich zaminder, is in love with his childhood playmate, Parbati, daughter of a poor neighbour. Devdas has to leave home to go to Calcutta to study. He and Parbati feel the parting terribly. Parbati's father arranges a marriage for her to a wealthy zamindar of a nearby district. The Rai Sabib is elderly and has grown-up sons and daughters by an earlier marriage. Devdas comes back from Calcutta for the wedding and returns broken hearted, while Parbati goes with her husband to his home to suffer in silence and try to attain the Hindu ideal of a dutiful wife. A frustrated Devdas is introduced to drink by his friend Chunilal who also takes him to Chandra, a woman of easy virtue. She loves him, an unrequited love, and is purified through her suffering. Time passes. Parbati hears of Devdas' ruin and comes to try to wean him away from drink. He promises that before he dies, he will seek her out for her help. She goes back to the seclusion of her home and sheds bitter tears, while serving her husband and his family with a selfless devotion which wins her the admiration of everyone. Mornings come and go in her peaceful village until the body of a man is found. It is Davdas, who had travelled there all night and broken down. A few pieces of wood, a flame and Devdas in no more, his mortal remains consumed on the funeral pyre. Behind the high surrounding walls of her home, Parbati also hears the news of his death.



ACHUT KANYA

Hindi/B & W/1936

Direction Franz Osten/Production Company Bombay Talkies Ltd./Producer Himansu Rai/Dialogue & Songs J. S. Casshyap/Photography Josef Wirsching/Sound Savak Vacha/Music Saraswati Devi/Leading Players Ashok Kumar, Devika Rani, P. F. Pittawala, Mushtaq Hussain, Pramila

Kasturi, an untouchable girl is in love with a Brahmin youth. Caste barriers and religious bigotry stand in the way of their union. They boy is forced into marriage to a wife he cannot love and the girl to one of her own class. Wisely, afraid of their love, they keep out of each others way, till chance throws them together at a village fair. Inflamed by jealousy and egged on by neighbours, the girl's husband misunderstands this meeting and a fierce encounter ensues between the Brahmin youth and the untouchable husband at a level-crossing. A train comes on. The girl, in an effort to part the combatants, is run over and killed, a human sacrifice at the altar of bigotry.



MISS FRONTIER MAIL

Hindi/B & W/1936

Direction & Editing Homi Wadia/Production Company Wadia Movietone/Story & Screenplay J. B. H. Wadia/Photography Vasanti B. Jagtap/Sound Khurshed M./Music Master Mohammad/Leading Players Nadia, Sardar Mansoor, John Cawas, Sayani Atish, Master Mohammad, Jaidev, Gulshan

A gang of thieves kill a railway employee. The station master is charged with murder as people find him on the scene of the crime with the murder weapon in his hand. His daughter, Sarita, receives an anonymous message to meet someone at a specified time and place who could divulge to her the identity of the real culprit, the mysterious Signal X. But the man is shot dead before he can pronounce the culprit's name. Sunder, a senior railway officer's son, comes to her aid and they together give the gang of crooks a sound thrashing. There are many twists and turns in the plot which give Sarita and her boy friend ample scope to display their fighting skills. Eventually Signal X is unmasked and gets killed in a plane crash. Sarita's father is freed and Sarita and Sunder fall into each other's arms. The vamp also gets her lover.



SANT TUKARAM

Marathi/B & W/1936

Direction V. Damle, S. Fatehal/Production Company Prabhat Film Co./Photography V. Avadhoot/Music Keshavrao Bhole/Leading Players Vishunpant Pagnis, Miss Gouri, Pandit Damle, Kusum Bhagawat, Shree Bhagawat, Master Chhotu, B. Nandrezkar, Shankar Kulkarni

The village of Dehu listens enraptured to the devotional songs of the Marathi poet-saint Tukaram. This evokes the envy of the priest, Salomalo, who copies Tukaram's original verses and passes them off as his own. Tukaram is a poor man, lives with his two children and a wife who scolds him for his other-worldliness.

Tukaram begins to work on the land, much to his family's joy. Salomalo lets wild cattle loose in his fields to destroy the crops and the owner of the land demands compensation. However, when the harvest is brought in, it is found to be several times the normal yield. Salomalo next plots with the beautiful singer, Sundara, to seduce him. But instead Sundara's thoughts are turned to God and she repents of her immoral ways. Salomalo then accuses Tukaram before the learned Rameshwar Shastri for unorthodoxy in his preaching. The Shastri orders the destruction of his verses in the river. After thirteen days' vigil Tukaram is astonished to see the river goddess rising from the waters with his manuscripts unharmed in her hands. The great Marathi hero, Shivaji, hears of Tukaram and comes in all humility to sit at his feet. Hearing of Shivaji's presence, his enemy, the Moghul Sardar, attacks the place. But everyone in the audience at that moment looks like Shivaji and he is confused. Shivaji escapes. When the day of Nirvana for Tukaram arrives, he invites his wife to go with him, but she is happy in her home with her children and her buffalo and decides to stay on earth. Tukaram preaches his last sermon and a heavenly bird takes him up into the heavens.



SAVITRI

Marathi/B & W/1936

Direction & Screenplay Bhalji Pendharkar/Production Company Saraswati Cinetone Co./Photography Madhusudan Purohit/Editing B.S. Raut/Sound Dadasaheb Torne/Music Suresh Babu/Leading Players Leela, Madhav Kale, Saraswati, Dinkar Kamanna, Vasant Phaelwan



ALIBABA

Bengali/B & W/1937

Direction Modhu Bose/*Production Company* Shree Bharatashmi Pictures/*Photography* Bibhuti Das/*Music* Franco Polo and Mr. Nagar/*Leading Players* Sadhona Bose, Modhu Bose, Suprava Mukherjee, Indra Roy, Bibhuti Ganguly, Kamal Biswas, Priti Majumdar

A musical in the truest sense of the term, *Alibaba* depicts the popular tale of Alibaba and the Forty Thieves. Alibaba, a poor lumberjack, discovers the secret word to open the door of a cave where the forty thieves have amassed a fabulous fortune and becomes rich overnight. Kassem, his greedy half-brother, learns the secret from him and goes to the cave. In his excitement he forgets the secret word which will let him out and is caught by the thieves. They kill him and chop his body into pieces. Alibaba recovers the body, gets it stitched by an old cobbler, Mustapha, with the help of Marjina, the slave girl, and buries the body. The thieves learn about this and the leader, disguised as a merchant, arrives at Alibaba's house and begs shelter for the night. He hides his companions in big earthen jars for a surprise attack later in the night. But clever Marjina discovers the plot. She and Abdullah, a fellow-slave, kill the thieves by pouring boiling oil on them. She also stabs the leader to death while dancing for him. Alibaba rewards Marjina by marrying her to his son Hussein.



AMBIKAPATHY

Tamil/B & W/1937

Direction & Editing Ellis R. Duncan/*Production Company* Salem Shanker Films Ltd./*Screenplay* T.R.S. Mani/*Photography* Krishnagopal/*Sound* J.D. Irani/*Leading Players* M.K. Thyagarajahbavadar, M.R. Santhanalakshmi, T.S. Baleiah, N.S. Krishnan, P.B. Rangachari, T.A. Mathuram



KUNKU

Marathi/B & W/1937

Direction V. Shantaram/*Production Company* Prabhat Film Co./*Producers* S. Fatehlal, V. Damle/*Story* Narayan Hari Apte/*Lynics* Shantaram Athale/*Photography* V. Avadhoot/*Art Direction* S. Fatehlal/*Music* K. Bhole/*Leading Players* Shanti Apte, K. Date, Vasanti, Master Chhotu, Raja Nene, Vimala Vashistha, Shakuntala Pranjape, Gowri

Neera, a young girl, is married off to an old widower by her foster-parents, an uncle and his orthodox wife. The deal is obviously motivated by considerations of money. The shock of the marriage is too much for the girl, but she bravely tries to adapt herself. The widower deceives himself into believing that he is still not old enough to have lost his manhood. His college-going son tries to flirt with his young step-mother, while a widowed daughter of his sympathises with her in her woe. The marriage does not work. Some cheer is added to Neera's life through the company of a teenaged girl belonging to the household. However, when the old man realises the implications of his action, he commits suicide, leaving the girl he has married free to go her own way.



MUKTI

Bengali/B & W/1937

Direction & Screenplay Pramathes Chandra Barua/*Production Company* New Theatres Ltd./*Photography* Bimal Roy/*Music* Pankaj Mullick/*Leading Players* Pramathes Chandra Barua, Kanai Devi, Menaka, Nawab, Jagdish Sethi, Bikram Kapur, Pankaj Mullick

Prasanta, an artist, loves his art as much as his wife Chitra. She loves him enough to have married him despite social disapproval. People start gossiping about Prasanta and his favourite model. Infuriated, Chitra wants freedom from the marital bondage. He lets her go, destroys all his works and goes away to a secluded existence in the jungles of Assam. The years pass. He has reconciled himself to a life of drink, in the company of a tavern-keeper and his girl. The girl falls in love with him but he pays no heed. Chitra misses Prasanta. She is now wooed by a rich man, Bipul. On one occasion when they all go on a hunt they shoot by chance at an elephant belonging to Prasanta. This leads to an angry meeting. Bipul tells Prasanta not to try and see Chitra. Prasanta has read the news of the new match. He withdraws. But a wily trader, having recognised Chitra, tells her about Prasanta and then kidnaps her. When Prasanta hears of this he decides to rescue her. His pistol does away with all the goondas, but he purposely permits the trader's dagger to pierce him. Prasanta wanted to give Chitra the ultimate freedom that she desired. . . . or did she?



KACHA DEVAYANI

Telugu/B & W/1938

Direction Dronamraju/*Production Company* Radha Film Co./*Producer & Screenplay* B.V. Ramanandam/*Photography* Prabodh Dass/*Editing* A.N. Chatterji/*Sound* B.N. Ghosh/*Music* N. Krishnamacharyulu, Muniswamy/*Leading Players* S.P. Lakshmanaswamy, Krishnaveni, Y. Raju, K. Raghavayya, Tulasi



AADMI

Hindi/B & W/1939

Direction V. Shantaram/*Production Company* Prabhat Film Co./*Photography* V. Avadhoot/*Sound* S. Dami/*Art Direction* S. Fatehla/*Leading Players* Shahu Modak, Shanta Hublikar, Ram Marathe, Gouri, Manju, Narmada, Ganpatrao, Paranjpe

Aadmi depicts the life of a dancing girl from the infamous localities of the city. She is a lively person, dancing and flirting for the benefit of customers drawn from all communities, when love in the form of a gentle, strict policeman comes into her life and completely shakes it up. She sees in him the first remote sign of a home and family. But the way towards the achievement of that goal is difficult. Her own conscience also shakes her confidence and eventually she decides to keep away from him. Finally, when she gets involved in a murder (for his sake) and is sentenced for life, the message she sends him is not to ruin his life for the sake of love.



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Designed and produced by the Directorate of Advertising
and Visual Publicity, Ministry of I & B, Govt. of India and
printed by Munna Offset & Packaging, Ltd. New Delhi.