

THE PEACOCK

TUESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2022



Father of Konkani Cinema

BY DAMODAR MAUZO

2 4th April is celebrated as Konknni Cholchitr Dis, or Konkani Cinema Day. It was on this day, 72 years ago, that the first Konkani feature film, *Mogacho Aunddo*, was screened.

Antonio Lourenço Jerry Braganza, a lad from Mapusa, Goa, had chosen to go to Mumbai for further studies, where, upon completion of his college education, he found employment at various cinema-related companies. After gaining experience at Indian News Parade (now the Films Division of India), Geeta Pictures, and Vishwa Shanti Films, Al Jerry (as he was popularly known) went on to join the Navakala Film Company and worked in the capacity of production assistant and assistant director. His familiarity with filmmaking prompted him to take up the challenge of making a film in Konkani – his mother tongue.

In the first half of the 20th Century, thousands of Goan job-seekers went to Mumbai, which was also an important hub of film activities. Goan youth, especially those who had an aptitude for music, rushed to Mumbai to try their luck. The gifted ones made it big as singers, musicians, and arrangers. When Al Jerry saw the Goan community in Mumbai wholeheartedly patronising tiatr (a highly popular form of Konkani theatre) performances, he was struck by the idea of exploring the possibility of making a film in Konkani.

Confident of his own talent as an actor, director, and singer, he adorned all these roles and went into the risky business of filmmaking.

The cast he chose for the film was new to this medium. They hadn't worked in tiatr, where the songs are sung by the artists themselves. The lyricist, music director, and script writer were all Goan Konkani-speakers who cooperated with Jerry, mainly out of love for their language. The heroine of the film, Ms. Leena Fernandes, a Goan from Siolim who was living in Mumbai, was a novice, but had a good voice. With dedicated effort, it took six months to make the film, and Al Jerry's love for his motherland led him to launch the film in his hometown, Mapusa. Although stringent censorship was in vogue during Portuguese rule, the film sailed through easily without any hurdles. On 24th April, 1950, Dasharath Theater in Mapusa had the honour and distinction of screening the first show of the first ever Konkani film.

Al Jerry knew that his main body of viewers eagerly waited his shows in Bombay. Most of the Goan community in Mumbai lived around Mahim-Bandra, and the Dhobitalao region. The film was screened simultaneously at Rivoli Theatre in Matunga, and at other Goan strongholds. Matinee shows at Liberty near Dhobitalao attracted hundreds of Goans. Whether Al Jerry earned any riches from his film is not known.

Today, Konkani cinema is still reaping the fruits of Al Jerry's determination. Konkani films are produced not only in Goa, but also in Konkani-speaking areas in Karnataka (mainly in and around Mangalore).

Jerry went on to be involved in two more Konkani feature films. In 1966, he produced *Sukhachem Sopon*, in which he played an actor and was also the playback singer. This film went on to earn laurels from the Konkani audience. In his last film, *Kortubancho Sounsar* (1970), he played the main role. Al Jerry died in Mumbai on 8th January, 1990, but he remains immortal in the hearts of the Konkani and cinema-lovers.

The concerted efforts of the Dalgado Konkani Academy paid dividends when, in 2015, Al Jerry Braganza was posthumously honoured with a postal cover. He remains treasured in the world of Konkani speakers as the Father of Konkani Cinema.



Illustration by Govit Morajkar

Pragyaverse

INAUGURATION

Ladies and gentlemen
take your seats, settle down
selfies and little black dresses
haloed in blue neon, tonight
we are divine

for the fortunate, there's chips and soda
i'm in the gallery with the plebeians

to my right, a woman
the last inauguration was the only entertainment
during the pandemic. actually, i've cancelled
my movie plans to be here.

to my left, a man
without degree, how to be writer, tell.
shabd mein jaan hoti hai, sirf jaan-e-man
banana hota hai.

Poem of the Day by Pragya Bhagat

Walking His Journey In Her Shoes

BY JONATHAN RODRIGUES

Favourite child? I am not sure, but surely the daughter he always wanted," says Anna Saura Ramón, the youngest child of legendary Spanish filmmaker Carlos Saura, who was awarded the Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award at the 53rd International Film Festival of India.

"I enjoyed every minute of the inaugural ceremony. Watching the flamenco dancers at IFFI warmed my heart – my father would have loved it. Meeting with the Bollywood actors was also fun, and the streets of Panjim, wow! Such a festive atmosphere!" says Anna, also expressing her regret that she doesn't have enough time to taste the Goan cuisine.

The 27-year-old filmmaker says she felt "very special" to receive the Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award in Goa, on behalf of her father. "My father loves Indian cinema and

Indian culture. He worked hard to find the connection between the flamenco dance and its Indian influences, through his live show *Flamenco-India* (2015)," says Anna.

Whether Indian cinema is an acquired taste, she says "I have watched India's entry for the Oscars, *The Last Film Show* (2021), and it is beautiful. Movies have the power to celebrate culture and history of a region like no other medium."

Anna confesses she is completely blown away by the rhythm of Indian cinema and is growing a healthy addiction towards the camera angles, storytelling and colour palette of filmmakers in India. She says, "Indian films keep me on the edge of my seat, I can't stop watching once I start. I would like to study how to keep the audience gripped like that."

Having accompanied Carlos Saura on his work travels since she was a pre-teen, Anna knows the real person behind the camera. She says, "He always does things that are not

contemporary, swimming against the tide, so yes, maybe he someday hoped he would have a daughter who might do the same. He is so easy to work with and has a clear mind about what he wants as a director."

So, what is the oldest active Spanish director up to these days? "He is 91, but works like he is 19. He is working on a theatre release titled *Lorca de Saura*. Then he will

move on to conceptualising and directing a show to celebrate 100 years of Picasso's work," says Anna.

Grateful for the work ethic and education of filmmaking she has received from her father, she is also appreciative of his non-domineering mentorship. "He always says: 'Work hard, every day, no matter how talented you are. No one is going to look out for you and you have to make a career on your own'. I don't feel the pressure as I genuinely love what I do."

As a filmmaker, she has deep appreciation for the long hours invested by actors to produce a perfect performance, which makes the final cut on screen. "I am not sure I want to do that for a living," says Anna, ruling out a career in acting. "Directing is tricky as I don't want to be judged by critics based on the high standards set by my father; rather I want to be known for my own body of work," says the proud producer of

Walls Can Talk (2022), which is being screened at IFFI 2022.

Anna is a huge believer in the magic of the movies and speaks passionately of her calling as a filmmaker.

She says, "There are so many stories waiting to be told and that's my responsibility to give them a voice and visual. Not every story appeals to every audience, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't be told. The power of the movies, especially powered by OTT distribution, can take stories to places they have never been before, to audiences that may not be able to make it to a big screen viewing."

Comparing the "colourful festival culture" at IFFI 2022 to other global film fanfares, Anna says, "You must know that IFFI is a very important festival for us in Europe, not only from a strategic film distribution transit point for South Asia, but also the award by itself is considered very prestigious for filmmakers in my region. The diversity of films showcased is truly appreciated and makes the award even more desirable."

The Best Is Yet To Come

BY ZENISHA GONSALVES

Isteal from the epics," says V Vijayendra Prasad, drawing murmurs of appreciation from a roomful of young writers and film students who are attending his masterclass 'The Master's Writing Process' at the 53rd International Film Festival of India. "I allow the stories to fall into my head on my morning walk. And then I dictate."

The acclaimed screenwriter – most recently of Baahubali (2015), Bajrangi Bhaijaan (2015), Baahubali 2: The Conclusion (2017), and RRR (2022) – is met with applause as he continues to share his insights: that "writers are thieves", that "stories hold no truth", and that human beings possess no natural hunger for film. That this hunger must be manufactured. Then, quieter,

he offers another aphorism: "We can be proud of our own ancestry."

On a white board, Prasad draws a graph, which he refers to as "the graph of clapping points". "Clapping," he explains, "is not necessarily about making an audience happy. You can make them really emotional; the key is to carry them on your shoulders for the first five minutes, to the first clapping point." A single diagonal moves up the graph, after which Prasad draws points at equal intervals on a flat line. His job, he insists, "Is to carry you on my shoulders, through the film." There is disdain for writers who don't believe in compromising. "If you don't want to compromise, write a novel," he suggests, "where you will be paid 1 or 2 lakhs. I require 3 crores." One audience member asks why he writes films with heroes, but with no heroines. "No one

wants that," he responds, "I want to do it, and this I would do for 1 crore. I would write a feminist film for 1 crore."

The celebrated screenwriter drew laughs at the opening ceremony of IFFI when he said "I follow Gandhi," for 'inspiration' and then pulled out a currency note from his pocket and waved it at the audience. "This Gandhi," he specified.

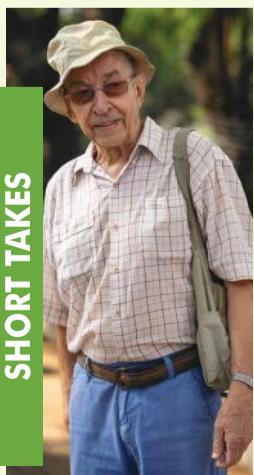
When, at his masterclass, moderator Mayank Shekhar asks how he started writing (Prasad wrote his first script at the age 46), he responds, "Hunger," and does not elaborate. A young man introduces himself as a young filmmaker, and wants to know how Prasad first started writing – how did he work on a smaller scale? Prasad only says, "I have always liked spectacle."

Questions about his age – both, about how late he started, and about the

screenwriter now producing blockbuster scripts in his 80s – are quickly answered. "I do not give advice," he says, "I take it. If I give advice, I am old." And then, "The best is yet to come." A young woman who is just beginning to write tells the screenwriter that she struggles to believe her own stories. "Think of a bus," Prasad responds, "You have no money, and no friends, but you have to get from Goa to Bombay – how do you get there? You have to exercise your problem-solving." Another audience member is more persistent – what does that mean, problem-solving? The screenwriter says, "Really, most films are made to order. We tell stories for the needs of the director."



Photos : Michael Praveen



SHORT TAKES

Black and white Indian films were the soul of the people in Russia. However, modern Indian films have lost their touch.

Mikhail Kov
Interpreter,
Russia



A recent film I loved was *Kantara*. It portrays a very good message about the protection of the environment and tribal people of India.

Mahesh
Dhanawade
IT Professional,
Pune



I enjoy watching films starring Amitabh Bachchan. I thoroughly enjoyed his acting and charisma in *Trishul*.

Saurabh Pratap
Singh
Actor, Mumbai



My favourite film is *A Separation* by Asghar Farhadi. His films portray the internal conflicts of individuals and showcase raw human relationships.

Anoop
Ravindran
Filmmaker,
Kerala

Bazaar Buzz



Photo : Siddhartha Lall

BY ROMA FERNANDES

There's an audible animation in the capacious lobby of the Film Bazaar's main location, with pockets of animated chatter among delegates, meetings, presentations in huddles, and discussions about what movie to catch in market screenings (along with who will turn up for lunch or dinner).

True to its name, the National Film Development Corporation's Film Bazaar is a place where one can find all kinds of people related to the business of films: directors, buyers, producers, agents, script writers, countries and states seeking film shoots, and independent filmmakers. Everyone is here to pitch a dream, strike a deal, make new friends, and catch up with old networks after the Covid hiatus.

Going by the first day, it's back to business in full, with the first offline bazaar post-Covid. 245 films – 168 features, 18 mid-length films, 59 shorts – are being showcased in the Viewing Room section, helmed by moderator Deepti D'Cunha.

This is India's homegrown holy grail for independent filmmakers to showcase work that could be as successful as the NFDC-promoted *Lunchbox* (2013) and many others films over the past decade. *The Peacock* spoke to a cross-section of delegates to get a sense of the major drivers and hopes this year.

Munish Bhardwaj, director of the production house Delhi Talkies, and screenwriter, talks about how the Film Bazaar works. He says: "The most important event here is the co-producers' pitch, where you submit your projects. They select about a dozen films and the Film Bazaar makes it their responsibility to fix appointments with the big Indian and foreign production houses. They also have a work-in-progress competition, where films are shot and edited during the festival. There's also a lab here that can be used and one of those films is selected for an award here."

Many countries and Indian states have come to make a pitch for film shootings, promising incentives to lure production houses. "We came

here to strengthen and to make a strategic partnership between Spain and India in the field of film, trade, and tourism," says Fernando Noguer, the consul general of Spain. "Last year on June 15, our foreign minister and the Indian foreign minister signed a joint statement saying they wanted to base financial relations in culture and so we are bringing plenty of big productions and we also hope to participate in big festivals like the Film Bazaar and IFFI."

Hemanta Sadeq, a Dhaka-based filmmaker and winner of the 'Young Talent Award' at the 10th International Children's Film Festival has come to the Bazaar to showcase his new film *Khowab (Castle in the Air)* (2022) which focuses on the dying handloom sector in Bangladesh and its impact on society. The film has been chosen for the Film Bazaar Recommends (FBR) shorts. He says: "The whole world is facing the same situation – if we want to keep our tradition alive, we have to try and sell everything to be alive. This is the reality, so this conflict between tradition and reality is the theme of the film. Through this festival, I want to represent the current situation of the traditional looms and fabrics in Bangladesh."

Then there's Jayant Kumar from Rajasthan, who has come to the film bazaar with Flydreams Publications with the hope of connecting with the right people to produce fresh new content that is rarely seen in India. He says: "We are creating content in the form of comics, audio books, web series focusing on topics (like superheroes and fantasy) that no one is covering in a big way. This content can be used in various formats, be it film or over-the-top (OTT) content. You need to understand your consumer, not just from today's perspective but from 25 years later."

Finally, seasoned film critic Ashok Rane from Mumbai talked about his documentary *Yet Another Mohenjodaro* about Girangaon – a locality of cotton mill workers in Central Mumbai – and the 40th anniversary of a massive workers' strike. "My film is about that village, how there was a rich civilisation created by these workers," said Rane.

22nd NOVEMBER 2022

MASTERCLASS
'ANIMATION AS A TOOL FOR EXPRESSION'

11:00 - 12:30
Speaker: Mark Osborne
Moderator: Prosenjit Ganguly

IN CONVERSATION
'JOURNEY AS AN ACTOR'

13:00 - 14:30
Speaker: Nawazuddin Siddiqui
Moderator: Vani Tripathi

IN CONVERSATION
'ART AND CRAFT OF LYRIC WRITING'

15:30 - 17:00
Speaker: Prasoon Joshi
Moderator: Anant Vijay

IN CONVERSATION
'NEGOTIATING AESTHETICS AND ECONOMICS'

17:30 - 19:00
Speaker: R Balki
Moderator: Mayank Shekhar

National Film Development Corporation | **IFFI** | **cinemas of india** | **eFA** | **Entertainment Society of Asia** | **AA** | **Azadi ke Amrit Mahotsav**

“Main khud ek student hoon”

BY PRAGYA BHAGAT

The essence of Pankaj Tripathi is evident from the moment he gets up from his front row seat to walk to the stage, but is stopped midway. “We have an audiovisual clip we’d like to show,” the introducer says.

“Dikha deejye,” the much admired actor says with a gentle flick of his wrist, and he patiently waits for the clip to end. This, his ability to let go, this accommodation, is perhaps what sets Tripathi apart as an actor of contemporary Hindi cinema.

Gaurav Gandhi, the Country Head of Amazon Prime, started the masterclass by asking Tripathi about his newly found stardom, and the actor acknowledges its cost.

“Samay nahi milta. There’s no time.” Now he counts his sleeping hours and not just his waking ones. “Mujhe sona bahut achcha lagta hai.”

The expectation, in attending Pankaj Tripathi’s Masterclass on Character Development, is that of a skillful artist, doling out generous helpings of wisdom. The reality is more of an unassuming man who is surrounded by devoted followers, precisely because of his humility.

The first audience member to speak gushes: “I’m your Eklavya, you’re my Drona.” The appreciation for Mr. Tripathi’s craft is palpable in a hall brimming with students of all ages. Mr. Tripathi jokes about his place in this hall. “Mai khud ek student hoon, Masterclass mein kya bolunga?”

The journey has not been an easy one. There were periods of struggle. “When you are looking for work,” Tripathi says, “when you are khali, that is not empty time. That is preparation.”

The lockdown led to a surge in his popularity, and he speaks about the responsibility of his fame. “Now I have to pay attention to the stories I tell, both on and off screen.” He aspires to use this fame not only for entertainment but also for building social consciousness.

Tripathi’s work expands over multiple OTT platforms—from *Sacred Games* on Netflix to *Mirzapur* on Amazon Prime to *Criminal Justice* on Disney Plus Hotstar—in addition to a robust filmography that includes *Masaan*, *Stree*, *Ludo*, and *83*. Each of his characters, as his viewers will attest, leaves an indelible mark.

“Actor aur character ka rishta bahut adbhit hai. When you perform someone else’s life, you become a better man.” In other words, his profession is

a tool to build empathy.

Does he have fond memories of certain characters? The actor, whose roots are in Bihar, mentions *Nil Battey Sannata*, and how he loved playing a teacher. “Principal Srivastava was a caricaturist. I had lots of fun playing him.” He credits his teachers for who he is today. “One of them taught me about the economy of gestures,” an approach he continues to subscribe to. These gestures, he notes, are now picked up on by meme makers. “Twenty years ago, those subtle details may not have been noticed.”

The host offers the audience an

opportunity to ask their questions.

Over the next ninety minutes, Tripathi speaks primarily in Hindi. “It might be possible some people don’t understand Hindi.

In that case, ask your neighbour.” For a man who is known for his dramatic roles, the actor is surprisingly funny.

An audience member asks how Tripathi eventually gets a character out of his system, to which he responds, “Simple hai. Last payment mila.

Character nikal gaya.” A collective laugh echoes in the room. Tripathi turns serious and comments on how busy his life has gotten. The past can only stretch so far; eventually, one lets it go. “The payment bit was a joke.” He grins.

When the conversation shifts to craft, Tripathi refers to his National School of Drama days. During that time, he mentions, acting was an obsession. “During my bath, in class, even on the toilet, acting is all I thought about.” This obsession, however, didn’t always translate to what he considered quality. “I recently watched a scene I did for a Doordarshan show and realised that I was a bad actor then.” Now, his method begins with the physicality of a character. “Next, I move to their emotions.”

The Masterclass concluded with Gandhi asking Tripathi to advise aspiring actors on the art and science of their profession.

“For the science of acting, work on your IQ. For the art of acting, work on your EQ.”



Photo : Aman Bagali

“Our Kind of Film-making is Tough”

BY NICOLE SUARES

The insurgency in the North-East is a long-lasting impact on my life,” says the noted Assamese producer, director, and actor Rajni Basumatary of the scars that have affected her life and family. Her personal struggles, and those of women from the Bodo community that she belongs to, find voice in her films. *Wild Swans* at this year’s Film Bazaar’s Viewing Room is a 95-minute drama that she has written, directed, and co-produced.

“Whatever I write, there will something from the North-East states,” says Basumatary, who played the mother of Mary Kom in the eponymous movie. “Not many films are being made in the Bodo language. The last film that really did well with the masses and the festival circuit was 30 years ago. After that, some made films in the commercial format. I am here trying to make films that tell stories in an aesthetic, subdued way that appeal to both the masses and the festival community.”

The subject matter of this new movie is a group of women who are fighting the bitter legacies left by their menfolk. Mainao and Gaodaang are raising their children as single mothers. Mainao’s husband was a rebel, who was killed by security personnel, while Gaodaang’s husband, an Indian army soldier, is posted at the war-torn border. Middle-aged Malothi is gang raped by an armed patrol one night.

Basumatary says that “women are left behind without resources; many are half-educated, untrained, and find themselves lost. They often take care of the old parents left by the men. In conflict zones like Assam, some women used to be raped by the security

personnel. The husbands abandon their wives.”

Along with region-specific issues there are other subtle problems. “It’s not like there are dowry deaths, or you have to pay a lot of dowry to get your daughter married,” she says. “Things like, if you have two children – a boy and girl – and you can educate only one for higher studies, they will always choose the boy. Women have to ask permission to buy new clothes for a festival or she could be beaten, if no permission is taken. This eats into your soul. Although people, say, ‘our women are more liberated from other societies,’ there is no yardstick to measure inequality against women. All genders should be equal, represented, and uplifted.”

She has been a writer, director, and producer, and now enjoys being in front of the camera. “For the past seven to eight years, I’m doing more roles as an actor and I am happy to do that as well.”

She has acted in films like *The Shaukeens* (2014), *III Smoking Barrels* (2017), and a recent Netflix release. “Our kind of filmmaking is tough. You have to script, pitch it, find a producer, and bring talents together because we can’t afford to pay and we work within limited resources. Hence you need passionate people to work on the subject.”

She is optimistic about the film industry in the North-East. “With the revolution of digital filmmaking, many are making films without much obstacles. They have access to tools. The youngsters are making meaningful films which are appealing, not only to the festival circuit, but also to the masses. It’s a good time and space. Their stories are very young and innovative,” she says.



Photo : Siddhartha Lall

The Magical Muse

BY LINA VINCENT

When I find myself at a creative dead-end, I go watch movies..." said a friend the other day, when we were discussing artists' processes and inspirations. "Because the mind is transported into another place, into a narrative other than my own." Another colleague then added his bit, "I am inspired by women-centric movies – either a rise from the ashes or a disastrous downfall story. My absolute favourite is *Kill Bill* (2003); in an alternate universe I love the gore as pure poetry."

That's what films can do – in their larger-than-life quality and the magic of storytelling, they can take us into alternate realities, both familiar and unfamiliar. In India, where both Hindi and regional cinema boast of 'superstars' (mostly male, but some female too), not only films, but actors who essay different roles also become artists' muses. A great example of the power of an actor-persona is the Big B, Amitabh Bachchan. His 70th birthday in October 2012 was celebrated with a massive exhibition in Mumbai, in which 70 leading contemporary Indian artists made paintings, sculptures, and mixed-media works inspired by him and his various roles over the decades.

Kanchan Chander is a Delhi-based artist whose practice revolves around the figurative exploration of the feminine torso. She unravels the notion of the male gaze and produces a visible environment in which women and their experiences take centre-stage. Her 'Hollywood-Bollywood' series has featured actresses of yesteryear like Marilyn Monroe, Greta Garbo, Meena Kumari, Madhubala, Waheeda Rehman, and Devika Rani among others. The works include portraits of the stars, embellished with sequins, stickers, laces, crystals, and found objects that she works into the image in a therapeutic process.

Cinema is deeply embedded in Indian public life and popular culture – walk past a wedding ceremony or temple festival and you will hear 'hit' film songs being played on loudspeakers. Street art overflows with references to current heart-throbs, names of films and the dialogues that become catch phrases and symbols for more. Atul

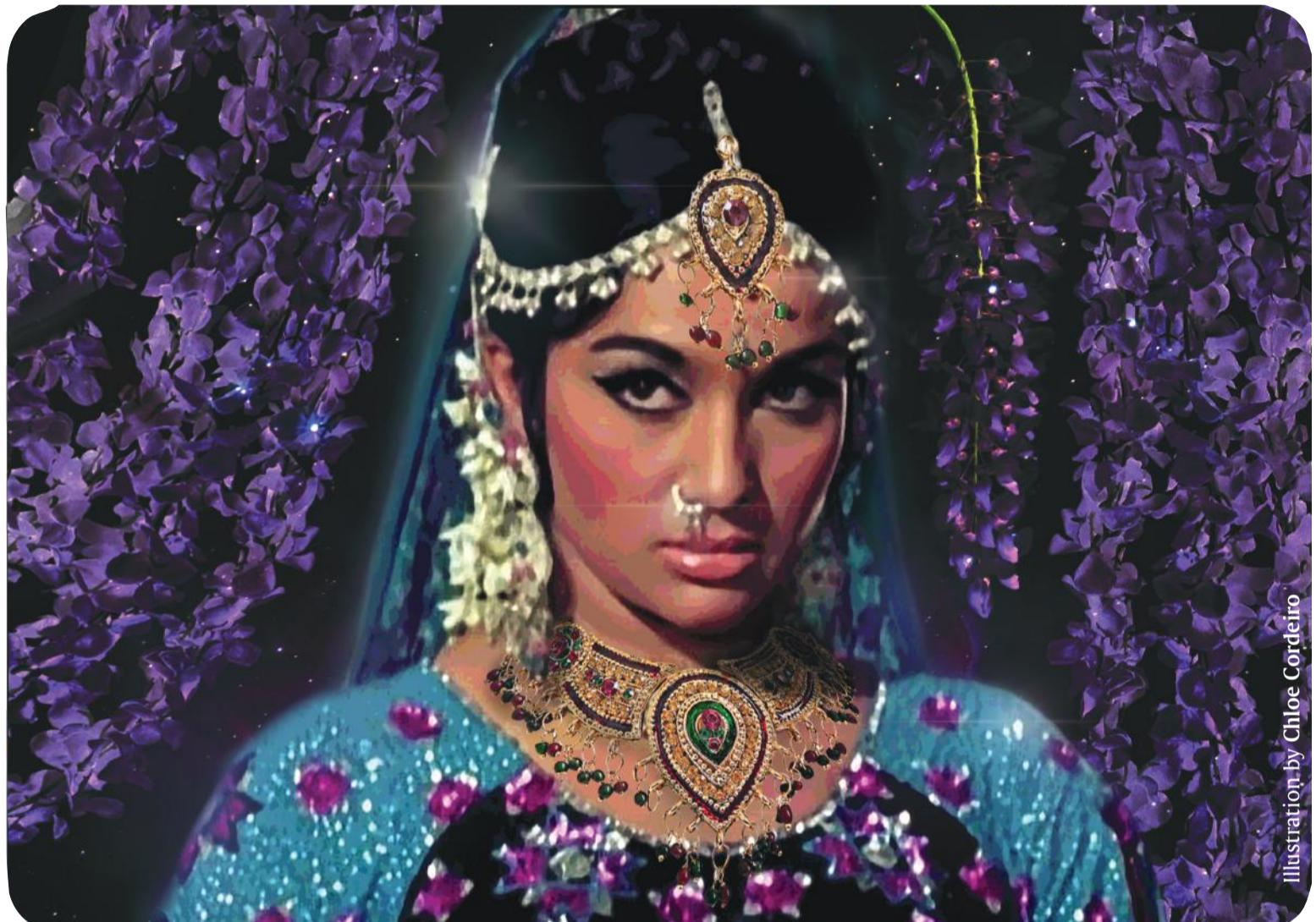


Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro

Dodiya is an internationally renowned artist based in Mumbai, a place that is not unintentionally called the City of Dreams. This quintessential 'Mayanagri' is a place that has, over the decades, offered opportunities for life and work to thousands, including in the thriving film industry. With a deep interest in both film and art, Dodiya chose to study visual art, but cinema persisted as an influence. His early paintings feature characters from films like *Baazigar* (1993), *Sholay* (1975) and *Apur Sansar* (1959). He was also part of an innovative Project – 'Cinema City' – a multidisciplinary art exhibition curated by Madhusree Dutta in 2012, at the National Gallery of Modern Art. It showcased the relationship between cinema and Bombay's transformation into Mumbai, as well as the imaginary space where film and reality intersect.

Dodiya created a series of works featuring iconic Bollywood villains, painting their portraits juxtaposed against signboards for 13 railway stations on the Central Railway Line, which was his daily commute route when he went to art school. His continues to create social commentaries on surfaces like roller shutters, often populated by essences of cinema.

The very first Indian film *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) had a very interesting art connection. Raja Ravi Varma (1848 – 1906) was an artist from Kerala, who became highly popular because of his depiction of characters from Indian mythology, and his iconic visual interpretations of gods and goddesses. His work appealed to the masses, and with a desire to share his art more widely, he established a printing press in Ghatkopar, Bombay, with German

technology. One of his trusted employees was a young photographer, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, who became skilled at photo-litho transfers of Varma's paintings. In 1899, unfortunately the press had to be sold due to the plague epidemic in the city. It is said that from those proceeds, Varma offered Phalke a good sum, to support his dream of movie-making.

The first film *Raja Harishchandra* was made, and Phalke became the father of Indian cinema, setting the stage for an entire industry. Much has been discussed about the visual influences of Varma's paintings on the décor and characterisation in the film.

Considering the number of films that have been inspired by the lives of artists, it can be said that not only are artists inspired by film, but the other way holds true as well.



This is really special because I didn't get a chance to experience this kind of energy, colour, and a festival of this magnitude in my youth.

Jayashree Jagannatha
French teacher,
Mysore



I am from Mumbai and the film festivals there are usually organized in different places. Here in Goa IFFI is in a fixed venue every year, making it a much easier way to enjoy the festival.

Hemant Joshi
Retired banker,
Mumbai



This year I am looking forward to seeing good world movies of any language and of artistic value. One of my favourite films of all time is Satyajit Ray's *Charulata*.

Kusuma Krishna
Retired,
Bangalore



I have been attending IFFI since the 7th one held in 1979, Delhi. This festival is an opening, a door for all people keen on making, distributing, and exhibiting films.

Sunder Raj
Kannada Actor,
Bangalore

The Complexity of Seemingly Simple Things

BY SACHIN CHATTE

Leaving a day job in the software industry and making films that take you around the world may be the stuff that dreams are made of, but there is a lot of sweat, hard work, and frustration that also comes along with it, especially if you are an independent film maker.

Meet Prithvi Konanur, whose *Hadinelentu* (Seventeeners) had its India premiere and opened the Indian Panorama yesterday, at this edition of the International Film Festival of India. Earlier, the film was showcased at the Busan Film Festival where it was nominated for the Kim Jiseok award. Prithvi is no stranger to festivals – his previous film *Pinki Elli?* travelled around the world, and was also screened at IFFI last year.

Like his previous films, *Hadinelentu* is also a social drama where two teenagers from different sections of society find themselves in a spot of bother when an objectionable video shot by them starts circulating. The plot may sound sensational but the film is as grounded as it can get.

Like *Pinki Elli?*, which was about a baby that goes missing, *Hadinelentu* also cuts to the chase right from the word go. "It doesn't matter what story you are telling, I believe in getting to the core of it right from the beginning. The rest can be told gradually as the story unfolds, but to me it is important to establish the crux of it without wasting too much time," said Prithvi, on the sidelines of the opening of the Indian Panorama. He is here with the cast and crew of the film, all of them enjoying their moment in the spotlight, and deservedly so, as many of them are non-professional actors while the others have made their debut in this film. Ravi Hebballi, a plastic surgeon in real life, plays the principal of the college and makes a very assuring debut in the film while Rekha Kudligi who plays the vice-principal retired from the corporate world and has now forayed into films. In *Pinki Elli?* Konanur cast real life domestic helps in main roles and one of them even got to walk the red carpet at IFFI.

Konanur's films are a testimony to the fact that you don't need big budgets or special effects to make engrossing films – it the story and the craft of storytelling that counts. His films don't even have any music, which is generally an integral part of Indian cinema. It is the characters and what happens to them that drives his films.

"I had the idea for this film many years ago

and wrote several drafts that then went through changes. I have always been fascinated by the dynamics in the society and have felt the need to explore it. That has been the common theme of all my films so far," said the Bengaluru-based filmmaker.

While the idea was in place Konanur explored it further – "I didn't know about the legalities and the procedures involved (about cybercrimes), it is only when I did the research did I realize the depth of the matter, which I have tried to incorporate in the film, from a human angle. The idea is also to bring out the complexity of seemingly simple things, which can help maneuver the story further. As a filmmaker it is imperative to explore these aspects."

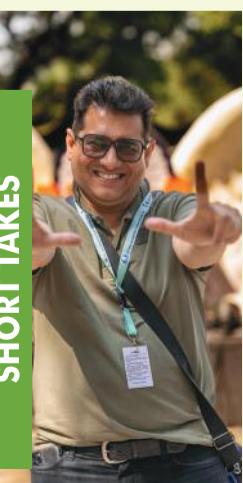
Talking about his writing and shooting style and how he manages to convey what he wants to say visually, Prithvi says that it happens at the writing as well as shooting stage. "Ideally, I would like everything to happen at the writing stage itself and not leave it for later. That way, hopefully I will make fewer mistakes," he said with a smile.

Ironically, while his films have received critical acclaim they haven't yet found screening platforms in India – *Railway Children* made it to Channel 4 in the UK and *Pinki Elli?* has an international distributor, but it hasn't released in India.

We hope that *Hadinelentu* will turn things around, because Prithvi has an idea for a sequel as well. More power to such independent filmmakers!



Photo : Assavri Kulkarni



There is no bigger film in Indian cinema than *Sholay*. It is an all-encompassing film that showcases music, dance, grandeur, love, emotions, and relationships.

Yusuf Shaikh
Filmmaker,
Mumbai



Amar Akbar Anthony is my favourite movie as it was the first time in Indian cinema that characters from three different religions were portrayed together.

**Dharmindra
Mehra**
Producer,
Mumbai



My film *My Love Affair with Marriage*, about a woman's journey of discovery and self-acceptance will be shown here. I want to connect with the Indian audience in a positive way.

Signe Baumane
Animator &
Writer, New York



I have attended over 65 International film festivals and have come to 20 here in Goa. I enjoy the films of the world and consider this a cultural mela on films.

**Brijbhusan
Chaturvedi**
Film Journalist &
Critic, Indore



White Chicks

It is perfectly understandable that everyone is preoccupied with the magnificent banquet of cinema at the International Film Festival of India, but in your off-screen moments, do take the time to consider the extraordinary cultural history of this location on the ancient Mandovi riverfront of Panjim, and especially the Old Goa Medical College precinct at the heart of the festival campus. This is the inheritor institute of the teaching hospital upriver in what is now called Old Goa, which was the very first medical college in all of Asia.

Many great men and women have passed through these halls, including one of the most important Indians ever (even if he is rarely acknowledged as such). This is the story of Francisco Luis Gomes, a genius polymath who first achieved very high distinction at medical college, where he was immediately appointed to the faculty after graduation. Self-taught in the highest traditions of autodidactism, this brilliant young Goan very quickly started attracting the attention of the world with his profuse, elegant, highly erudite analyses of the social, cultural, historical and economic questions of the day, and at the age of just 32 he sailed off to Lisbon to represent Goa in the Portuguese parliament.

Here's what Aravind Adiga – who won the Booker Prize for *White Tiger* in 2008 – has written about Gomes: "The young man's first day in parliament was a rough one: he heard another member demand that the government rescind the right given to colonial savages to sit in a civilised parliament. The member from Goa, in his maiden speech, counter-attacked. Savages? "In India," he informed the carnivorous Europeans, "there are no banquets of human flesh; on the contrary, there are sects whose hands are innocent of all blood; who abstain from a diet of meat; who show compassion towards animals." His parliamentary eloquence won him admirers in Lisbon; Gomes met John Stuart Mill and corresponded with French novelist Alphonse de Lamartine, wrote a treatise (in French) on economic theory, and in 1866 completed a novel in Portuguese—*Os Brahmanes*."

Adiga says "that few Indians know of Gomes speaks more about the narrowness of our conception of Indianness." That the country ignores patriots who spoke in Portuguese (or French, or English) is folly: To Goans "this is a bitter irony: their patriotism is being questioned by Indians who speak English, follow every ball of the Ashes and spend their nights reading the Guardian blog. In the early 1980s, a grand statue of Camões, author of the Portuguese epic poem *The Lusiads*, was removed from the square in old Goa, and consigned to a dingy museum. *The Lusiads* does celebrate Portugal's imperial expansion—but it also shaped the language in which Gomes and his peers would assert India's right to self-respect. By dispatching the statue of Camões from our sight, we are also choosing to ignore one of the most brilliant pieces in the mosaic of the modern Indian identity."

This is complex analysis, and worth pondering in front of the imposing statue of Francisco Luis Gomes that is the centrepiece of Campal, the genteel neighborhood which punctuates the Panjim waterfront between the multiplex and Kala Academy. Its appeal is undeniable, as was the great man's direct demand: "I was born in India, once the cradle of poetry, philosophy and history and now their tomb. I belong to that race which composed the Mahabharata and invented chess. But this nation which made codes of its poems and formulated politics in a game is no longer alive! It survives imprisoned in its own country. I demand Liberty and Light for India!"

- VIVEK MENEZES

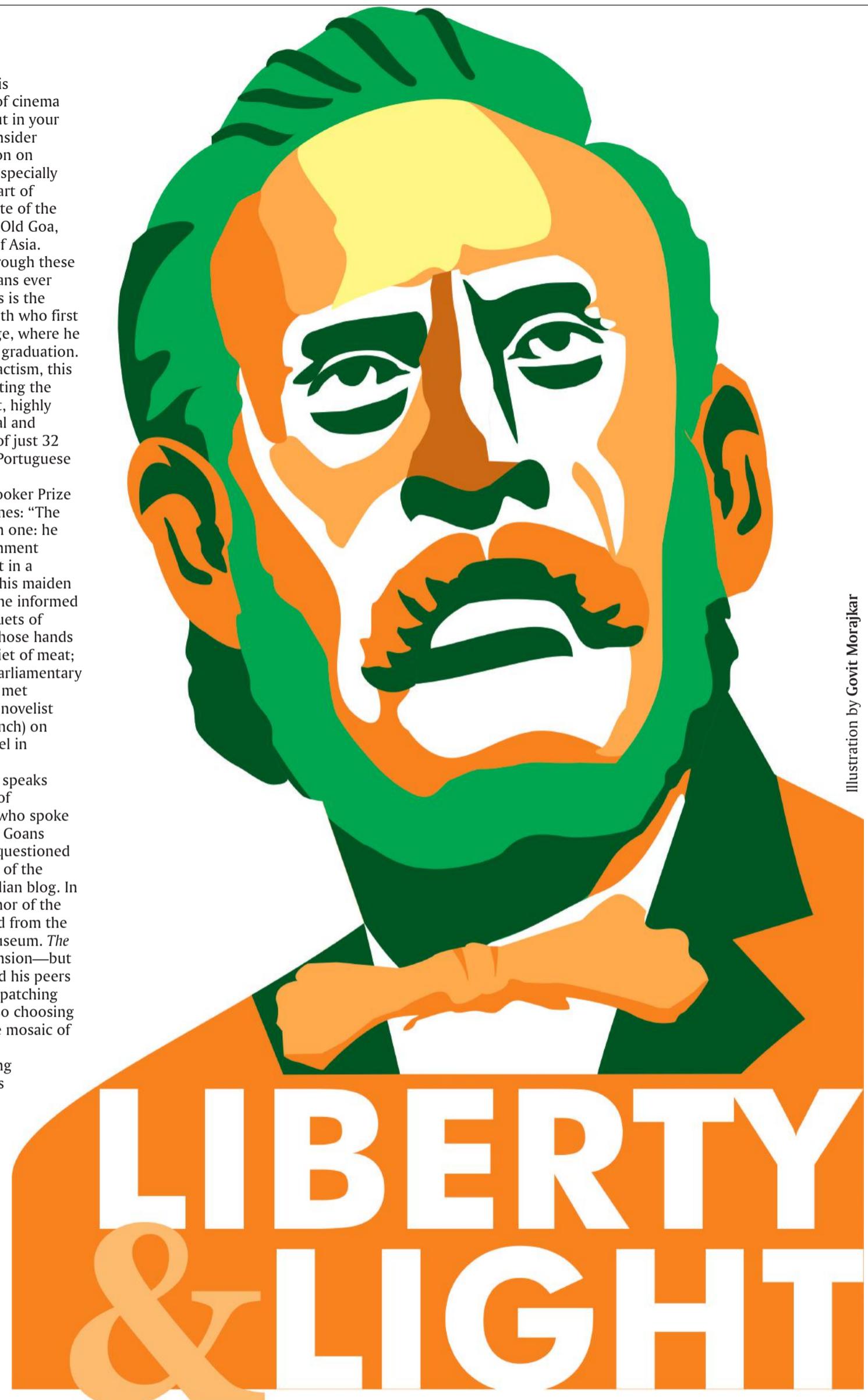


Illustration by Govit Morajkar

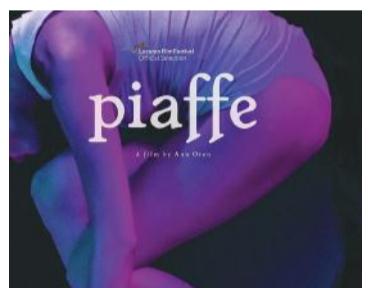
SCREENING SCHEDULE - 22ND NOVEMBER 2022

(WP)- WORLD PANORAMA (FK) - FESTIVAL KALEIDOSCOPE (IC) - INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION (DD) - DEBUT DIRECTOR (ICFT) - ICFT UNESCO GANDHI MEDAL (SpS) - SPECIAL SCREENING (HM) - HOMAGES OF KIRK DOUGLAS, IVAN PASSER, ENNIO MORRICONE, MAX VON SYDOW, CHADWICK BOSEMAN, GORAN PASKALJEVIC, ALAN PARKER, OLIVIA DE HAVILLAND.
HOMAGES OF RISHI KAPOOR, SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT, BASU CHATTERJEE & YOGESH GAUR, WAJID KHAN, BIJAY MOHANTY, S.P. BALASUBRAHMANYAM, BHANU ATHAIYA, NISHIKANT KAMAT, AJIT DAS, SAROJ KHAN, NIMMI & KUMKUM (LTA) - LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD - VITTORIO STORARO (CF) - COUNTRY FOCUS - BANGLADESH (RTL) - RETROSPECTIVE - PEDRO ALMODOVAR, RUBEN ÖSTLUND, KIM-KI-DUK (THE FATHER OF INDIAN CINEMA) - 150th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY DADASAHEB PHALKE CLASSICS OF THE MAESTRO - BIRTH CENTENARY OF SATYAJIT RAY (IP-F & IP-NF) - INDIAN PANORAMA - FEATURE & INDIAN PANORAMA - NON-FEATURE 100 YEARS OF CHRYSOSTOM - A BIOGRAPHICAL FILM"

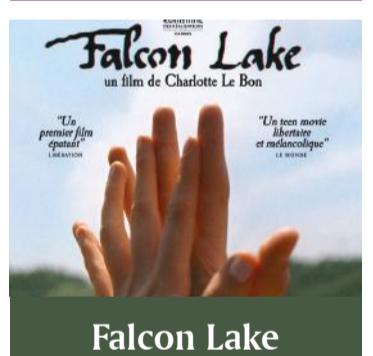


So much beauty in Praveen Naik's lovely cover painting today: the gorgeous hues of peak growing season in the ancient rice paddies of Goa, along with the meticulously hand-woven winnowing fan – Sup in Konkani – which allows grains to be separated from the husk.

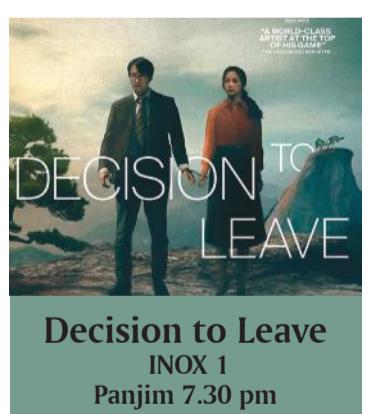
PEACOCK PICKS



**Piaffe
INOX 3
Panjim 9.00 am**



Falcon Lake
INOX 1
Poryorim 5.00 pm



Decision to Leave INOX 1 Panjim 7.30 pm



The Blue Caftan INOX 3 Panjim 7.30 pm