

THE PEACOCK

MONDAY, 18 JANUARY 2021



CONTOURS OF LOSS

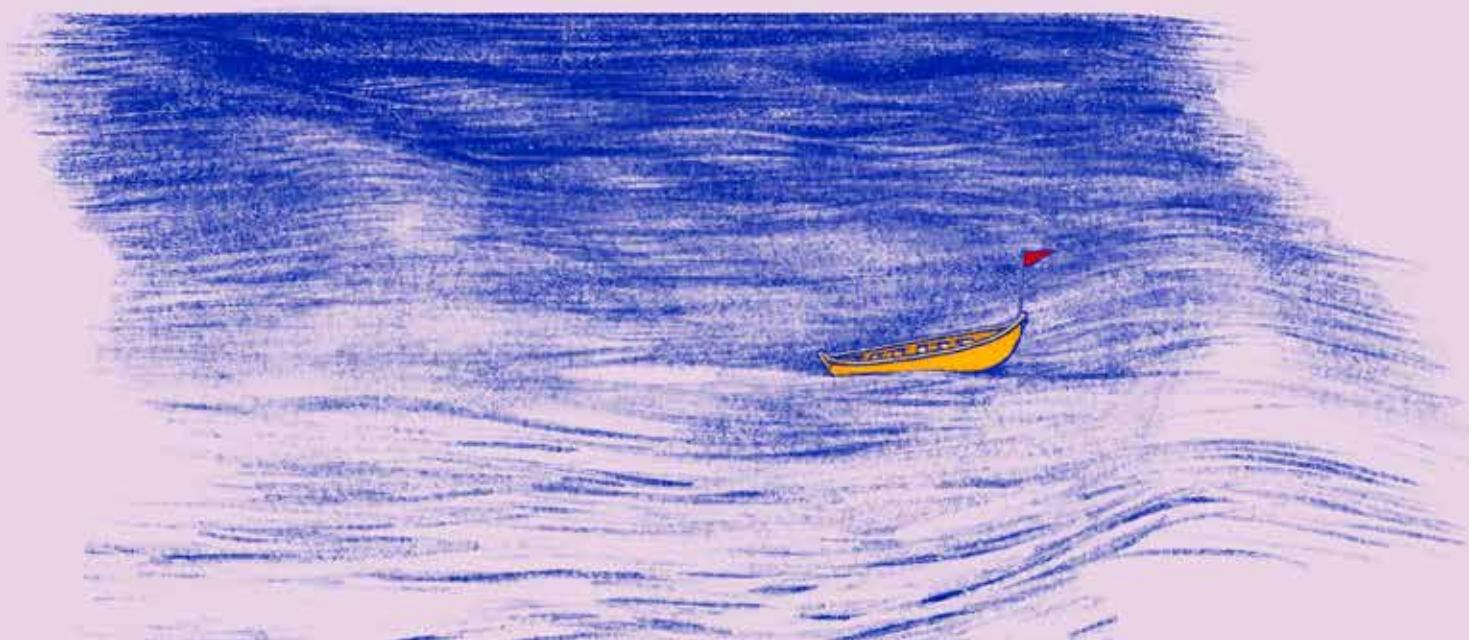


Illustration: Pakhi Sen

BY DAMODAR MAUZO

In early 2020, the Coronavirus shattered the world with its giant spate, and then, soon, it shuttered cinema halls, entertainment theatres, and cultural events. We have lost talented writers, artists, musicians, actors, comedians, and other stars to the global pandemic.

Amongst the global death tally are many celebrity filmmakers. Kim Ki-Duk, the veteran South Korean filmmaker, who participated in the 43rd IFFI edition, died just a month ago. Jay Benedict, an actor with more than 100 film and TV, and credits to his name, died last April. The illustrious singer and guitarist, Charley Pride, who was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in 2000, did live to see the glorious moment in his life when he was awarded the *Lifetime Achievement Award* from Country Music Association. But he did not live further; a month back Covid-19 snatched him

away.

In India itself, the virus has taken a toll of over 150,000 so far. We have lost the veteran poets Mangalesh Dabral and Sugathakumari, the popular playback singer S P Balasubramaniam, veteran Bollywood producer Amit Suri, and eminent actor Soumitra Chatterjee.

The smallest state in the Indian union has suffered as well. Goa's renowned fashion designer Wendell Rodricks died in February 2020, and though he did not succumb to the deadly virus, the loss was colossal. Just as we were coping with that grief, Covid-19 claimed the much-loved son of the soil, *Top Chef Masters* winner Floyd Cardozo, who died at 59, in New York.

Floyd's memorable visit to Goa in 2013 was at the Goa Art and Literature Festival. He was very happy to participate as he discussed *Life in Food*. Like a host of Goans, he went to the USA in search of greener pastures. Proud and confident of his culinary

talents, he opened his first restaurant in 1997. His love for Goa and Goan cuisine was evident from the way he designed the façade and the interiors of the restaurant. *Tabla* immediately earned him three stars from the *New York Times*. In 2011, Cardoz won the Season 3 of Bravo's hit show contest, *Top Chef Masters*. Upon his death, Padma Laxmi wrote, "He had an impish smile, an innate need to make those around him happy, and a delicious touch. This is a huge loss, not only for the professional food world but for Indians everywhere." Floyd, who promised us to come back to the Goa Litfest, is lost to us forever.

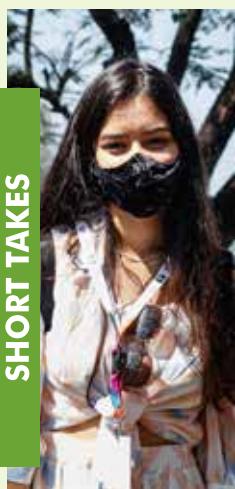
Goa has also lost our own veteran film personality, Ashalata Wabgaonkar. Born in Palolem as Ashalata Nadkarni, she acted in over 100 Marathi, Hindi and Konkani films. Though she began her career as a singer and stage artist, she got a boost when Basu Chatterjee offered her a role in his Hindi film *Apne Paraye* (1980) for which she won the

Best Supporting Actress Filmfare Award. She loved to work in Konkani films.

Ashalata sung some memorable songs in Konkani, like *Vaat sopum*, *Raat aas*, *Kazarachem utor tukaa dilam* and *Mogaan pishem zalaam khoshi* penned by the lyricist Uday Bhembre. She had a flair for writing too. She wrote plays in her early years and now has a book of memoirs to her credit. She was in Satara shooting for a Marathi TV serial, *Maazhi Aai Kalubai*, when she was found infected with Coronavirus. She did not respond to the treatment and was on a ventilator before she succumbed to the virus. What a sad end to a brilliant career!

I have taken a sample stock of the losses we suffered. Now let us look forward to a new-normal where we can experience new ways of being creative. Long Live Cinema!

Damodar Mauzo is the pre-eminent author of Konkani literature.



SHORT TAKES

"I'm looking forward to the festival. I think Goa is a superb venue. I've met a lot of really nice people; they're really chilled out. The weather is amazing as well."

Yashasvi Tripathi
Student
Indore



"This is my first year at IFFI. I'm looking forward to watching all kinds of films. I'm an aspiring director and I'm hoping to improve."

Shivaditya Tanwar,
Student, Indore



"This is my second year at IFFI. The new arrangements are good. They've improved the décor from last year."

Tanya Sayed,
Help Desk staff,
Goa



"I think this is a much nicer festival than Mumbai. It's less crowded and it's a comfortable environment. I especially like the new hybrid system. It's very convenient."

Shrikant Dhakna,
Businessman,
Maharashtra

THE PIONEER

BY SACHIN CHATTE

If Dr. Prabhakar, an ophthalmologist who practiced in Bombay more than a century ago, had not treated a particular patient successfully, the most important chapter in the history of Indian cinema would have been written very differently.

His patient was Dhundiraj Govind Phalke – professionally known as D.G. Phalke, though we know him best as Dadasaheb Phalke – who had developed cataracts in both eyes and nearly lost his eyesight. This was in 1911. A year later, in February 1912, Phalke would embark on a journey to England with the sole purpose of learning filmmaking. He returned to India with a camera and raw stock (film to shoot), after spending a couple of weeks in London.

A year later, on 21 April 1913, India's first feature film *Raja Harishchandra* premiered, and the rest, as they say, was history. It is worth noting here that Phalke scripted, directed, edited, did the production design, makeup and even processed the film (with assistance from his wife Saraswatibai).

Dadasaheb Phalke went on to make 120 odd shorts and feature films during his career and, for good reason, is revered as the Father of Indian Cinema. Unfortunately – and criminally – the majority of those films survive only in academic books and IMDb listings. Only eight of those films are known to exist today; the rest were victims of the shoddy valuation of our art and culture.

Four of Phalke's films are being screened at IFFI this year – it promised to be a treat and delivered in grand style.

All diehard movie buffs will agree that a film about the magic of cinema has a very special place in our hearts – among others, think of Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* (1988), Fellini's *8½* (1963) or closer home, Guru Dutt's *Kagaaz Ke Phool* (1959).

While the stories in Phalke's films have

nothing to do with cinema, they are all about love and passion for cinema. When we saw *Raja Harishchandra* on the big screen, it was not just any film that we were watching – we were afforded a glimpse of history being made. Paresh Mokashi's *Harishchandrachi Factory* (2009) is a brilliant film telling us the story of how Raja Harishchandra was made, while Bapu Watwe's book on Dadasaheb is an excellent source to read about the man who had an unparalleled passion for cinema.

In *Raja Harishchandra*, along with the director, even the male actor Anna Salunke made history for being the first 'heroine' of Indian cinema when he played Queen Taramati in the film since there were few women who were either willing or permitted to act. Considering it was the first film, there is a great deal of clarity in terms of storytelling and using the medium in an optimum manner.

Salunke pushed the boundaries of acting – under Phalke's command, of course – when he played both Ram and Sita in *Lanka Dahan* (1917), becoming the first actor to play a double role. Phalke's grandson Chandrashekhar Pulaskar was present for the screenings, and while watching the film, one realizes that for Phalke, cinema wasn't just an ordinary passion. He looked at it as art, as entertainment, and not least, as a way of bringing alive India's culture and heritage for its people. Sadly, only a couple of reels of *Lanka Dahan* exist, and that too just the middle portion of the film.

The Life of Christ (1906) by the French director Alice Guy-Blaché was the turning point in Phalke's life. The film inspired him to make movies and made him lean towards telling the stories of Indian gods and goddesses, drawing from the abundance of myths and legends that is our inheritance. Phalke mastered the use of the camera and technology from his first short film *Ankurachi Wadh* (The Growth of a Seed, 1911) but in *Kaliya Mardan* (1919), he outdid himself

- putting to good use his training as a magician - with clever and innovative techniques, particularly when we see Lord Krishna dancing on the hood of a gigantic serpent. If Christopher Nolan is the master of cross-cutting (oscillating between two scenes at different locations), Phalke gave us a glimpse of what cross-cutting is, when Lord Krishna (played by the director's daughter, Mandakini Phalke) overpowers Kaliya underwater, while the anxious villagers are waiting. Incidentally, *Kaliya Mardan* was screened at Kala Academy in 2008 with a live orchestra and is a memory to be cherished.

Phalke had an opportunity to work in England with some of the top technicians, which would have definitely helped him prosper, professionally and financially, but he gave up that opportunity because he wanted to make films in India and for Indians - and he did it more than a century before the slogan 'Make in India' was coined.

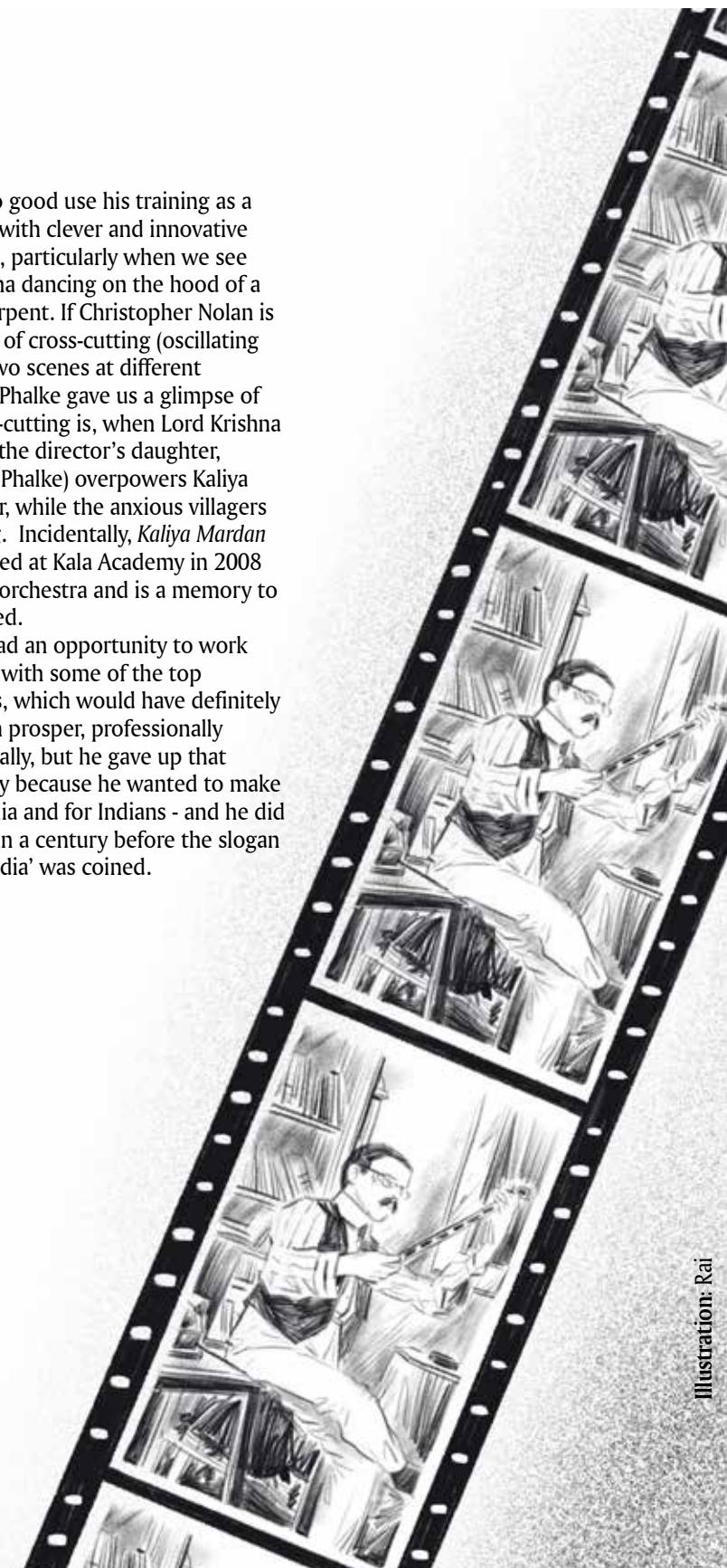


Illustration: Rai



"The hybrid format is good but people need to be informed properly. If we knew the movies could be watched online, we could have stayed in the room."

Cheitanya Kanduna,
Cinematographer
Hyderabad



"I'm hoping to build a lot of contacts with filmmakers. I think the hybrid system is convenient for the delegates, and allows organizers to collect valuable data."

Sannya Chhabra,
Writer
Indore



"I'm looking forward to Indian movies. It's been a long pandemic. I was worried if IFFI would happen or not, so it's nice to see that they're doing it."

Prince Arya,
Filmmaker
Margao



"I am looking forward to interviews with movie stars like Hrithik Roshan."

Sancia Vaz,
Student
Visakhapatnam



"The travel influenza's viral video."

“WE MUST STOP BLAMING THE PAST AND MOVE AHEAD”

BY CHRISTAL FERRAO

Manguirish Bandodkar is a young filmmaker from Goa. This 28-year-old has reason to be proud as his film *Shivar* (The Downpour) has been selected under the Feature Film category and will be screened at the 51st International Film Festival on 23 January.

He told *The Peacock* that he was inspired by the film *Kadvi Hawa* (2017), and described it as a touching experience. “I wanted to work on a film using rain and set it in one location. My film is set in and around a local house. It captures the experience of three generations of sons and their anxieties with rain due to an event in the past. Here, the older generation sees rain as bad luck, while the younger generation wants to let go of this negativity and move on. I see this as a learning. Instead of opting to travel to Mumbai for better opportunities, I decided to return home after studies and begin my journey here. Had I not returned, the film would never have been made and my IFFI dream would not have come true,” Manguirish said.

This film is a message for the youth to stop brooding over the negativity of the past and move on. He has several people to credit for the film, and is especially grateful to writer Damodar Mauzo for the story. Aditya Suhas Jambhale, whose film *Kharvas* (2018) was screened at IFFI in 2018, helped with the direction and film poster. Dattaprasad Desai helped him with sound design owing to his experience in films like *Section 375* (2019), *Dream Girl* (2019), and the *Baaghi* Series. Anushri Saxena, who also worked in the film *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl* (2020),

did the sound editing. Mahesh Kadam, an assistant of the Marathi director Nagraj Manjule, worked on the visual effects.

Making a film involves several challenges. Informing *The Peacock* about these, Manguirish stated that they were not allowed to shoot at the house they initially wanted, but this provided an opportunity to select another better one. Finding accommodation for the team and getting them together during bad weather conditions like a cyclone were other challenges.

He is inspired by several filmmakers, including Christopher Nolan, Hansel Mehta, Rajkumar Hirani, Aditya Suhas Jambhale, and Miransha Naik. His life can be seen as a story in sync with Rajkumar Hirani’s *3 Idiots* (2009). Reminiscing about his life as a student, Manguirish told *The Peacock* that he studied electrical engineering as a college student, but after watching films with keen interest, he wanted to be a filmmaker. He studied filmmaking at Vinson Academy in 2016.

Manguirish has been watching films at IFFI since ten years. This year is special for him as his film has been selected at this festival for the first time. “Previously, I have participated in the Anti-Tobacco Film Festival and won the 2nd place in 2017. This achievement served as a stepping stone,” Manguirish said.

Manguirish says, “Goa has many talented people. Filmmaking is a good career option. However, we need a lot of financial support. We need audiences to come and watch our films so that we can make more. Goa happens to be a preferred shooting location for several filmmakers. It will be great if they could involve local talent so that young artists and film enthusiasts can be motivated to choose filmmaking as a career.”

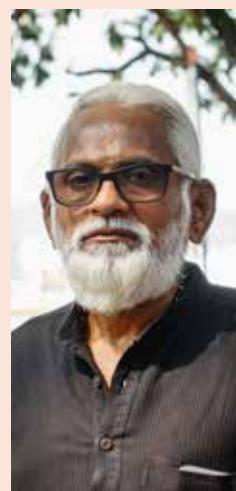


Photo by Michael Praveen



“I am looking forward to watching any movies with Kichcha Sudeep; and *Mehrunisa*, as it is focused on women.”

Asma Torgal,
Reporter
Karnataka



“The hybrid format should be repeated even after Covid. My wife and daughter who are ill, are watching the same films as me from home.”

Dr. K.
Gopinathan,
Professor
Kerala



“I am looking to gain knowledge about films, and watch different movies I might not have been able to see before.”

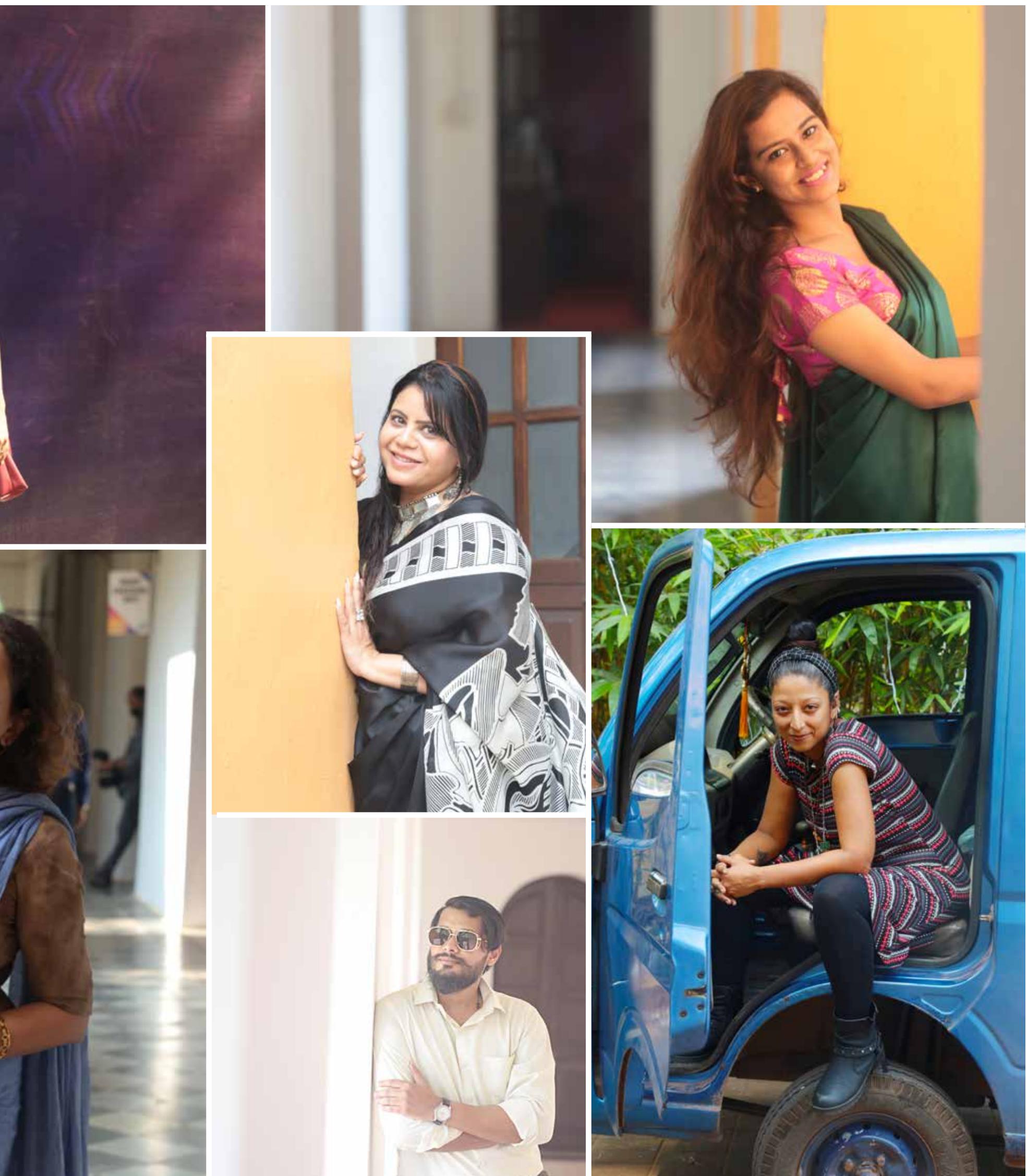
Ravina Shet,
Student
Goa



“I did two short films that got national awards, but screening them here at IFFI is our biggest accomplishment. This is a dream for us.”

Anish Menon,
Filmmaker,
Kerala





HIGHLY STRUNG

BY DR. LUIS DIAS

When I scanned the list of films announced in the World Panorama section at this year's International Film Festival of India, *The Audition / Das Vorspiel* (2019) a German-language film directed by Ina Weisse leapt off the page calling my attention. This was for several reasons.

For one, I was born in Berlin (then West Berlin, West Germany) over half-a-century ago, and German is the first language I spoke, so I'm drawn for nostalgic reasons. For another, I love the violin with a passion and as an adolescent, had grand dreams of making it my profession, but by then my family was back here in Goa and the opportunities and options were not so clear as they might have been if I were that age today in a digitally-connected world. So I took up medicine instead and although I've enjoyed that very much, I still look wistfully over my shoulder

asking myself "What if?" Would I, could I have made the cut? Wouldacouldashoulda, as the Americans say.

Reason #3: After over two decades in medicine in India and the UK, I've now devoted my life to music education, wanting to give India's disadvantaged children the opportunities I would love to have had when I was their age. This is why I founded the Child's Play India Foundation (www.childsplayindia.org) a little over a decade ago. So I can relate to being a pedagogue myself.

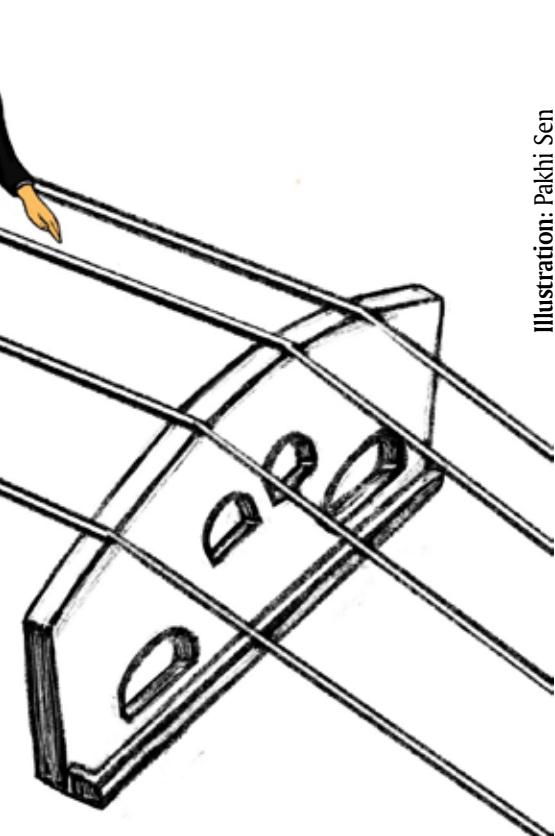
In *The Audition*, Anna (Nina Hoss) is a no-nonsense internally insecure violin-teacher at a German high school that focuses on music education. She is married to Philippe, a French luthier (maker of violins and other bowed stringed instruments, and played by Simon Abkarian). They have a ten-year-old son Jonas (Serafin Mishiev), who also studies the violin but Anna supports a slightly older student of hers, Alexander (Ilja Monti) in whom she sees the glimmer of a diamond in the rough, although her fellow pedagogues don't share her view.

The film shows us how fragile the world of music-making is, in equal parts a matter of technique, practice but perhaps crucially, a mind-game.

There are so many little nuances that resonate with me, for example, the scene where Anna trims Alexander's fingernails at one of his violin sessions. As music-teachers, we often have to do this to students ourselves. In fact, there's a nail-clipper in the drawer of our office just for this purpose. Long fingernails don't allow for good finger position on the instrument fingerboard. You can always tell a serious violinist (or violist) by the presence or absence of long fingernails; that and the tell-tale dark patch under the chin where it rests on the violin.

Reason #4 why I found this film intriguing: The actor playing Alexander, the gifted student, is actually a real-life violinist, already a winner of many competition prizes. So he's not faking it on the instrument, not synching finger and bow with some canned soundtrack. Ilja Monti is the real Monty, if you'll pardon the pun! So prepare to hear him play some serious violin repertoire in the film.

This brings me to Reason #5. My column is



called '*The Score*', and the score in this film is not just one composer, but all of my pin-up heroes: in chronological order, Johann Sebastian Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, Jean-Marie Leclair, Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach (son of JS Bach), Ignace Pleyel, Rodolphe Kreutzer, Niccolò Paganini, Franz Schubert, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Edouard Lalo, Johannes Brahms, Jean-Baptist Clément, Max Bruch, Jacques Féreol Mazas. A smorgasbord of music. In these troubled times, when live concerts are foreseeably out of the question, here is the next best thing, disguised as a film, with an engrossing plot to go with it.

In a Q&A session, when *The Audition* was first screened at the Toronto International Film Festival, Weisse was asked how she selected the music. Being a violinist herself, this was the music she was familiar with and had personal experience with and therefore, had special meaning for her.

So Reason #6 (or, should I just stop counting?). I 'know' all the music, in the sense that I've heard the works before. I've not got up to the technical level of Paganini Caprices, but I'm intimately familiar with the solo violin music (three sonatas and three partitas) of Johann Sebastian Bach, and, in fact, won a violin competition way back in the 1980s playing the first movement Adagio from his violin sonata No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001, which is in the film. It features the Presto, another movement from the sonata that I've also played, which as its name suggests is played at a pretty brisk pace.

Reason #7: Nina Hoss who plays Anna had to learn violin just for the film, and, apparently, does a wonderful job. So if you're an adult beginner, you have your role model! If you love western classical music, certainly if you also play a musical instrument, this is the film for you.

Dr. Luis Dias is a physician, musician, writer and founder of music education charity Child's Play India Foundation www.childsplayindia.org. He blogs at www.luisdias.wordpress.com.



CUCKOO'S NESTS ARE EVERYWHERE

BY DR. RACHANA PATNI

Parasitic brooding is a phenomenon we observe in nature. Cuckoos and other birds who do not build their own nests lay their eggs in the nests of other birds, and then disappear. The cuckoo eggs are then cared for by the unsuspecting birds, who now house them in their nests, but we may never know if they simply do this altruistically. Once the cuckoo's egg hatches, its fledgeling often throws out the host's other eggs, and if it does not manage to do this, it is often stronger than the other chicks, so manages to get first dibs on the nutritional supply from the host.

Many of us see *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) as a film about mental health and institutional care. It is a film about those who are defined as 'mad' or 'lunatic' and have been placed in an asylum in the custody of psychiatric professionals with dubious motives. It is about the absolute struggle between power and control of the inmates of a ward; and Nurse Ratched, who represents all that is evil about medico-psychiatric power. She believes in being dominant over the wills of the inmates and doles out medicines and psychiatric surgical interventions based on her own need of

power rather than based on the needs of the individuals in her care.

Once a human being has been labelled mad, seen to be a madman or madwoman, our society deprives them of human and humane treatment. Their control and sullenness are more desirable than their passionate and out-of-control attempt at living their life. Their expressions become dangerous to human societies, as they begin to challenge everything that we take for granted about how human beings live and experience and interact in life. Societies find a way to sanitise our lives from the existence and experience of those who do not fit our realm, and the understanding of what it means to live as a human being.

This film highlights that those who get to control the process of labelling people as 'mad', but those who wield power in psychiatric wards may have their own forms of mental illness that deprive them of empathy. However, even if empathy may be seen as another essential quality required to be considered fully human, we do not take away the rights of people who feel no empathy for others; we continue to give them the power to continue as they are. It is a difficult context and does not make for easy watching. The film is deeply disturbing

in many ways and allows us to see the insanity of power and the sanity of those considered deranged.

However, I have been struck by the choice of the narrator as a Native American, and to me, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is also about the desertion, disaffection, and distancing that comes through confinement, when humans engage in parasitic brooding of their own kind.

When dominant groups of power-hungry human beings have gone to capture lands that belong to people who are of a different mythico-imaginative orientation and have brazenly taken over resources to confine and alienate the original inhabitants; when the power-hungry human beings have further gone on to categorise the *other* as socially inept and incapable, as deficient, try to take over control of how they interact and encounter the world; to dominate through representing them as primitive, immature, unscientific and placing them in a binary of qualities that makes them appear not good enough to be fully human and fully in-charge of their own destiny; when powerful human beings have done this to groups of other human beings, feeling no care, concern or empathy for them.

This confinement happens not only

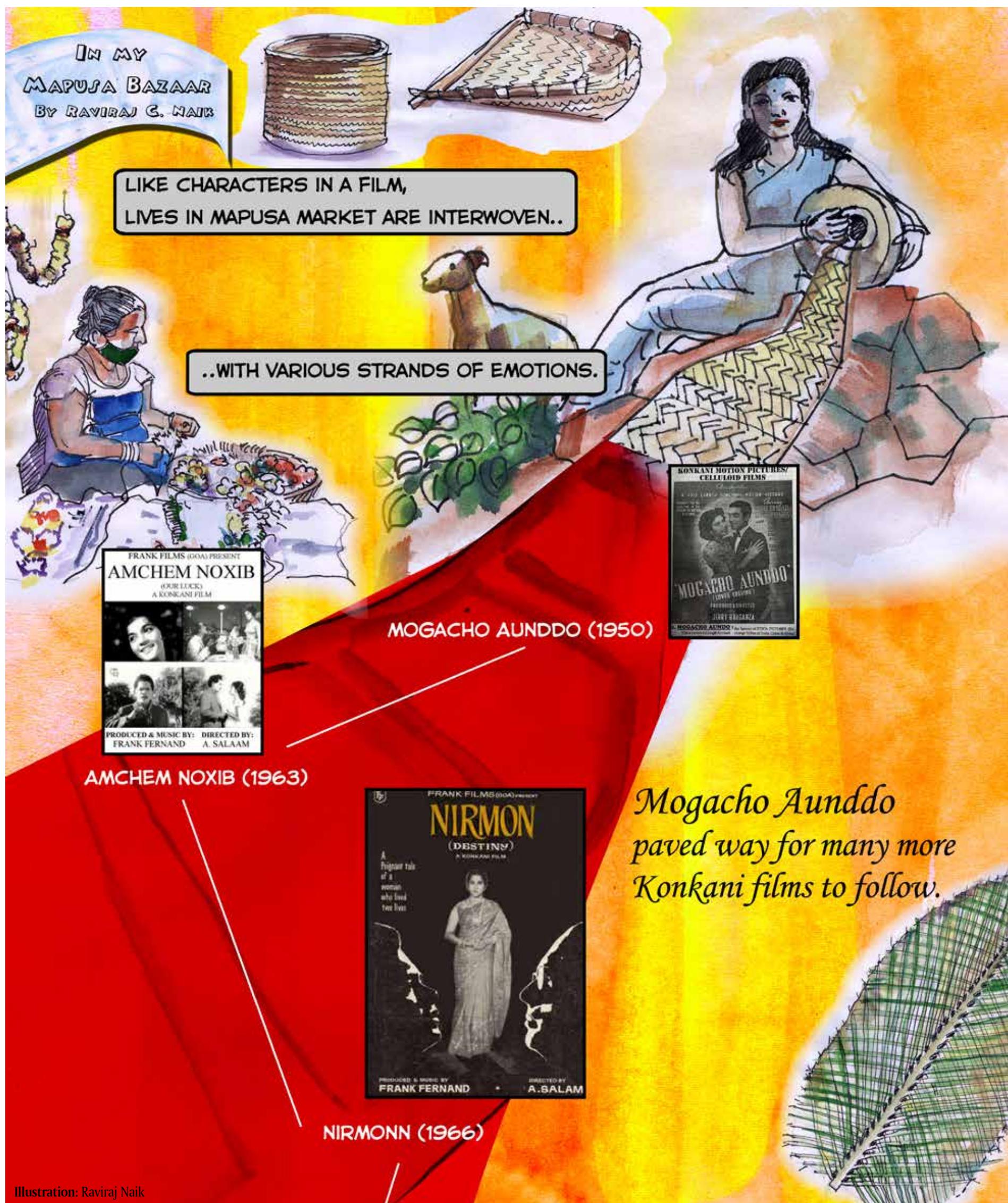
in mental health institutions but in all institutions that fit the metaphor of the cuckoo's nest. Resisting this kind of confinement requires the capacities that Chief Bromden, also referred to as Chief Broom in the film, amply demonstrates. The first way in which the Chief resists is by choosing to withdraw his senses and claiming to be deaf and mute. This way of retreating into the inner world and not engaging with the outside is a clear strategy to keep one's sanity, however powerless it may seem at first reading. It is a strategy that only those with firm control over their own faculties and capacities can make, and it shows the power of non-violent subversion.

We constantly recreate the cuckoo's nest when we play with the virtues of freedom through the strategy of power, and control of the human mind. Over time, this parasitic brooding creates mysterious pockets of grief and loss in those that have harmed and those that are harmed. For, we are connected in our wellbeing, however slow our realization of this may be. May it not be too slow!

Dr. Rachana Patni is a Panjim-based leadership consultant who works globally. She is the founder of The Centre of ME and writes on emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Illustration: Rai





VIVA BANGLADESH!

BY VIVEK MENEZES

Maps can be deceptive. If you go by what's in the atlas, tiny Goa on the western coastline of India is very far away from Bangladesh, all the way on the other side of the subcontinent. There are at least 2000 kilometres separating Panjim and Dhaka, with an immense variety of regions, languages and people situated in-between.

Yet, mere geography is not the sum of culture, and there are many hidden currents that have directly connected this location to immensely vibrant Bangladesh, the country of focus at the 51st International Film Festival of India. Some are only half-discriminable through the veils of antiquity. But others are startlingly direct, such as just over 500 years ago in 1518 when four Portuguese *caravelas* sailed down the river Mandovi that courses just beyond the IFFI "campus" and, sailing south, turned around Cape Comorin to reach Chittagong.

On May 9 of that year, the captain João da Silveira established the first European foothold in Bengal, which was absorbed and administered as part of the Portuguese Estado da India. The capital of that state – the seat of power – was in Goa, and even after the British eventually took over colonial dominance in the region, the maritime connections were supplanted by other overland pipelines of communication and migration.

Much later into our modern era, Goans played profoundly significant roles in

the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War that saw the two halves of Pakistan cleaved apart. No part of India was more overrepresented in the officers of the Indian army: commanders from Goa (including at least four generals) led action on both eastern and western fronts.

Even more significant was the crucial intervention of the Goan journalist of conscience (he was based in Karachi at the time) Anthony Mascarenhas, whose stunning coverage of Pakistani atrocities in London's *Sunday Times* that

prime minister Indira Gandhi told the paper's editor Harold Evans triggered her "campaign of personal diplomacy in the European capitals and Moscow to prepare the ground for India's armed intervention."

Bangladesh has been the country in focus in this part of India before, in an especially memorable edition of the Goa

Arts + Literature Festival. At that event, acclaimed authors like Kazi Anis Ahmed and Abeer Hoque were embraced into this state's vibrant cultural milieu, thus rekindling much older bonds that have yielded considerable mutual enrichment in the past, and hold immense promise for the future. IFFI 2021 only adds wind to those sails!

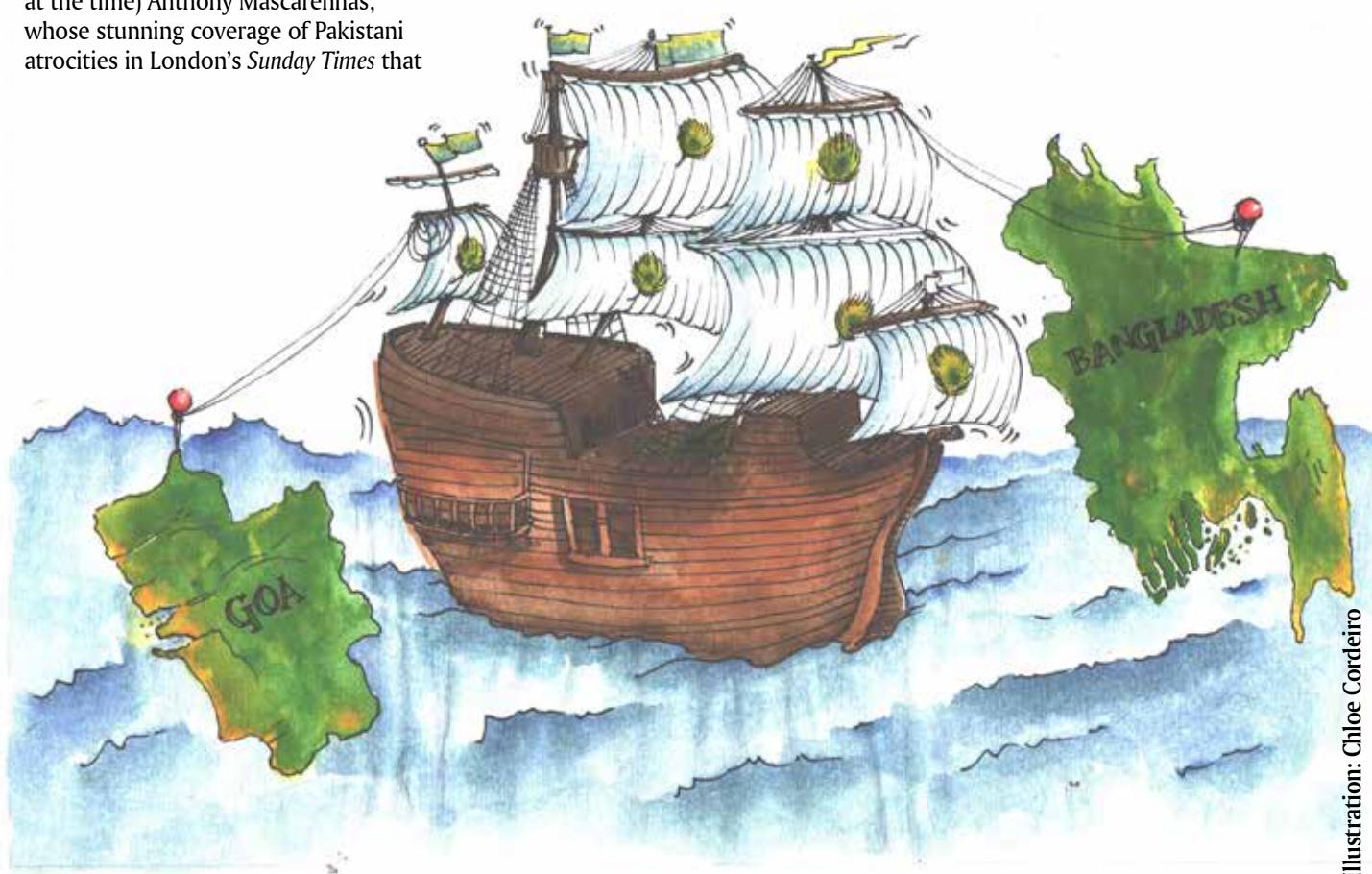


Illustration: Chloe Cordeiro

PEACOCK PICKS



The Death of Cinema and My Father Too (2020)

Director : Dani Rosenberg
Israel - 103 min. Hebrew
Kala Academy, 11:30AM



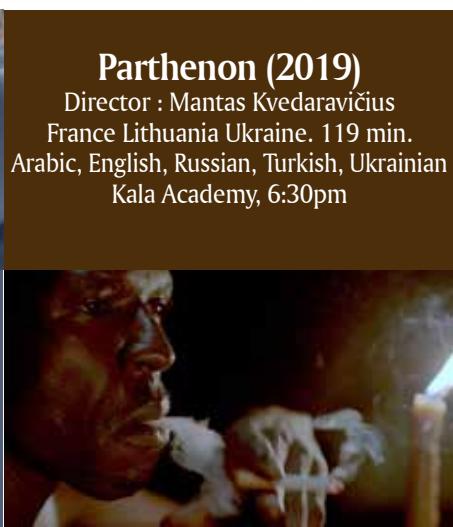
Suk Suk (2019)

Director : Ray Yeung
Hong Kong .92 min. Cantonese
Inox, Screen IV, 10:30am



Pinki Elli? (2020)

India. 107 min. KANNADA
Inox, Screen II, 5:00pm



Parthenon (2019)

Director : Mantas Kvedaravičius
France Lithuania Ukraine. 119 min.
Arabic, English, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian
Kala Academy, 6:30pm



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