

THE PEACOCK

WEDNESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2024



Angela
Dempsey

Bholi ani Dubo

BY DAMODAR MAUZO

Every language has its own considerable folklore, that unfolds myths, anecdotes, legends, and ghost stories. Our present day literature is also considered to have its origin in folk literature, and Konkani is no exception. Despite its long and arduous political and physical suppression at the hands of the Portuguese colonial regime, Konkani oral literature managed to survive and thrive. Some of the folk songs that are lastingly popular – and also among the tourists – have historical significance. For example, 'Haanv saiba poltodi voitam, mhaka saiba vatu dakhoi...' hearkens back to that period when so many people were alienated from their own kinfolk following religious violence, and conversions. You may recollect how this particular song had attracted the imagination of Raj Kapoor, who adopted the lyrics to a *filmi* song in *Bobby* (1973).

In this digital age, if no measures are taken to document, preserve and promote our rich folk literature, there is a danger it may soon vanish. Some of our Goan folktales are noteworthy for the way they communicate high moral and ethical values. All of them need to be documented in audio-visuals. One such tale that prevails, not only in Goa but also among the Konkani communities who settled in Karnataka and Kerala, is Bholi, the cow and Dubo, the calf. The story is sung in a genre that can be called prose-verse. It runs thus:

Once upon a time, in the City of Karamat there lived a king called Bhimak, who had eight thousand cows in his sheds. One day, while they were taken out to graze, a cow called Bholi inadvertently leaves the herd and reaches the woods, when, all of a sudden, a tiger pounces upon her. She is panicked. She remembers her calf who is left behind in the shed. The cow pleads with the tiger to spare her for a day, as her calf, Dubo, was hungry and waiting for his mother to return. She promises the tiger that she would return that very place the next day after feeding



Illustration: Pakhi Sen

the calf. The tiger initially hesitates but later believing her, allows her to go only after extracting the promise to return. Bholi goes back to Dubo and feeds him until he is sated. Then she advises the calf how to be happy with the grass and water, and how to protect himself from the hot sun by grazing in the shadows. As she walks to the woods the next day, Dubo follows her without being noticed

by her. When he sees the tiger in wait, Dubo suddenly comes forward asking the tiger to spare his mother by relishing him. Bholi pulls him back and tells the tiger to eat her instead, and spare Dubo who is too young to see the world around. Both the cow and the calf create a row over the issue. The tiger is moved by their pleas. He sends both of them back saying that 'henceforth Bholi is my

sister and Dubo my nephew'.

What a beautiful message this folktale has! Such stories need to be documented for posterity. And what better medium can be for this than animation? I feel the story above can be a theme for a children's film in any language.

Damodar Mauzo won the Jnanpith Award in 2022

SHORT TAKES



The festival's organization has improved with better management and booking systems.

Aadesh Salekar
Director
Mumbai



I love movies from the Middle East, Azerbaijan, and Australia. Watching these movies is like traveling the universe through cinema.

Atima Kala
Artist
Goa



Previously, there were more films from Iran, which provided unique insights and learning. This year's selection doesn't feel as compelling.

Amarendra Palusa
Director
Hyderabad



Both Indian and Australian films bring their cultural backgrounds to their movies. It is surprising how good the quality of films are here.

Diana Tempest
Retired
Australia

“You have to be a powerful woman who never cries”

BY KINJAL SETHIA

“My experience as an actor helped me give the right cues, and evoke the correct emotions,” says the actor-turned-director Elza Gauja. *A Postcard From Rome* (2024) is her first appearance at the International Film Festival of India.

Gauja acted in the Latvian film *Nothing Can Stop Us Now* (2019), and wanted to get into an acting course, but the Latvian Academy of Culture cancelled the course that year. She says, “I did not want to skip a year, and that is how I ended up in the course on film direction. I also worked as an actor in films and theatre for some time, but I realized that direction is what I really wanted to do.” From acting to writing to making documentaries to directing feature films, Gauja has done it all, and told *The Peacock* that “Once you get the taste of making films, it’s difficult to stop.”

Gauja says, “my parents made me watch French New Wave films, such as those by Jean-Luc Godard. At that time, sometimes I found them really boring. But I think they were educative for me, and seeped into my mind. Later, in high school, I started shooting some music videos. At 16, I took some acting classes, and loved to act.” That is when she applied to the Latvian Academy of Culture.

A Postcard From Rome follows a couple who work at the post office, and dream of travelling to Italy, trying to win a trip through lottery. But their plans are thrown when the wife gradually succumbs to Alzheimer’s. Gauja says, “My grandmother started showing symptoms of this condition six years ago, and it progressed very quickly. She was 65 years old at that time. I feel she was not so old to have started forgetting things. I could see

how things were so difficult for my family, and it was painful to watch her condition.”

Gauja notes that very little is known about this degenerative disease in Latvia; about its symptoms, care and support systems. She says, “Sometimes people don’t realise the conditions, and think that the old people are just going crazy. I wanted to make a film that would portray this disease, its difficulties and generally spread awareness about it.”

The film sketches the nuances of a couple married for long, and the effects of Alzheimer’s on their relationship. Gauja says, “It is not to say that men are less sensitive, but I feel it is easier for a woman to notice the little details that come with such a condition. And my experience with acting helped. It is easier to understand the mental process of an actor, and then communicate with them.”

Asked about the challenges about being a woman director, Gauja told us that “in my country, it is not so difficult. It has not always been like that, but now it is much better. Now, there are as many women making films as men. On this film, the crew and everyone on the set were very respectful and supportive. But you have to put up a strong façade; you have to remain in the leader’s chair.”

Recalling that it was difficult to keep going on some days, Gauja says, “You cannot show weakness or vulnerability. You have to be a strong powerful woman who never cries. Otherwise, you lose the position of authority on the set. In that sense, you have to censor showing your true emotions as a woman director. That position warrants certain power, leading the whole team, and you have to maintain that. It is part of the job, especially in auteur-driven cinema.”



Photo: Assavri Kulkarni



SHORT TAKES

When we open the app, we have been seeing that everything is booked. There should be an option to reserve beforehand or get notified about free slots.

Vikepe Yhokha
Cinematographer
Nagaland



My favorite part of IFFI was presenting my film to a diverse audience of different ages and backgrounds, and hearing their feedback.

Dr. Bobby Sarma Baruah
Producer
Assam



I loved *Transamazonia* because it shed awareness on illegal deforestation on tribal lands in the Amazon.

Dr. Shailendra Sadolikar
Professor
Kolhapur



Some people watch movies to pass their time, but when I watch films, I learn something from them.

Raja Kumar Sharma
Golden Artist
Bihar

“I want to make films that question the world”

BY POULOMI DAS

In his *Itihaas* column in *The Peacock* a few days ago, Damodar Mauzo — recipient of the Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary honour — asked a pertinent question about the glaring lack of children's cinema in India. Mauzo pointed out the film industry's dismissive stance toward backtracking narratives that foreground the lives of children and young adults — more importantly, their dreams and anxieties in a rapidly escalating world. In a film landscape that prioritizes the entertainment of adults, what can bring about a renewed focus toward narratives about children?

The answer might lie with our child actors. Or in this case, a National Award-winning child actor: Manohara K. Nearly a decade ago, he was plucked out of school and cast in Prithvi Konanur's Kannada feature *Railway Children* (2016), a striking crime drama about homeless children growing up in railway stations. When he won the National Award, and the state award for Best Child Actor, Manohara K. was only 13. He grew up poor in rural Karnataka and at the time, forging a career as an actor was not a roadmap for him. Konanur remembers having to convince Manohara K. to do the role, even inducting him in a week-long workshop to prepare him for the film. The rest is history.

Since *Railway Children*, Manohara K. went on to become Konanur's frequent collaborator, appearing in nearly all his films, notably *Pinki Elli* (2020) and *Hadinelento* (2024). With time, Konanur observed Manohara K. displaying an interest toward filmmaking itself. “On sets, he was always curious about staging and blocking so I decided to ask

him to assist me in a couple of projects.”

Besides acting in the film, Manohara K. assisted Konanur in *Hadinelento* as well as on *Action, Drama, Cut* (2019), a PSBT documentary that followed a bunch of children from rural Bangalore as they

learn filmmaking and make a short film.

It was during the making of the documentary that Konanur realized that Manohara K. was ready to step back behind the camera. “I had seen the ease with which he handled child

actors when he assisted me so it made sense to me that he should mount a children's film as a debut filmmaker.” At Konanur's suggestion, Manohara K. read *Mikka Bannada Hakki*, Sonia S's 2018 autobiography about living a life with albinism, a congenital condition characterised by the lack of melanin, resulting in white hair, pale, scaly skin, and eyes that appear pink or blue. He finished the book immediately and then brought Sonia S on board as a co-writer for the film adaptation: the duo ended up writing the screenplay at 17.

Today, Manohara K., a first-year commerce student, is 22. *Mikka Bannada Hakki* (*Bird of a Different Feather*), his directorial debut is all set for its India premiere at IFFI tomorrow — he is also up for a Best Debut Director award, the youngest in the lineup.

Led by an evocative performance by 12-year-old newcomer Jayashree, the coming-of-age film follows the resilience of its albino protagonist as she faces a world designed to other her existence. Told with extreme sensitivity and candour, *Mikka Bannada Hakki* is that rare film that eschews talking down to children or on behalf of them. Instead, it lets their voices reign.

Set in rural Karnataka and shot entirely in Manohara K.'s own village, the film, which already won big at Shanghai Film Festival earlier this year, including a Best Actress nod for Jayashree, marks another milestone in Manohara K.'s career. “This is a story that combines my own childhood mired in poverty with Sonia's lifelong struggle for acceptance. I want to make films that question the world that children live in.”

Mikka Bannada Hakki screens on 28th November, 11.45 am, Maquinez Palace-I.



They welcomed us very well. Their arrangements and theaters were also very good. We are enjoying this festival a lot.

Gurunath Pawar
Retired
Mumbai



I have been taking care of the garden here for almost 17 years. I only like older films and older actors like Govinda and Salman Khan. My favorite movie is *Maine Pyar Kiya*.

Pallavi Pirankar
ESG Staff
Bicholim



I love the hidden gems screened at IFFI, but it was difficult to get to every film I wanted to see. Some of the best titles were screened at Porvorim or Margao.

Tusshar Sasi
Film Critic
Kerala



Film professionals should have access to the main festival and Film Bazaar. It's frustrating to travel so far and not be able to connect with influential people.

Ridheema Karmakar
Model
Mumbai

The Disappearance of Girangaon

BY JANE BORGES

There was a legend that, for long, pervaded the rooms and corridors of Mumbai's chawls. Every night, a woman in white was seen making her way into one of the many crammed structures, often emerging out of or disappearing into one of the public latrines. Nobody knew if she was the same person, or in cahoots with a band of sisters, who'd taken it upon themselves to haunt the chawls that dotted the length and breadth of the city. But the number of sightings grew, making these apparitions a unique addition to the Bombay collection of horror stories. Until they disappeared. Like the mill workers themselves, the creators and carriers of this lore.

Renowned filmmaker and scholar Ashok Rane's Marathi documentary, *Aankhi Ek Mohenjo Daro (Yet Another Mohenjo Daro, 2022)*, screened at the 55th edition of the International Film Festival of India, nosedives into the social, cultural and political heritage — ghostly myths too — that were lost with the displacement of lakhs of mill workers who used to inhabit the erstwhile neighborhood of Girangaon in central Mumbai.

Today, Girangaon, like its lore and legends, is a blur in the consciousness of Mumbaikars. Once a composite name for areas comprising Mazagaon, Lalbaug, Parel, Worli and Prabhadevi, which made room for the working class — the backbone of Bombay — it is now being arbitrarily manicured for money-bags. The mills are becoming malls, and the 10 x 10 tenements rapidly transforming into swanky glass buildings. Rane's 130-minute-long film, which won the Best Biographical, Historical Reconstruction, Compilation Film award at the recent 70th National Film Awards, trains the lens on the labour district and its assiduous people, and their becoming and unbecoming in just over a century.

Mohenjo Daro, he says, is a fitting metaphor for this forgotten way of life. "Mohenjo Daro used to be one of the most progressive, ancient civilizations in

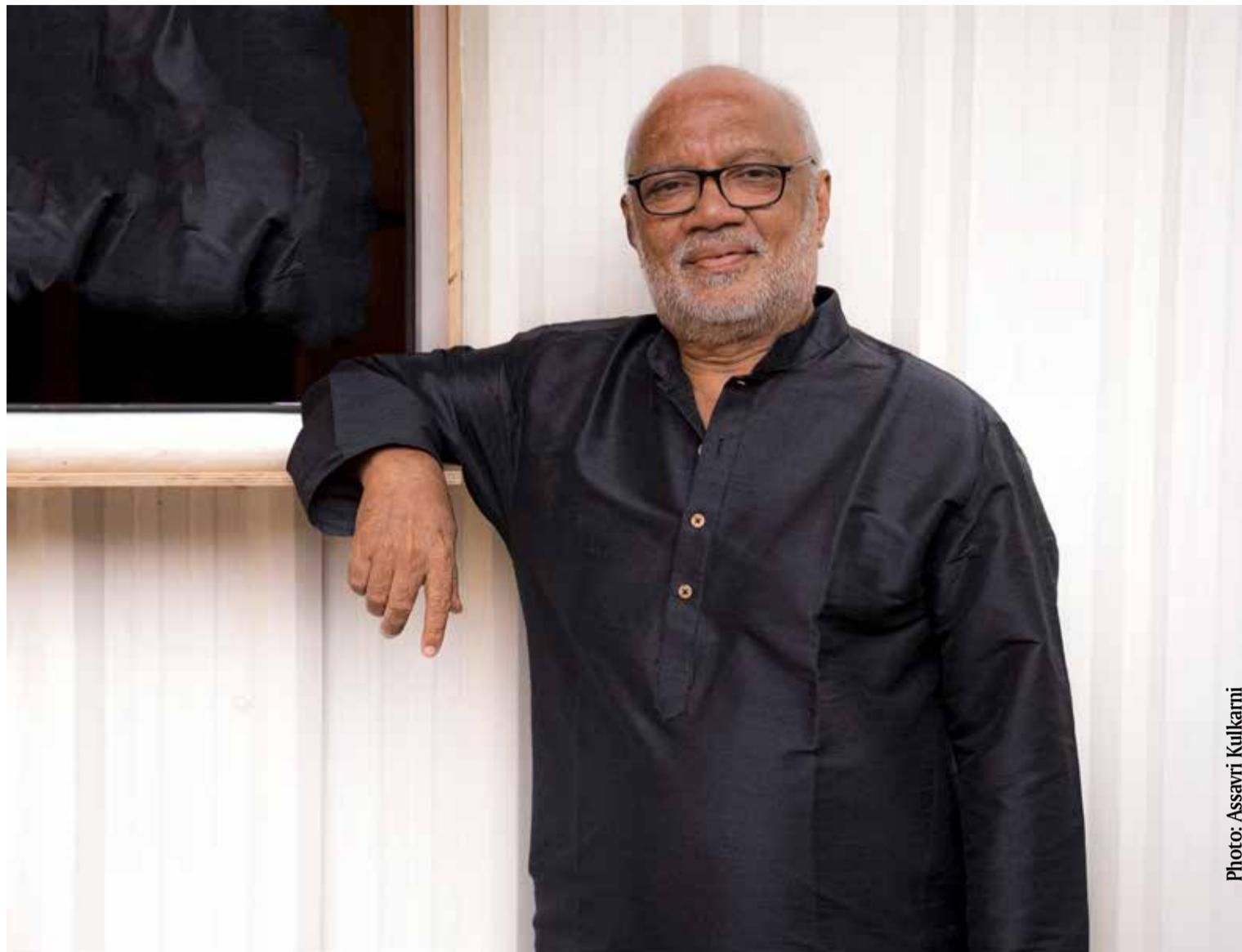


Photo: Assavri Kulkarni

our part of the world. But it was wiped away from history, until archaeologists rediscovered it after extensive digging. Till date, nobody knows what led to the downfall. Who was the villain, or chief conspirator responsible for it? Similarly, it's hard to say who was responsible for the disappearance of Girangaon. If you ask me, there are 25 villains. And I can't name just one."

As a former Girangaon resident, Rane once breathed the same air that he so poignantly and authentically captures in his documentary, stitched together from 35 hours of film footage and 70-plus interviews. His father worked at Mafatlal Mills, and his siblings and he shared in the joy of calling the neighbourhood

their family. Caste, class, and religious differences were never simmering or even evident — they had other issues to contend with. This burgeoning lower middle-class work force struggled in the pursuit of happiness: Families were large, rooms were small, money always running out, and debts growing. They held on resiliently, giving voice to their distress through music, theatre, art and literature. The documentary captures all this by empathetically splicing interviews with a dramatized narrative running throughout in black and white.

At the core of Rane's storytelling is the strikes called by unions seeking equal rights and better pay. It was the only hope for mill workers, but everything changed

after the tragic failure of the great Bombay Textile Strike of 1982 led by trade union leader Datta Samant.

"I was hurt by the way it all transpired," shares Rane, and to this day he cannot visit the old mill lands without being swept over by emotions: "Some years ago, I was invited for an embassy party at the mall in Phoenix [in Lower Parel]. When they opened the bar, my friend asked me to join him for a drink. But I kept thinking about what existed here before. My relatives had toiled on the same land. And here I was now, holding a glass of scotch. It broke me. I held on the drink for a bit, but stepped out soon after."

The film has been co-produced by Gayatri and Rajesh R. Pednekar of de Goan Studio.



SHORT TAKES

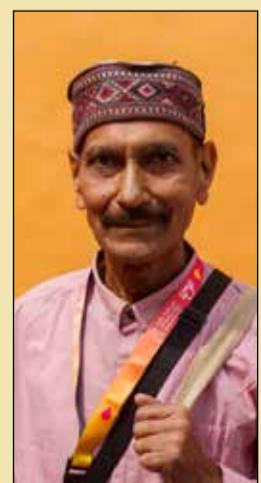
Movies are not meeting my expectations. I feel the curation can certainly be improved further.

Rajendra Prasad
Administrator
Mangalore



The accessibility was much appreciated and so were the widespread screenings all over Goa. I thoroughly enjoyed the film - *Soy Nevenka*.

Swati Rao
Homemaker
Goa



Many seats remain unoccupied because there's no rush line. If a ticket holder doesn't show up before the film starts, their seat should be offered to someone else.

Shrish Dobhal
Director
Uttarakhand



Toxic had great cinematography, but the lack of dialogue made the emotional narrative less compelling; it was hard to grasp the concept.

Trisha Manna
Film Student
Kolkata

Cinemaleela

BY CHANDRAHAS CHOUDHURY

From a grove of trees by a river, a child with a crown of peacock feathers comes skipping and dancing, silhouetted against the sky and trailed by a claque of impassioned women. The group advances to the foreground of the frame, where the women entreat the cherub to play his flute. Shaking his head vehemently, Krishna waves his flute around his head like a scimitar. Finally he consents, and as he lifts his musical wand to his lips, the lilting sound of the flute comes cresting over the tabla on the soundtrack.

Delirious with joy, the women pick up the child and carry him to a small clearing, where they set him down on a pedestal. As he plays, they scamper out of the frame and return each carrying a tree branch, with which they begin to play dandiya, swiftly interchanging positions around Krishna's still centre. In their blissful haze, they do not notice when Krishna jumps out and disappears. It is as though the flautist's music has pervaded the entire universe; the creator disappears into his own creation.

This is an enthralling sequence from *Kaliya Mardan* (1919), the only work by the first genius of Indian cinema, Dadasaheb Phalke (1870-1944) that survives in something close to its entirety. Between 1913, when Phalke made what is now considered the first Indian feature film (*Raja Harishchandra*) and 1934, when sound in cinema became the norm and "movies" became "talkies", over 1300 silent films were made in India.

Regrettably, only a few scraps of this vast corpus still exist (India's National Film Archive was established only in 1964), and so *Kaliya Mardan* might also be seen as a master key to this era. In harnessing the wonder and magic of the new technology of the moving image to the corpus of divine myths and legends stored in the imaginations of the Indian audience, cinema in its early years in India, in the words of the film critic Chidananda Das Gupta, actually used science in a way that "reinforced faith and blurred the distinction between myth and fact."

THE
HINDUSTAN CINEMA FILM Co.
(Incorporating Phalke's Films)
PRESENTS

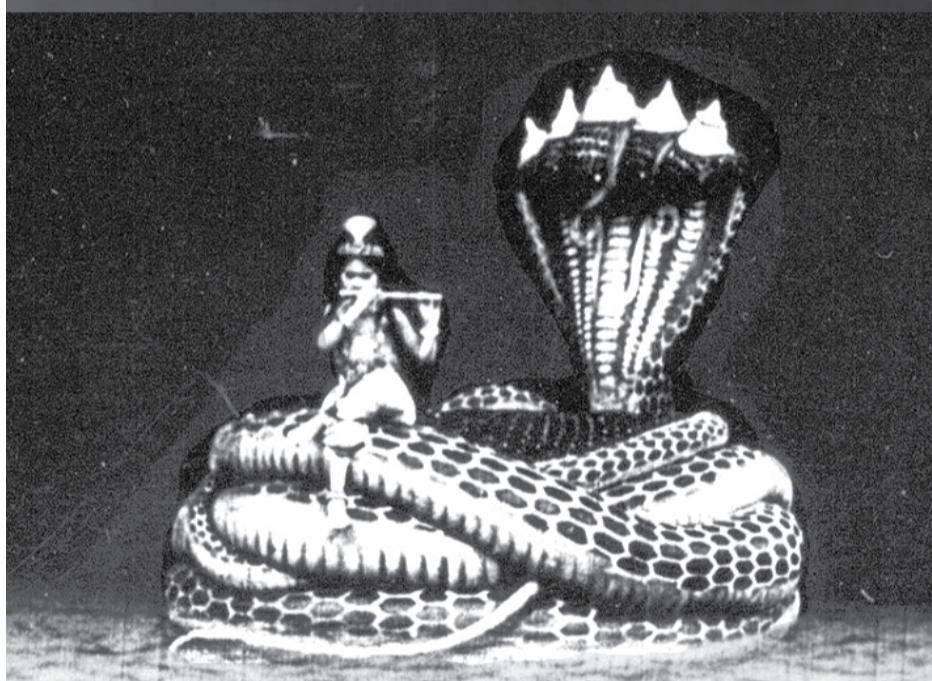
KALIYA-MARDAN.

AN INTERESTING EPISODE FROM THE CHILD-LIFE OF SHREE KRISHNA.

Composed, directed & produced

By Mr. D. G. Phalke

The Pioneer Cine-Artist
of the East.



By removing actors from the orbit of the audience, and speeding up storytelling with cuts and other kinds of montage, the new cinema could scale up the make-believe of theatre a hundredfold while still drinking deeply from the technical repertoire and mudras of dance, music, literature and the visual arts. Phalke's advertisement for *Raja Harishchandra* gives some sense of the wonder of this new super-form: "A performance with 57,000 photographs. A picture two miles long. All

for three annas."

That is why, although it is by some distance the oldest film on show at IFFI this year, *Kaliya Mardan* still feels in many ways like the most novel. We are watching not just a great artist, but an entire medium discovering its own expressive power. The film is rapt in its own leela, as the women are in Krishna's music. Except for short captions inserted periodically into the story, the form has no need for words (although its effect is greatly intensified by sound, which in today's IFFI screening will be provided by a live orchestra).

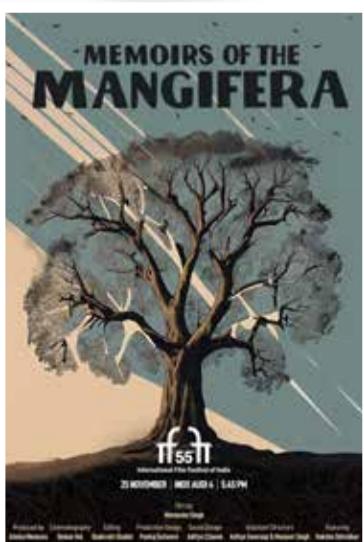
In *Kaliya Mardan*, Phalke also introduced to Indian cinema one of its first stars: his five-year-old daughter Mandakini, who plays Krishna with great panache. The film's opening sequence has no narrative content at all, as little Krishna, sparkling with mischief and delight, makes eyes at the camera and emotes for the pure joy of self-expression, taking us on a rapid tour of the *navarasa*, the nine emotions central to Indian dramatic theory.

Then we are led through a series of legendary episodes in the life of the child Krishna, culminating 40 minutes later in a great setpiece. The giant serpent Kaliya has devastated the waters of the Yamuna with poison and ravaged the life of Vrindavan. Only a solitary tree survives by the riverbank. A long shot shows Krishna approaching the tree and sizing up his task, a tiny figure in the bottom corner of the frame.

Then he slowly climbs the tree and plunges into the river – a journey inventively and economically shown by Phalke against a background of black cloth, with Krishna exiting one frame with

his head last and appearing in the next with his feet first – as the villagers cry out in fear and dread. Down "below" he is enfolded by the coils of the snake, even as up above, the villagers conclude he has been killed.

Then their mouths drop open as they see Krishna rising out of the water, both victorious and winsome, atop the arched head of the snake. Both the story and the medium have come together in a beautiful embrace to stage a miracle.



Memoirs of the Mangifera

Himanshu Singh expressed enthusiasm for his screening at IFFI, calling it "a boost to all the young filmmakers." His docu-fiction *Memoirs of the Mangifera* is a tribute to an iconic mango tree on Divar Island. "When we heard of its uprooting during the monsoons, we thought let's make a film about it."



Ek Cup Cha...!

Kishor Arjun values IFFI: "It makes a big difference for us, to be able to show our good stories." His fifth Konkani film, addresses global women's perspectives, aiming for international festivals. "We got very good recognition here, from Australia to Europe."

Angry Young Women

BY PANKHURI ZAHEER

When you think of female rage on screen, Rekha's iconic fury in *Khoon Bhari Maang* (1988) instantly comes to mind, but recent films are shifting gears — now, women's anger is a slow-burn rebellion, grounded in everyday injustices. Gone are the days when female anger was confined to vengeance-driven revenge sagas. Today, several filmmakers are more interested in quieter forms of rage — anger that stems not just from personal betrayal, but also from the suffocating expectations of patriarchy.

For decades, Hindi cinema's portrayal of women's anger was larger-than-life, often cartoonish. Think of Sridevi's *Nagina* (1986), Madhuri's *Pukar* (2000), or Kajol's *Gupt* (1997) — the anger here was dramatic and all-consuming, a spectacle more than a statement. In recent times, however, films have opted for subtler depictions of anger, offering a voice to women who do not have the luxury of grand revenge arcs. In *Thappad* (2020) for instance, Amrita (Taapsee Pannu), leaves her husband over a single slap, but her anger isn't just about that one moment of violence. It is about years of unnoticed sacrifices, societal expectations, and the deeply embedded notion that a woman's primary role is to absorb pain.

Actress Niharika Lyra Dutt highlights how these grounded portrayals resonate with women, "If there are roles that are written better, that have more of a connection to a deeply personal or a systemic problem, I feel like the anger that they express could definitely make a lot of women feel very seen."

What makes recent portrayals of female rage so compelling is their refusal to play into stereotypes of hysterical, uncontrollable women. Instead, they reflect the simmering anger that is rarely given space to be expressed. In *Dolly Kitty Aur Woh Chamakte Sitare* (2019), the anger of both Dolly (Konkona Sen

Sharma) and Kitty (Bhumi Pednekar) is multifaceted. Dolly's frustration emerges from a stifling marriage and the unspoken burdens of domestic life while Kitty's fury is rooted in the daily indignities of surviving in an urban, misogynistic environment as an independent woman.

Many recent films also position female anger within a broader socio-political context. In *Article 15* (2019), the rage of Sayani Gupta's Gaura is a response not only to a personal tragedy but to a history of caste oppression and violence that has been brushed under the carpet. Her fury is an indictment of the establishment — a demand for justice that echoes beyond the confines of her village. Actor Naina Sareen points out that this shift goes beyond individual emotions and highlights broader issues of representation. "We have to get rid of the terms 'hysteria' and 'madness' in women. We have to associate more logic with all of it, what has driven her to this point. Historically, women have not been allowed to express anger, and hence it is very, very important for female anger to be channelized into different forms in Indian cinema."

Hindi cinema is slowly building a new vocabulary around female anger, allowing women on screen to be angry without being monstrous, unreasonable, or villainized. Films like *Darlings* (2022) present women protagonists as wronged individuals whose

anger is not misplaced and whose resistance comes from a place of strength and survival. These narratives ask the audience to recognize the legitimacy of female rage. A film like *Lipstick Under My Burkha* (2016) presents the day-to-day survival story of four

women grappling with the restrictions imposed by society. Each character's anger is expressed through their struggle for autonomy — whether it's a housewife seeking sexual liberation, a young woman fighting for her right to independence, or an older woman confronting the loss of her dreams.

In these films, women's anger is never a spectacle — it's

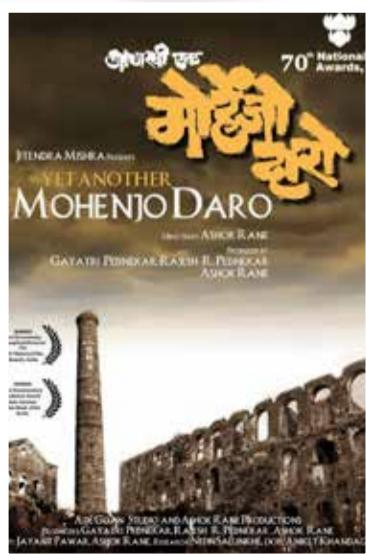
transformative, a mirror held up to society's inequities, a call to attention that things cannot remain as they are.

Sareen also underscores how, unlike in male characters, anger rarely finds violent outlets for women. "Men's anger is often valorized through violence. For women, transgressions are quieter — restricted to gossip or emotional outbursts. Cinema must explore how women's anger manifests without dismissing it as irrational or hysterical," she argues, referencing Gina Rowlands' portrayal in *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974) as a haunting example of misunderstood rage.

It is worth noting that today, Hindi cinema is moving away from the trope of the "vengeful woman" toward a more complex, nuanced understanding of anger. They invite audiences to empathize with women's struggles while challenging the stigma around female anger. As Dutt aptly puts it, "The goal isn't to show a woman as 'just angry.' It's to humanize her."

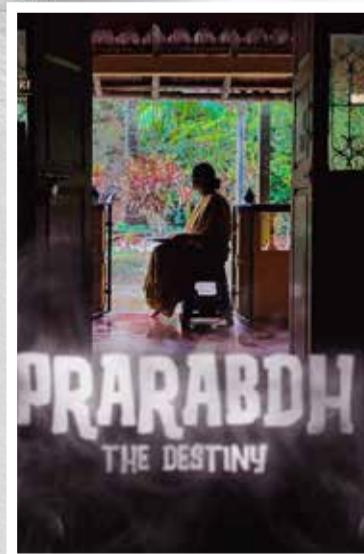


Illustration: Sayali Khairnar



Yet Another Mohenjo Daro

Ashok Rane's documentary produced by Rajesh Pednekar focuses on a textile village in Mumbai, Girangaon, and its historical significance.



Prarabdha

Jay Amonkar describes IFFI's special Goan section as "a wonderful initiative...promoting small artists to a larger stage." His film, in Marathi, aims to resonate with a wide audience from "standard 10th to the age of 75" about the issue of drinking and driving.



“Gumnaam”

1965: The mystery movie *Gumnaam* was filmed in the ruins of St. Augustine in Old Goa

2013: DNA testing revealed the relics of Georgian Queen Ketevan at the same site.

A Queen's Bones

BY TINO DE SÁ

IFFI 55 has two very highly rated Georgia-connected films among its 293 entries – Sikharulidze's *Panopticon*, and Levan Akin's *Crossing*. Sikharulidze is Georgian-American, but his film is made with a Georgian cast, as is Akin's *Crossing*, though Akin is himself Swedish. The latter had its world premiere at Berlin earlier this year, where it won the Teddy Award for the best LGBTQ-themed film. It also won the Maguey Award at the Guadalajara festival in June 2024. *Panopticon*, which refers to a circular shaped prison, is a contender for the Golden Peacock. A third Georgian film, *Bobo*, made in 1991, is being screened as a tribute to the legendary Georgian film maker of the Soviet era, Sergei Parajanov.

The Georgia-Goa connection is not a recent one. In a dramatic twist of history, that is as fascinating as it is poignant, it goes back four centuries. The story begins in the Kakheti kingdom of Georgia, when in 1605 the widowed Queen Ketevan became regent because her son, Teimuraz was a minor. At the time, Georgia was sandwiched between three enormous and aggressive empires: Tsarist Russia to the north, Ottoman Turkey to the south, and Safavid Persia to the east. The Safavids were the ones who threatened Georgia the most, and in 1614 Ketevan was taken hostage by Shah Abbas of Persia. As her young son continued to assert his independence, Abbas decided it was time to teach the Georgians a lesson. He ordered Ketevan to convert to Islam and agree to become one of his many queens. Ketevan spurned both offers, and Abbas had her publicly tortured with red hot pincers, and finally strangled to death. This happened in Shiraz, exactly four hundred years ago – almost to the day – in September 1624. Three Augustinian friars witnessed the gruesome event, and managed to get hold of the queen's body and give it a decent

burial. However, a few months later, fearing desecration, they decided to exhume her bones, and take the sacred remains with them to Goa, where they were headed.

The monastery of St. Augustine in Old Goa, completed in 1602, was one of the three largest Augustinian monasteries in the world – the other two being El Escorial in Spain and São Vicente in Portugal. The monastery was abandoned in 1835 when the Portuguese, under a new republican fervour, suppressed religious orders in all their possessions. The vault collapsed in 1842 due to neglect. Fire and earthquake did the rest, and by 1931 all that remained was the iconic red laterite tower, still a major tourist attraction, along with the exquisite Museum of Christian Art (MOCA) in the equally ancient Santa Monica Convent opposite it. Incidentally, the foundations of the sprawling monastery with its eight chapels was the location for the haunting song *Gumnaam hai koi*, from the Manoj Kumar and Nanda starrer suspense film *Gumnaam* (1965).

At around the same time that *Gumnaam* was being made, by chance some old Portuguese records were unearthed in a dusty Lisbon archival library, and what followed was almost a whodunit. After a fifteen-year search by teams from India, Georgia, Portugal and Russia, the stone casket reliquary was found in 2004, and the bones in it subjected to DNA testing in 2013, confirmed them to be those of a Georgian woman who lived four centuries ago. In 2021, some of the remains were handed over to Georgia in a solemn ceremony, replete with pomp and grandeur, by the Indian Foreign Minister, who flew to Tbilisi with them. The relics were received by the President of Georgia and the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church, for whom Ketevan is a saint and martyr. A small portion of the relics have been retained in the ASI Museum in Old Goa, as an enduring symbol of the shared past of Georgia and Goa.

Ketevan

From a land where mountains kiss the sky
like eagles, came a queen who bore
her faith like unyielding stone,

hostage to a foreign king, who snatched her throne.
He demanded she forsake belief,
and trade her soul for sweet relief.

The lashes struck, the irons burned,
still yet her soul to heaven turned.
Her martyrdom became her crown.

Stewards of her story bore the fragments
of her sanctity through salt-soaked winds,
to Goa's foreign soil.

In a sacred vault they found their peace,
where time would shroud their tale's release.

- Tino de Sá



IFFI Tech Force



Photo: Michael Praveen

BY TINO DE SÁ

“Military exercises are not very different from film festivals when it comes to planning and organization,” says Pavel Kalenda, the brain behind the software that is the heartbeat of IFFI. Kalenda and his tiny Czechia-based team (they’re just five of them) have been associated with the digital aspect of India’s oldest and most prestigious film festival since 2009. Fresh out of university, Kalenda was doing his compulsory military service, when his commander asked him to develop an app for a military exercise. He has not looked back since.

Kalenda Systems works closely with Arjun Narvekar, the IT Manager in ESG, and his enthusiastic back room team to keep the wheels of IFFI moving as smoothly and efficiently as possible. ‘Behind the scenes’ takes on a whole new meaning in this context. “Arjun, the IT Team and I are probably the only guys who never get to see a single film during the festival,” says Kalenda jokingly.

The use of IT began with the intention of reducing paperwork, but has grown in ways that were unimagined fifteen years ago. “Today, quality of delegate experience is our main objective,” says Narvekar. “A seamless experience from registering to choosing what to watch to booking tickets for screenings, and even giving feedback, is our aim.” But that’s not all the software does. It caters to the needs of all departments involved in the festival planning, organization and management in an integrated way. Not just delegate registration, but also accommodation, travel and transport for the invited guests and celebrities, and planning of the exhibition schedule of the various categories of films at the multiple venues, the budgeting and financial aspects are managed through it.

In IFFI 55 delegates have to make their bookings exclusively through an app. There is no provision for off-line reservation. Have you ever wondered what that 3-character alpha-numeric code is that appears near the name of the movie when you are scrolling

through? It is a simple straightforward code that is unique to that particular screening – the first letter indicates the day (from A to H for the eight days of the festival), the second letter indicates which of the 18 venues the screening will take place at, and the last number is the order of the screening at that particular venue, generally from 2 to 5.

To prevent binge booking that blocks seats without utilising them there is an in-built brake that will not allow bookings for screenings with overlapping timings, and if the screenings are at venues in different towns, then the gap between the end of a screening and start of the next one possible to be booked needs to be at least an hour. The app gives a delegate a notification reminder fifteen minutes before a screening is due to start. There is a severe disincentive for not turning up for a booked screening – for every no-show the pass holder’s entitlement of four viewings a day gets reduced by one for the rest of the duration of the festival. Notably, a digital version of each daily edition

of *The Peacock*, the official festival daily newspaper, is also available on the app.

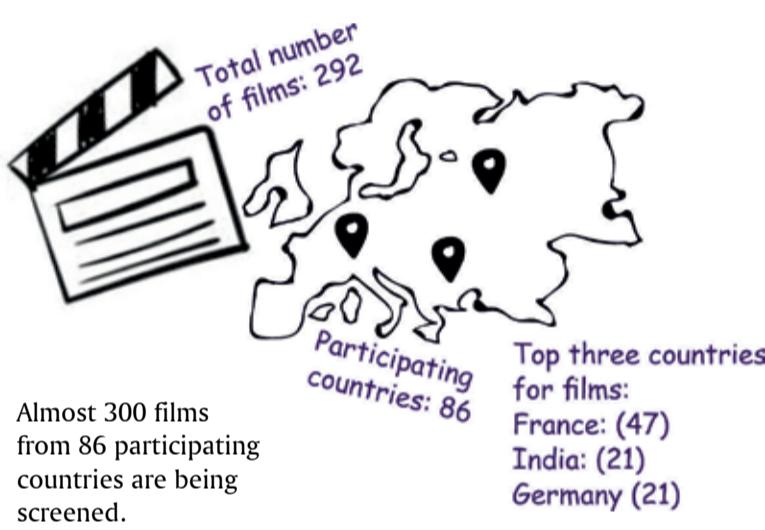
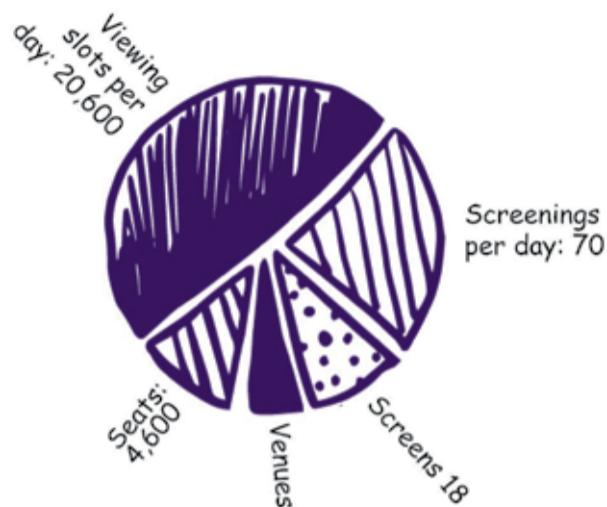
Narvekar and Kalenda are justifiably proud of their latest innovation: a kiosk for self-printing of badges. Begun on an experimental basis – about 500 delegates have opted to use it this year – it is proposed to be the principal track in the future. There are, of course multiple challenges. The most problematic of these is last minute changes in schedules. Updating the app poses no technical problem whatsoever, but it impacts the delegate experience severely, since many people make their hotel bookings and book plane and train tickets based on the announced programme timings of the specific movies that they choose to watch.

Any software is only as good as its weakest string - it requires to be constantly updated, modified and glitches removed. Immediately after the festival ends, there will be an in-depth post mortem and evaluation, and then, after a lull of maybe two months, work on IFFI 56 will begin!

Digitising the organisation and management of IFFI 55 has resulted in the accumulation of huge quantities of digital data. ESG uses this for policy shaping, course correction and decision making. Some find numbers intimidating. Team Peacock finds them illuminating. Numbers don't lie; on the contrary, they provide fascinating insights. We've crunched some of the data, and are sharing these stats here for your information and pleasure – or simply to satisfy your curiosity.

There are 18 screens in all – four in Margao, four in Porvorim, two in Ponda and eight in Panjim. The total number of seats in all the venues put together are 4,600, with Kala Academy having the largest capacity at little under a thousand, and Ashoka the smallest at about a hundred. Barring two venues, all the rest have four to five screenings a day – thus, on an average, each day there are 70 screenings, with a total of around 500 during the course of the festival.

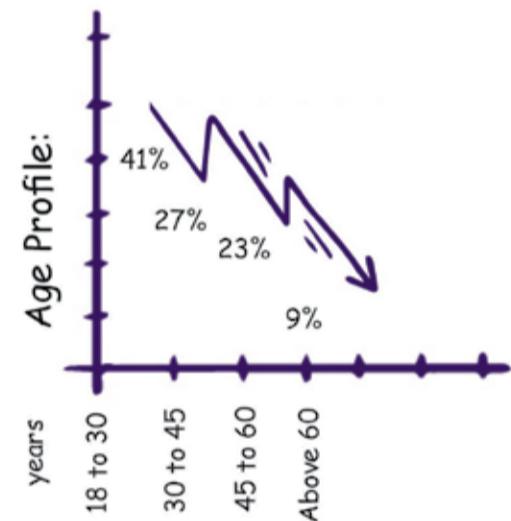
When each screening is multiplied with the seating capacity of its venue, we get a figure of 20,600 – which is how many slots are actually available for daily viewing. Of course, every film is not equally popular, and while some get sold out within hours of the booking opening, some remain partially unfilled. Overall, about 75% of the available capacity is actually utilised, that is, there are about 15,000 viewings a day.



About 9,100 delegates have registered – a little over 6,000 being cine enthusiasts, students and film professionals. The 3,600 cine enthusiasts and 900 film professionals (those who deal professionally in the business side of film distribution and exhibition), pay for their admission. The 1,500 student delegates are not charged. There are 800 media delegates (including print, digital and camerapersons), and 2,300 official and special invitees, including celebrities, every one of whom has also been registered. This count does not include the personnel involved in official management, security and services, all of whom have also been issued special entry badges.

Total Delegates	9,100
Cine Enthusiasts	3,600
Film Professionals	900
Student delegates	1,500
Invitees	2,300
Media	800

Since the films are uncensored, one has to be at least 18 to register. Less than a tenth of the delegates are senior citizens (9%), another quarter each fall between the ages of 45 and 60 years (23%), and 30 and 45 years (27%). More than 41% of the delegates, including almost all the students, are below 30 years.



Women constitute barely one-fourth the number of delegates. This inexplicable and unfortunate trend reflects the gender composition of earlier festivals too.



It seems like IFFI is more popular among film enthusiasts from the southern states, with, apart from Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh contributing the largest number of delegates.



Most of the foreign delegates are from the UK, USA, Russia and Australia, in that order.

55th International Film Festival Schedule - 27th November 2024

INOX PANJIM - AUDI 1	6:00 PM PHARMA (SERIES)	KALA ACADEMY	INOX PORVORIM - AUDI 2	INOX MARGAO - AUDI 1	INOX MARGAO - AUDI 4
9:00 AM CROSSING		11:00 AM TAPAN SINHA-CENTENARY SESSION- THE SPECTRUM AND THE SOUL	10:15 AM WHEN SANTA WAS A COMMUNIST	10:00 AM UNSINKABLE	11:00 AM THE QUIET SON
11:30 AM LINDA	7:30 PM THANUPP	12:30 PM BLURRING LINES BETWEEN THE TRUTH & THE PERCEPTION : PR & PERCEPTION OF STARS AND THEIR FILMS	1:15 PM MEMORIES OF A BURNING BODY	1:00 PM A FRAGILE FLOWER	2:00 PM WITH LOVE FROM BHUTAN
2:00 PM PANOPTICON		INOX PANJIM - AUDI 4	4:15 PM JÍKURI:JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF THE TARAHUMARA	4:00 PM Article 370	5:00 PM BLACK BOX DIARIES
4:30 PM LESSON LEARNED	9:45 AM DEAR MALOTI	2:30 PM LATA MANGESHKAR MEMORIAL TALK: MUSICAL THEATRE IN INDIA	3:30 PM ASHOK AUDI	7:00 PM I AM NEVENKA	8:00 PM AYSE
7:15 PM MOANA 2		11:00 AM I AM NEVENKA	10:30 AM SLEEP STILL WITH YOUR EYES OPEN	10:15 AM Aamar Boss	MAGIC MOVIEZ PONDA AUDI 1
INOX PANJIM - AUDI 2	2:45 PM LOST HORSE	2:30 PM BOBO	1:30 PM TO A LAND UNKNOWN	1:15 PM Article 370	4:00 PM DEAR MALOTI
9:30 AM Raavsaahab		11:00 AM BIBO BINANAO	4:30 PM CAROL	4:15 PM FOR RANA	7:00 PM HAPPY
12:45 PM P For Paparazzi	5:45 PM HEADHUNTING TO BEATBOXING	2:30 PM MAQUINEZ PALACE AUDI 1	7:30 PM Juiphool	7:15 PM 35 Chinna Katha Kaadu	4:15 PM THE TOWER OF STRENGTH / OBRAZ
12:45 PM Srikanth		10:45 PM WORKING CLASS GOES TO HELL	11:00 AM HUM DONO	7:15 PM OPEN AIR SCREENING SCHEDULE	7:15 PM RHYTHM OF DAMMAM
4:30 PM Monihara	7:45 PM THEY CALL ME THE PANZER	9:00 AM INOX PORVORIM AUDI 1	INOX PORVORIM AUDI 4	INOX MARGAO - AUDI 3	7:00 PM MIRAMAR BEACH
4:30 PM Juiphool		11:45 AM BOONG	10:00 AM BITTER GOLD	10:30 AM STEPPENWOLF	7:00 PM Penguins of Madagascar
8:00 PM Aadujeevitham	2:15 PM TAAL	1:00 PM BETANIA	1:45 PM WHO DO I BELONG TO	1:30 PM THE LAST ROMANTICS	7:00 PM ANJUNA BEACH (HELIPAD)
INOX PANJIM - AUDI 3		4:00 PM PIERCE	4:45 PM SWADES	4:30 PM JEEVAN YOGI	7:00 PM Unchaa
9:15 AM GOAN PREMIERES & NON-PREMieres	7:00 PM RAZAKAR	7:00 PM Monihara	8:45 PM BLINK	7:30 PM Gypsy	7:00 PM RAVINDRA BHAWAN OPEN LAWNS (MARGAO)
PRARABDH					7:00 PM Kung Fu Panda 2
KALAKHIVAT					
GUNTATA HRIDAY HE					
12:00 PM FOTOGENICO					
2:30 PM SEEMABADDHA					



Despite our troubled, torn-up world, all of us come together in almost intimate communion at the cinema halls of the International Film Festival of India, an epitome of the ancient Upanishadic principle of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (meaning “the world is one family”). That is why Sagar Naik Mule has painted our favourite bird in an infinite embrace of our entire world, and the heart of an entire universe of meaning that encompasses all faiths, credos and ways of being, as an expression of the eternal truth that “we are one”.

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Raavsaahab

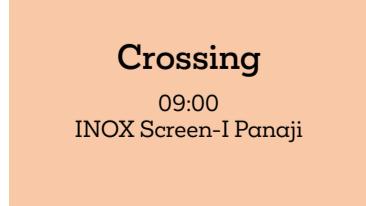
09:30

INOX Screen-II Panaji


**Working Class
Goes to Hell**

22:45

INOX Screen-IV Panaji


Crossing

09:00

INOX Screen-I Panaji


Panopticon

14:00

INOX Screen-I Panaji