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| Shyam Benegal (1934--) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Shyam Benegal, a prolific New Indian Cinema filmmaker and the nephew of filmmaker Guru Dutt, is best known for ‘middle cinema,’ so called because his films tread the path between mainstream popular Hindi cinema and India’s parallel cinema and enjoy popularity with both kinds of audiences. While he has produced and directed television programs (for instance, Nehru’s *Discovery of India* [*Bharak Ek Khoj*, 1988]), he is celebrated as a filmmaker of socially conscious, quasi-realist films that explore post-independence modernity and focus on issues of caste, gender, religion, and village life. The social-realist style he employs is influenced by Italian neo-realism and Soviet cinema, and shares aesthetic and political characteristics with filmmakers like Bimal Roy and Satyajit Ray.  Benegal’s films reveal the conflicts between modernity and tradition, but in markedly different ways from popular cinema. For example, *Mammo* (1994) focuses on Muslim identity and the tragic repercussions of partition and communal violence. Critiqued and celebrated for sharing the Nehruvian vision of secular modernity as well as showing its failures, his films provide an alternative history of India by complicating notions of national progress through his portrayal of lower caste people and women. In *Ankur* [*The Seedling*, 1973], *Bhumika* [*The Role*, 1977], *Mandi* [*Market Place*, 1983] and *Hari Bhari* [*Fertility,* 2000] he presents strong, unconventional women as his subjects and explores concerns as diverse as oppression of dalit women, female stardom, prostitution, and reproductive rights. |
| Shyam Benegal, a prolific New Indian Cinema filmmaker and the nephew of filmmaker Guru Dutt, is best known for ‘middle cinema,’ so called because his films tread the path between mainstream popular Hindi cinema and India’s parallel cinema and enjoy popularity with both kinds of audiences. While he has produced and directed television programs (for instance, Nehru’s *Discovery of India* [*Bharak Ek Khoj*, 1988]), he is celebrated as a filmmaker of socially conscious, quasi-realist films that explore post-independence modernity and focus on issues of caste, gender, religion, and village life. The social-realist style he employs is influenced by Italian neo-realism and Soviet cinema, and shares aesthetic and political characteristics with filmmakers like Bimal Roy and Satyajit Ray.  Benegal’s films reveal the conflicts between modernity and tradition, but in markedly different ways from popular cinema. For example, *Mammo* (1994) focuses on Muslim identity and the tragic repercussions of partition and communal violence. Critiqued and celebrated for sharing the Nehruvian vision of secular modernity as well as showing its failures, his films provide an alternative history of India by complicating notions of national progress through his portrayal of lower caste people and women. In *Ankur* [*The Seedling*, 1973], *Bhumika* [*The Role*, 1977], *Mandi* [*Market Place*, 1983] and *Hari Bhari* [*Fertility,* 2000] he presents strong, unconventional women as his subjects and explores concerns as diverse as oppression of dalit women, female stardom, prostitution, and reproductive rights.  Link: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0070867/)  Shyam Benegal's filmography on IMDB  Link: http://www.bfi.org.uk/live/video/970  Shyam Benegal interview with Rosie Thomas on BFI website Selected Filmography: *Ankur* [*The Seedling*, 1973]  *Nishant* [*Night’s End*, 1975]  *Manthan* [*The Churning*, 1976]  *Bhumika* [*The Role*, 1977]  *Mandi* [*Market Place*, 1983]  *Mammo* (1994)  *The Making of the Mahatma* (1996)  *Sardari Begum* (1996)  *Hari-Bhari* [*Fertility*, 2000]  *Zubeidaa* (2001)  *Well Done Abba* (2010) |
| Further reading:  (Benegal)  (Datta)  (Mazumdar)  (Van der Heide)  (Virdi) |