NIHALANI, Govind (December 19, 1940-)

Govind Nihalani is an Indian film director and cinematographer. He is regarded as one of the key figures of the so-called ‘Indian Parallel Cinema’ and ‘New Cinema Movement’ of the 1970s and 1980s, most notably through his camerawork for his more famous colleague Shyam Benegal – e.g., on *Ankur* (1974) or *Bhumika* (1977) – and through his own directional ventures *Aakrosh* (1980, his debut) and *Ardh Satya* (1983). Nihalani’s early work as director is marked by social criticism and psychological introspection within genre formulas and by his collaboration with playwright and scriptwriter Vijay Tendulkar. *Ardh Satya*, a bitter cop story sometimes compared to *Dirty Harry* (1971, Don Siegel), might illustrate best the major departures from Popular Indian Cinema in Nihalani’s work: Though operating with a largely linear narrative, Nihalani is not interested in attractions, doing mostly away with (physical) action and song-and-dance sequences, and instead opts for the Academy format in the film’s cinematography and a deliberately slow, but relentless pace to explore the various forms of institutional and mental violence inflicted upon the main character. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Nihalani made a string of adaptations from theatre including Ibsen (*Jazeere*, 1989), Strindberg (*Pita*, 1991) and Lorca (*Rukmavati Ki Haveli*, 1991). His masterpiece though remains the TV mini-series *Tamas* (1986) which became a highly controversial television event of the eighties. Adapting Bhisham Sahni’s novel of the same name, it stands as one of the major cinematic studies of Partition.

References and further reading:

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List of works:

Aakrosh (1980)

Ardh Satya (1983)

Tamas (1987)

Jazeere (1989)

Pita (1991)

Rukmavati Ki Haveli (1991)

Party (1984)

Drishti (1990)

Drohkaal (1994)

Hazaar Chaurasi Ki Maa (1997)

Paratextual materials:

http://www.cinemasofindia.com/director/view/8

http://www.vijaytendulkar.com/

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