

= Swayamvaram =

Swayamvaram ( English : One 's Own Choice ) is a 1972 Indian Malayalam @-@ language drama film co @-@ written and directed by Adoor Gopalakrishnan , starring Madhu and Sharada in the lead roles . Notable smaller roles were played by Thikkurisi Sukumaran Nair , Adoor Bhavani , K. P. A. C. Lalitha , and Bharath Gopi . The film depicts the life of a couple ? Vishwam ( Madhu ) and Sita ( Sharada ) ? who have married against their parents ' wishes and want to start a new life at a new place . The title is an allusion to the ancient Indian practice of a girl of marriageable age choosing a husband from among a list of suitors .

Swayamvaram marked several debuts ? directorial of Gopalakrishnan , acting of the Malayalam star Bharath Gopi , and film producing of the Chitrallekha Film Cooperative , an organisation cofounded by Gopalakrishnan himself . The film features an original score by M. B. Sreenivasan , camerawork by Mankada Ravi Varma , and film editing by Ramesan . Writer @-@ director K. P. Kumaran co @-@ scripted the film with Gopalakrishnan . It took seven years for Gopalakrishnan to get the project rolling when his initial proposal for a loan to make a film was turned down by the Film Finance Corporation ( FFC ) . The FFC later partially financed the film when Chitrallekha provided the rest .

The film received widespread critical acclaim . It pioneered the new wave cinema movement in Malayalam cinema and became one of the first Malayalam films to use synchronised sound and outdoor locales . The film also became the first Indian film to use sound as a leitmotif . It was shown at various film festivals around the world , and won four National Film Awards at the 20th National Film Awards in 1973 , including Best Feature Film , Best Director for Gopalakrishnan , and Best Actress for Sharada .

= = Plot = =

A newly wed couple , Vishwam ( Madhu ) and Sita ( Sharada ) , have married against the preference of their families , and left their hometown . Both want to start a new life at a new place . Initially , they stay in a decent hotel but soon due to financial reasons they move to another , ordinary hotel .

Vishwam , an educated , unemployed youth , is an aspiring writer and had some of his short stories published in the newspapers earlier . He dreams of having his novel , titled Nirvriti ( Ecstasy ) , published in the newspaper . He meets one of the newspaper editors ( Vaikom Chandrasekharan Nair ) , who agrees to read his novel but declines to publish it as Vishwam does not have many writings to his credit . Sita is offered a job as a sales girl but cannot accept it because she is unable to pay the required security deposit of ? 1 @,@ 000 . With several unsuccessful attempts to get a job , the increasing financial pressure forces them to shift to a slum . With an old lady named Janaki ( Adoor Bhavani ) and a prostitute named Kalyani ( K. P. A. C. Lalitha ) as their neighbours , things do not work as desired for the couple and they end up selling Sita 's jewellery .

Vishwam takes a job as a zoology teacher in college but soon loses it . He then accepts a job as a clerk in a timber shop with a meager salary , replacing one of the dismissed employees ( Bharath Gopi ) . Vishwam and Sita try to set up a happy home with their newborn baby , but soon their dreams fade as they struggle on precariously . When Vishwam falls ill , Sita tries for his betterment with all her capabilities but is unable to afford the medicines . She finally decides to call a doctor . However , Vishwam dies , leaving her alone with their infant baby . When Sita is advised to return to her parents after Vishwam 's death , she declines . The film ends with Sita feeding her baby and gazing at a painting from an Indian Hindu epic , Ramayana , depicting Sita Swayamvara and a closed door .

= = Cast = =

Madhu as Vishwam  
Sharada as Sita

Adoor Bhavani as Janaki  
K. P. A. C. Lalitha as Kalyani , a prostitute  
Thikkurissy Sukumaran Nair as a college principal  
P. K. Venukuttan Nair as Vasu , a small @-@ time smuggler  
Vaikom Chandrasekharan Nair as an editor  
Karamana Janardanan Nair  
Bharath Gopi as a dismissed employee

= = Production = =

= = = Title = = =

The title refers to the ancient Indian practice of a girl of marriageable age choosing a husband from among a list of suitors . It was also an affirmation to one of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi 's beliefs about an individual 's right to make own choices . The film 's English title for international release was mainly One 's Own Choice , however it was shown at the Moscow International Film Festival under the title , On Own Will . Other translations of the Malayalam title have also been used , such as By Choice , Her Own Choice , Marriage by Choice , Betrothal by Choice , The Betrothal , and The Selection .

= = = Development = = =

While studying in the Film and Television Institute of India , Pune , Gopalakrishnan was influenced by the New Wave movement of global cinema and formed a film society in Kerala , named " Chitralekha Film Cooperative " , with his classmates in 1965 . Gopalakrishnan had initially submitted a romantic script Kamuki to the Film Finance Corporation ( now National Film Development Corporation of India or NFDC ) which they declined to finance . Later , he submitted the script for Swayamvaram , which Film Finance Corporation accepted and approved the loan of a ? 150 @,@ 000 ( US \$ 2 @,@ 200 ) . However , it took seven years for him to get the film rolling , after he passed out of the Film and Television Institute of India . Gopalakrishnan co @-@ scripted the film with writer @-@ director K. P. Kumaran . The film was produced by Chitralekha Film Co @-@ operative , Kerala 's first film co @-@ operative society for film production , with Swayamvaram being their first feature film production . The film 's total budget was ? 250 @,@ 000 ( US \$ 3 @,@ 700 ) and Gopalakrishnan used the money he had collected from his documentary productions . Initially , Chitralekha Film Co @-@ operative , the producer of the film had trouble distributing the film , so they decided to do it by themselves .

= = = Casting = = =

Gopalakrishnan wanted fresh faces for both the lead roles and he had written letters to various heads of colleges and universities for the auditions . However , he did not receive any response from anywhere . For the female lead , Gopalakrishnan approached Sharada , one of the most successful actresses of her time . She was acting in commercial films when Gopalakrishnan asked her to star in Swayamvaram . Sharada was initially reluctant to commit herself to an art film , but agreed when Gopalakrishnan narrated the complete story to her at Prasad Studios , in Chennai . The male lead for the film , Madhu , was an old friend of Gopalakrishnan and had expressed a desire to act in one of his films . By the time Gopalakrishnan finished his studies and returned from FTII , Madhu was already a star in Malayalam cinema . Gopalakrishnan then decided to cast him opposite Sharada . Mentioning about his experience working with Gopalakrishnan and Swayamvaram , Madhu recollected in an interview that " [ ... ] when Gopalakrishnan narrated the story of Swayamvaram , I knew it was going to be different . " Years later he also mentioned that he " sometimes wished Prem Nazir had acted in Adoor 's Swayamvaram . He might have won a

Bharath award . But he was very busy those days . "

Malayalam actor @-@ director Thikkurissy Sukumaran Nair was cast as a college principal . Bharath Gopi , who later became a major actor in the Malayalam film industry , made his film debut in Swayamvaram , doing a minor role as the dismissed factory employee who gets replaced by Madhu . Gopi was a noted stage actor before Swayamvaram and would later play the lead role in Gopalakrishnan 's second feature film , Kodiyettam , which earned him a reputation as one of the finest actors in Indian cinema and also inspired his screen name as " Bharath Gopi " or " Kodiyettam Gopi " . He won a Best Actor award , then known as " Bharat Award " , for the role at the 25th National Film Awards in 1977 .

K. P. A. C. Lalitha , who would later play notable characters in many of Gopalakrishnan 's films , played a small role as a prostitute in Swayamvaram . Noted Malayalam writer and journalist Vaikom Chandrasekharan Nair played a newspaper editor in the film . Gopalakrishnan praised him for his performance , expressing the difficulties of performing as oneself onscreen .

= = = Filming = = =

Due to financial crises , it took more than one and a half years for Gopalakrishnan to finish the film . Swayamvaram was one of the first Malayalam films to use synchronised sound and to be filmed in outdoor locales , for which Gopalakrishnan used his Nagra audio recorder . The film was shot in two schedules . It was delayed due to scheduling conflicts of the lead actress , Sharada . She was working in several films at that time , so Gopalakrishnan had to arrange the schedule to suit her convenience . The lead actor , Madhu , mentioned in an interview that Gopalakrishnan was clear about his characters and their behaviour . Gopalakrishnan also used to discuss the shoot with his crew before the shooting .

The film marked the beginning of a collaboration between Gopalakrishnan and cinematographer Mankada Ravi Varma . Gopalakrishnan had seen Varma 's work in his second film as a cinematographer , Olavum Theeravum ( 1970 ) , and when he decided to work on Swayamvaram , Gopalakrishnan approached Varma with the script . Initially reluctant , Varma agreed to do the film due to its " extensive " and " very well written " script . Incidentally , Varma won his only National Film Award for Best Cinematography , with a career spanned over thirty years , for Swayamvaram . The film featured no songs and has only an original score by M. B. Sreenivasan . The editing of the film was done by Ramesan , whereas S. S. Nair and Devadathan worked together on the production design . Sound mixing was done by P. Devadas . The total budget of the film was ? 250 @,@ 000 ( US \$ 3 @,@ 700 ) , where the Film Finance Corporation provided ? 150 @,@ 000 as a loan .

= = Reception = =

= = = Theatrical = = =

The film had a lukewarm initial theatrical response . Gopalakrishnan was told that " If only he had some songs in it , it would have done well " . After the announcement of the National Film Awards , the film was re @-@ released in theatres and gathered better response this time , which also helped Gopalakrishnan repay the loan to FFC , the main producer of the film . The film participated in the competition section of the 8th Moscow International Film Festival in 1973 .

= = = Critical = = =

The previews of the film were held at various places , where it was well received by critics and audiences . Noted writer M. Govindan wrote a cover story in his magazine Sameeksha , and organised a seminar on the film in Chennai , then known as Madras . Various intellectuals and writers took part in it , including noted film experts like P. Bhaskaran and director Balu Mahendra . Noted critic and film director Vijayakrishnan mentioned that Devadas 's sound mixing work was one

of the major attractions of the film . Considerable use of natural sound , apart from background music , was new for Malayalam cinema . Cast performances were also praised by critics . Bharath Gopi received considerable attention even for his minimal screen appearance . Though Madhu had acted previously in several films , including Ramu Kariat 's National Award @-@ winning film , Chemmeen ( 1965 ) , Swayamvaram marked a turning point in his career .

Although most of the reviews were positive , some film experts were critical about the film . Amaresh Datta , in his book The Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature , criticised the film for " following the neo @-@ realistic style " and showcasing " same old love story without any freshness added " . Poet and journalist C. P. Surendran called the film " disturbing " in one of his articles , criticising Gopalakrishnan and his films . Shyam Benegal , a film director and a well @-@ known admirer of Gopalakrishnan 's films , also mentioned that he was not particularly pleased with Swayamvaram . Some critics have pointed out its resemblance to Ritwik Ghatak 's Subarnarekha ( 1965 ) . Gopalakrishnan agreed on influences of Ghatak and Satyajit Ray but pointed that Swayamvaram 's treatment is different from Ghatak 's Subarnarekha as Swayamvaram is more about the trip .

The film received little critical response in Kerala , which Gopalakrishnan referred to as " more of a question of insensitivity rather than personal enmity . " However , some noted critics like Moorkoth Kunhappa and T. M. P. Nedungadi praised the movie , with Nedungadi writing a response titled " Swayamvaram over , what next in Malayalam cinema ? "

= = Legacy = =

Swayamvaram pioneered the new wave cinema movement in Malayalam cinema . The film did not feature any dance numbers , comedy or melodramatic scenes , which were " usual ingredients " of films at that time , but it introduced viewers to then unknown techniques of film presentation , in which it was not merely used for " story @-@ telling " . It was an inevitable development for Malayalam cinema , as the film focused mainly on cinema rather than its story . The film also introduced film @-@ goers to a new cinematic art through the impulses generated by the film , which in turn were more important than the film itself . The film is also said to have divided Malayalam films into three different categories , " uncompromising art films " , " compromising films " which aimed at commercial success but tried maintaining a good deal of the artistic qualities , and the " commercial films " which purely aimed at box office success .

Through Swayamvaram , Gopalakrishnan became the first Indian director to use sound as a leitmotif ( a recurring musical theme ) . The film provided a new experience to Indian cinema @-@ goers , as it used ample amounts of natural sounds with a minimalistic background score .

= = Digital restoration = =

The National Film Archive of India has digitally restored the film , and the restored version with improved subtitles in English was screened at the International Film Festival of India in November 2012 . Also , the University of Wisconsin ? Milwaukee has acquired all of Gopalakrishnan 's features , including Swayamvaram , to restore and preserve .

= = Awards = =

1973 Moscow International Film Festival ( Russia )

Adoor Gopalakrishnan ? Nominated

1973 National Film Awards ( India )

National Film Award for Best Feature Film

National Film Award for Best Director : Adoor Gopalakrishnan

National Film Award for Best Actress : Sharada

National Film Award for Best Cinematography : Mankada Ravi Varma

1973 Kerala State Film Awards ( India )

Kerala State Film Award for Best Photography ( Black @-@ and @-@ white ) : Mankada Ravi

Varma  
Kerala State Film Award for Best Art Direction : Devadathan