

= Chandralekha ( 1948 film ) =

Chandralekha ( also spelt Chandraleka ) is a 1948 Indian Tamil @-@ language historical fiction film directed and produced by S. S. Vasan . Starring T. R. Rajakumari , M. K. Radha and Ranjan in the lead roles , the film follows two brothers named Veerasimhan and Sasankan , who fight with each other over ruling their father 's kingdom and for marrying the village dancer Chandralekha .

The development of Chandralekha began in the early 1940s when , after two successive box office hits , Vasan announced that his next film would be titled Chandralekha . However , when he launched an advertising campaign for the film , he had only the name of the heroine from a storyline by Gemini Studios ' story department he had rejected . Veppathur Kittoo , one of his storyboard artists , eventually developed a story based on a chapter of George W. M. Reynolds ' novel Robert Macaire : or , The French bandit in England ( 1848 ) , which impressed Vasan . The original director T. G. Raghavachari directed more than half of the film , then left the project because of disagreements with Vasan , who took over the film in his directorial debut .

Originally made in Tamil and later in Hindi , Chandralekha was in production for five years from 1943 to 1948 . It went through a number of changes to the script , cast and production , and ultimately became the most expensive film made in India at the time ; the budget for a single sequence equalled that typical for an entire film of the period . Vasan mortgaged all of his property and even sold his jewellery to complete the film . Cinematography was by Kamal Ghosh and K. Ramnoth . The music was largely inspired by both Indian and Western classical music ; it was composed by S. Rajeswara Rao and by M. D. Parthasarathy , with lyrics by Papanasam Sivan and Kothamangalam Subbu .

Chandralekha premiered in Chennai on 8 April 1948 and had a wide theatrical release the following day . The film received generally positive reviews , but was unable to recover its production costs . As a result , Vasan released the film in Hindi with some changes on 24 December in the same year , and Chandralekha soon became a major box office success . South Indian cinema gained prominence throughout the country with the film 's release . The film inspired South Indian film producers to market their Hindi films in North India . It was dubbed in English , Japanese , Danish and other foreign languages and was screened at Indian and international film festivals .

= = Plot = =

Veerasimhan ( M. K. Radha ) and Sasankan ( Ranjan ) are the sons of a king . While passing through a village on his horse , Veerasimhan meets a village dancer named Chandralekha ( T. R. Rajakumari ) and they fall in love . At the palace , the king decides to abdicate in favour of Veerasimhan . This enrages the younger brother Sasankan ; he forms a gang of thieves who embark on a crime spree . Chandralekha 's father is injured in the ensuing chaos and dies soon after . Chandralekha , now orphaned , joins a band of travelling musicians , whose caravan is raided by Sasankan 's men .

Sasankan orders Chandralekha to dance for him , which she does after being flogged , but she soon manages to escape . Later , Sasankan ambushes Veerasimhan and takes him prisoner . Chandralekha watches Sasankan 's men trapping Veerasimhan in a cave and sealing its entrance with a boulder . She rescues him with the help of elephants from a passing circus troupe . Veerasimhan and Chandralekha join the circus to hide themselves from Sasankan 's men . After returning to the palace , Sasankan imprisons his parents and declares himself king . He immediately sends a spy to find Chandralekha .

The spy sees Chandralekha performing at the circus ; he tries to capture her but Veerasimhan saves her and they both escape and join a gypsy group . When Veerasimhan leaves to seek help , Sasankan 's men capture Chandralekha and take her to the palace . Sasankan tries to woo Chandralekha but she pretends to faint every time he approaches her . One of Chandralekha 's friends from the circus comes to Sasankan disguised as a gypsy healer , claiming that she can cure Chandralekha of her " illness " . Behind locked doors , the two girls secretly talk . Sasankan is pleased to find Chandralekha miraculously cured and apparently ready to accept him as a

bridegroom . In return , he agrees to Chandralekha 's request for a drum dance to celebrate the royal wedding .

Huge drums are arranged in rows in front of the palace . Chandralekha joins the dancers , who dance on the drums . Sasankan is impressed with Chandralekha 's performance but , unknown to him , Veerasimhan 's soldiers are hiding inside the drums . As the dance ends , they rush out of the drums and attack Sasankan 's men . Veerasimhan confronts Sasankan , and they have a long sword fight , which ends with Sasankan 's defeat and imprisonment . Veerasimhan releases his parents and becomes the new king , while Chandralekha becomes his queen .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Producer S. S. Vasana contemplated a story for his third film to follow Bala Nagamma ( 1942 ) and Mangamma Sapatham ( 1943 ) , which netted profits of ? 4 million . He wanted a film on a grand scale with no budgetary constraints . He asked Gemini Studios ' story department ( consisting of K. J. Mahadevan , Kothamangalam Subbu , Sangu , Naina and Veppathur Kittoo ) to write a screenplay . They saw Mangamma Sapatham and Bala Nagamma as " heroine @-@ oriented stories " , and suggested a similar story to Vasana . They told the story of Chandralekha , a tough woman who " outwits a vicious bandit , delivers the final insult by slashing off his nose and , as a finishing touch , fills the bloodied gaping hole with hot , red chilli powder " . Vasana disliked their story 's gruesomeness and vulgarity , and rejected it but kept the character 's name , Chandralekha .

Without waiting for the full story , Vasana announced that his next project would be titled Chandralekha , and he publicised it heavily in most major publications . Despite much work by Gemini 's writers , the story was still not ready three months later . Vasana grew impatient and told the writers he would be shelving Chandralekha in favour of developing Avvaiyyar ( 1953 ) . After he allowed them a final week , Kittoo discovered George W. M. Reynolds ' novel Robert Macaire : or , The French bandit in England ( 1848 ) . In the first chapter he read :

A dark night in rural England and a mail coach convoy drawn by horses trots its way down a deserted leafy highway when suddenly , Robert Macaire , the fierce bandit and his henchmen emerge from the surrounding darkness and rob the convoy . Hiding under a seat is a young woman fleeing from a harsh , unhappy home . She is a dancer and when she refuses to dance the bandit whips her into submission .

Vasana was impressed when Kittoo narrated a story based on this episode . He decided to continue with the film , naming the heroine Chandralekha . Although the story was still incomplete , the rest of Gemini 's story department later improvised Kittoo 's ideas to give the story its final form .

= = = Casting = = =

The script had two major roles ; both princes of a kingdom ? the elder of whom was the hero and his brother the villain . M. K. Radha was offered the part of Sasankan , the younger prince . As he was then known for playing heroic roles , he was unwilling to play a negative role , and instead agreed to play the older prince Veerasimhan . Radha 's wife had persuaded Vasana to cast Radha for the part . K. J. Mahadevan , who joined Gemini as a production controller , was chosen to play Sasankan , while T. G. Raghavachari agreed to direct the film . Some footage featuring Mahadevan was shot , but his performance was deemed " too soft " and he was dismissed from the part . He continued to serve as a scriptwriter and an assistant director . When Raghavachari suggested Ranjan for Sasankan , Vasana was reluctant , feeling he was too effeminate to play a " steel @-@ hard villain " , but eventually agreed . By then , Ranjan was already committed to B. N. Rao 's Saalivaahana ( 1945 ) , but Kittoo persuaded him to take a screen test for Chandralekha and Rao gave Ranjan a few days off . The test was successful and Ranjan was officially cast .

T. R. Rajakumari was chosen to play Chandralekha , replacing Vasana 's first choice K. L. V.

Vasanthan . Film historian Randor Guy believes Vasanthan chose Rajakumari over Vasanthan because she was then leaving Gemini Studios permanently for Modern Theatres in Salem . In April 1947 , N. S. Krishnan was released from prison ; Vasanthan recruited him and T. A. Madhuran to play the circus artists who help Veerasimhan rescue Chandralekha from Sasankan . The script was rewritten ; new scenes were added to showcase the comedy duo . Actors Madurai Sriramulu Naidu and S. N. Lakshmi made their acting debut in this film ; the former appears in an uncredited role as a horseman , and the latter appears as a dancer in the climactic drum @-@ dance scene .

When a minor role of the hero 's bodyguard was yet to be cast , the then struggling stage actor Villupuram Chinniah Pillai Ganeshamurthy ? who later became known as Sivaji Ganesan ? was interested ; he grew his hair long for the role . Ganeshamurthy had contacted Kittoo several times asking for a role in the film . Eventually , Kittoo took Ganeshamurthy to Vasanthan , who had seen him perform on @-@ stage . To Ganeshamurthy 's dismay , Vasanthan rejected him , calling him " totally unsuited for films " and told him to choose another profession . This incident caused a permanent schism between Vasanthan and Ganeshamurthy . The role of the bodyguard was eventually given to N. Seetharaman , who later became known as Javar Seetharaman .

Kothamangalam Subbu 's wife M. S. Sundari Bai plays a circus performer who helps Chandralekha escape from Sasankan . T. A. Jayalakshmi , in one of her earliest film roles , appears briefly in one scene that lasted for a few minutes , as a dancer . L. Narayana Rao plays the circus manager . T. E. Krishnamachari plays the king and V. N. Janaki plays a gypsy dancer who gives Chandralekha and Veerasimhan shelter in the forest . Veppathur Kittoo plays Sasankan 's spy ; he also worked as an assistant director in the film . Pottai Krishnamurthy appears in the song " Naattiya Kuthirai " . Other supporting actors include Seshagiri Bhagavathar , Appanna Iyengar , T. V. Kalyani , Surabhi Kamala , Subbiah Pillai , Cocanada Rajarathnam , N. Ramamurthi , Ramakrishna Rao , Sundara Rao , V. S. Susheela , Varalakshmi and Velayutham , in addition to " 100 Gemini Boys & 500 Gemini Girls " . Studio staff members , their families and passers @-@ by were recruited as extras to play spectators in the circus scenes .

= = = Filming = = =

Chandralekha began shooting in 1943 . More than half of the film was directed by Raghavachari , but due to differences of opinion that arose between him and Vasanthan over the shooting of some scenes at the Governor 's Estate ( now Raj Bhavan , Guindy ) , Raghavachari left the project and Vasanthan took over directing , making his directorial debut .

Originally , the film did not include any circus scenes . Vasanthan decided to include them when the film was halfway through production , and the screenplay was altered . Kittoo travelled throughout South India and Ceylon ( now Sri Lanka ) to see over 50 circuses before choosing the Kamala Circus Company and Parasuram Lion Circus ; Vasanthan employed Kamala for a month . The circus scenes were shot by K. Ramnoth . In retrospect , Kittoo said about Ramnoth 's work , " In those days , we had no zoom lenses and yet Ramnoth did it . One night , while Chandralekha is performing on the flying trapeze , she notices the villain 's henchman in the front row . She is on her perch high up and he is seated in a ringside chair . Shock hits her and to convey the shock the camera zooms fast from her to the man . Today , with a fast zoom shot it can be done very easily , but there was no such lens forty years ago . Ramnoth did it using the crane . He planned it well and rehearsed the shot for long . He took the shot 20 times and selected the best ' take ' . " For the scene in which Veerasimhan is freed from a cave by elephants , " hundreds " of circus elephants were used .

After Raghavachari 's departure , one sequence he directed ? the drum @-@ dance scene ? remained in the film . The scene involved 400 dancers and six months of daily rehearsals . It was designed by the chief art director A. K. Sekhar , choreographed by Jayashankar and was shot with four cameras by Kamal Ghosh . The drum dance alone cost ? 500 @,@ 000 ( about US \$ 105 @,@ 000 in 1948 ) , and included various dance forms such as Kathakali , Bharatanatyam and the Sri Lankan Kandyan dance .

During post @-@ production , Vasanthan asked Ramnoth his opinion of the scene in which hundreds of Veerasimhan 's warriors storm the palace to rescue Chandralekha from Sasankan . Although

everyone else praised the scene 's photography , shots and action , Ramnoth remained quiet , finally saying that the suspense could be ruined if the scene was shown uncut , which sparked a discussion . Vasan advised the editor Chandru to edit according to Ramnoth , and he was impressed with the result . C. E. Biggs worked as the audio engineer .

Chandralekha was in production for five years ( from 1943 to 1948 ) ; it went through numerous changes to its story , cast , and filming . This caused substantial time and cost overruns ; the film ultimately cost ? 3 million ( about US \$ 600 @,@ 000 in 1948 ) , and became the most expensive Indian film at that time . Vasan had mortgaged all of his property , received financial assistance from K. Srinivasan ? then the editor of The Hindu ? and sold his jewellery to complete the film . Adjusted for inflation , the film would have cost US \$ 28 million in 2010 . According to film historian S. Muthiah , Chandralekha , considering the free @-@ floating exchange rate at that time , became the first film with a budget of more than a million dollars to be made outside of the United States .

= = Themes and influences = =

Although a period film , Chandralekha is not based on historical fact ; instead its plot is based on the first chapter of the novel Robert Macaire : or , The French bandit in England . Sasankan is based on the fictional bandit Robert Macaire , and , according to film historian B. D. Garga , Chandralekha is " probably " based on a female dancer in the novel who Macaire flogs when she refuses to dance . The film enacts the incident from the novel . Garga noted that the film also shows influences from other Western literary and cinematic sources , including the novel Blood and Sand ( 1908 ) , and the films The Mark of Zorro ( 1920 ) , Robin Hood ( 1922 ) , The Thief of Baghdad ( 1924 ) and Ben @-@ Hur ( 1925 ) . In December 1964 , Jerzy Toeplitz called Chandralekha an " extension and development " of the mythology genre . Toeplitz said , " The characters are mortals but behave like heavenly beings , and their movements and gestures , like those of the gods and heroes of the Mahabharata are impregnated with the miraculous . " He called the story a " mere pretext to hold together the different episodes , each of which builds up like a circus turn : the tension mounts to a culminating point , whereupon the next episode immediately takes over . " According to the book Third World Film Making and the West ( 1987 ) by Roy Armes , Uday Shankar 's Kalpana ( 1948 ) , which was also shot at Gemini Studios , inspired Vasan to make Chandralekha . In the 2003 book Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema , Chandralekha is defined as a " Ruritanian period extravaganza " .

The climactic sword fight between Veerasimhan and Sasankan has often been compared to that in the 1894 novel The Prisoner of Zenda . In 1976 , American film historian William K. Everson compared the comedians in Chandralekha to the comedy duo Laurel and Hardy . Although Randor Guy considers the film 's drum dance scene to be the first of its kind in Indian cinema , the 1947 film Naam Iruvar includes a scene in which the lead actress ' younger sister dances on drums to the Tamil poet Subramania Bharati 's song " Kottu Murase " ; French film historian Yves Thoraval said this " prefigured the dance that Chandralekha made famous the very next year . " According to American film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum , Chandralekha " belongs to the same childhood continuum " as Fritz Lang 's 1959 films The Tiger of Eschnapur and The Indian Tomb which were set in India . In his 2009 book 50 Indian Film Classics , film critic M. K. Raghavendra states that Chandralekha is constructed in a manner that " enables its narrative to incorporate elements drawn from virtually any kind of genre . " According to Guy , the settings of the song " Naattiya Kuthirai " picturised on Sundari Bai 's character , including the dance and the costume worn by Sundari Bai , are inspired by those seen in the 1943 musical film Coney Island .

= = Music = =

The film 's soundtrack was composed by S. Rajeswara Rao , with lyrics by Papanasam Sivan and Kothamangalam Subbu . R. Vaidyanathan and B. Das Gupta collaborated with M. D. Parthasarathy on the background music . Rajeswara Rao recalled in a 1993 interview with The Hindu that it took him over a year to compose the music for the film , with much of the time being taken for the drum

dance sequence . He stated , " As the dancers performed , we used to rehearse and compose the music . It was done with incredibly few instruments . We used a piano , ten double bass violins and drums from Africa , Egypt , and Persia which we have acquired from an African War troupe . " His salary was ? 1500 . The music was influenced by Carnatic music , Hindustani music , Latin American and Portuguese folk music , and Johann Strauss I 's waltzes . M. K. Raghavendra said the film has " snatches from [ Richard ] Wagner and [ Nikolai ] Rimsky Korsakov ( Scherezade ) being used at dramatic moments . "

The song " Naattiya Kuthirai " was not originally part of the script ; it was added during the final stages of the film 's production . Sundari Bai spent over a month rehearsing the song . The songs " Indræ Enathu Kuthukalam " and " Manamohana Saaranae " were sung by T. R. Rajakumari , while " Aathoram Kodikkalam " and " Naattiya Kuthirai " were sung by M. D. Parthasarathy . J. Cooling Rajaiah played the accordion and piano in the gypsy song of the film . The circus chorus was adapted from " The Donkey Serenade " from Robert Z. Leonard 's The Firefly ( 1937 ) . For the Hindi soundtrack , Vasana offered most of the songs to Uma Devi , who later became popularly known as Tun Tun . She was initially hesitant , feeling that " these were beyond her capabilities " , but she was supported by Rajeswara Rao who " worked hard on her " . The music of Chandrlekha helped it to become one of the most successful Indian musical films of the 1940s ; it " created an atmosphere for a number of music directors influenced by Western music " in Tamil cinema . The film was also a major breakthrough in Uma Devi 's career , though by signing it she violated her contract with producer Abdur Rashid Kardar , who terminated her contract in retaliation . This , in addition to the " dwindling fortunes " of the film industry following India 's independence from the British Raj , eventually ended Uma Devi 's career in playback singing .

In his 1997 book Starlight , Starbright : The Early Tamil Cinema , Randor Guy said Parthasarathy and Rajeswara Rao " created a fine blend of lilting music of many schools " . Writing for Screen in April 1998 , film historian M. Bhaktavatsala called the songs as " distinct and standing on its own , with barely any background score attempting to interlink anything , just periods of silence " .

= = Marketing = =

The first advertisement for Chandrlekha appeared on the back cover of the songbook for the film Dasi Aparanji ( 1944 ) . It featured Vasantha as the heroine , before she was replaced by Rajakumari . With Chandrlekha , Gemini became the first Tamil studio to attempt to distribute a film throughout India . According to film scholar P. K. Nair , Chandrlekha was the first Indian film to have a full @-@ page newspaper advertisement . According to a 2010 article in Mumbai Mirror by Vishwas Kulkarni , ? 574 @,@ 500 was spent on newspaper publicity and ? 642 @,@ 300 on posters , banners and billboards . G. Dhananjayan 's book The Best of Tamil Cinema ( 2011 ) contradicts this , saying that Vasana spent close to ? 500 @,@ 000 on publicity alone . Chandrlekha 's publicity campaign was the most expensive for an Indian film at that time ; the entire publicity budget of a typical Indian film a decade earlier was around ? 25 @,@ 000 . In the 1950s , the entire publicity for a " top Indian film " cost no more than ? 100 @,@ 000 , which is substantially less than the amount spent on Chandrlekha . According to Guy , the publicity campaign " made the nation sit up and take notice " .

A. K. Shekhar designed the publicity material , which included posters , booklets and full @-@ page newspaper advertisements . Gemini Studios , inspired by American cinema , also produced a publicity brochure for distribution to exhibitors and the press . It contained a synopsis of the film and a step pictorial account of the key points of the narrative . It provided text for use by local theatres . The booklet also had layouts for women 's pages and a pictorial account of suggested marketing activities , such as " How to drape an Indian sari : Theatre demonstrations have a big draw " , and information about the film 's costumes ? which were hand @-@ woven garments of silk and gold ; one gold @-@ embroidered riding jacket is considered " the most expensive piece of outfitting ever used in a motion picture " .

= = Reception = =

== Release ==

Chandralekha was released on 9 April 1948 . It was released simultaneously in 40 theatres throughout South India and in another 10 within a week . In the 1940s , a typical Tamil film would be released in about 10 towns , but Chandralekha was released simultaneously in 120 towns .

Chandralekha was released in Japan as Shakunetsu @-@ no ketto ( " Fight Under the Red Heat " ) in April 1954 , where it was distributed by Nippon Cinema Corporation ( NCC ) . It was the first Tamil film to be dubbed in Japanese , and the second Indian film to be released in Japan ? the first was the 1952 Hindi film Aan , which was released in Tokyo in January 1954 . NCC later collapsed ; no information about how Chandralekha came to be released in Japan survives . During the 1950s , when India was short of foreign currency , barter was a common means of exchange with overseas business partners . Japanese scholar Tamaki Matsuoka believes this to have been the case with Chandralekha . The pamphlet prepared by NCC for the film calls Vasana the " Cecil B. DeMille of the Indian film industry " . A Danish version of the film titled Indiens hersker ( " India 's ruler " ) , was released on 26 April 1954 . An abridged English @-@ language version of Chandralekha , titled Chandra , was screened in the United States and Europe during the 1950s .

The film was a bellwether for its filming , production costs and publicity before , during and after its release . Other producers delayed releasing their films until after Chandralekha 's release to avoid competition . The film 's entertainment value made it popular with audiences ; however , it was unable to recover its production costs , and Vasana remade it in Hindi to do so . The Hindi version was released on 24 December 1948 , with over 600 prints and became a large commercial success , setting box @-@ office records . Vasana called the film " a pageant for our peasants " meant for " the war @-@ weary public that had been forced to watch insipid war propaganda pictures for years " . It was selected by the government of India for exhibition at the Fourth International Film Festival in Prague in 1949 . The film 's success made Madras a major production centre for Hindi films . Five years after the film 's success , Gemini paid its employees a bonus , becoming one of the first studios in the world to do so .

== Box office ==

Although exact figures for the film 's box office earnings are not available , film trade websites provide estimates of its takings . According to Sharmishtha Gooptu 's 2010 book Bengali Cinema : An Other Nation , Chandralekha grossed ? 10 million ( about US \$ 2 @, @ 100 @, @ 000 in 1948 ) in India alone . Box Office India gives the Hindi version 's nett gross as ? 7 million and states that it was the second @-@ highest @-@ grossing Bollywood film of 1948 after Shaheed . It gives its adjusted nett gross as ? 37 @, @ 98 @, @ 00 @, @ 000 . Film historian B. D. Garga said in his 2005 book Art Of Cinema , " The two versions ? Tamil and Hindi ? grossed millions " . According to the 1998 book Indian cinema : A Visual Voyage by India 's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting , the film grossed ? 20 million ( US \$ 300 @, @ 000 ) at the box office . A 2011 article by Namrata Joshi in Outlook India says , " Chandralekha grossed Rs 1 @. @ 55 crore with an audience of 3 crore , 60 % from rural India . "

== Critical response ==

=== India ===

Chandralekha received generally positive reviews from Indian critics . On 9 April 1948 , The Hindu said , " India has not witnessed a film of this magnitude in terms of making and settings so far . " On 10 April , The Indian Express said , " Chandralekha is an entertaining film for everyone with elements like animals , rope dance , circus and comedy . " The same day , the Tamil newspaper

Dinamani said , " Chandralekha is not only a first rate Tamil film but also an international film . " Kumudam gave a rather mixed review : " Though the story is ordinary , the shocking events inserted into the narrative are something new to the Tamil cinema . There are some shortcomings : The songs are not so good ; the film is too long ; the time period of the story should have been defined ; in a scene , there is a wall clock in the King 's office , whereas he is writing with a feather @-@ pen . " In its January 1949 issue , the magazine Gundooosi praised the Hindi version for being an improvement over the Tamil version , stating that it had better dialogues and appreciated its pacing .

V. A. K. Ranga Rao described the film as " the most complete entertainer ever made " . In their 1988 book One Hundred Indian Feature Films : An Annotated Filmography , Anil Srivastava and Shampa Banerjee praised nearly every aspect of the film , including its grandeur , the battle scenes and the drum dance , which they called the " raison d 'etre " of the film . In 2003 , journalist S. Muthiah called it " an epic extravaganza worthy of Cecil B. de Mille " that was " larger @-@ than @-@ life " . In their 2008 book Global Bollywood : Travels of Hindi Song and Dance , Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti said , " Chandralekha is a film that translates the aesthetic of Hollywood Orientalism for an indigenous mass audience " , calling its drum @-@ dance sequence " perhaps one of the most spectacular sequences in Indian cinema " . In his 2009 book 50 Indian Film Classics , M. K. Raghavendra said , " Indian films are rarely constructed in a way that makes undistracted viewing essential to their enjoyment and Chandralekha is arranged as a series of distractions . " He concluded by saying , " Chandralekha apparently shows us that enjoyment and visual pleasure in the Indian context are not synonymous with edge @-@ of @-@ the @-@ seat excitement but must permit absent @-@ mindedness as a viewing condition . "

In May 2010 , Raja Sen of Rediff praised the film 's setpieces , the drum dance sequence and the " longest swordfight ever captured on film " , calling Chandralekha " just the kind of film , in fact , that would be best appreciated now after digital restoration . " In an October 2010 review of Chandralekha , Randor Guy praised Rajakumari 's performance , calling it " her career @-@ best " and saying that she " carried the movie on her shoulders " . Guy praised Radha as his " usual impressive self " , saying the film would be " remembered for : the excellent onscreen narration , the magnificent sets and the immortal drum dance sequence " . In 2013 , director Dhanapal Padmanabhan told K. Jeshi of The Hindu , " Chandralekha had grandeur that was at par with Hollywood standards . "

= = = = Overseas = = = =

Chandralekha was well received by critics overseas . Reviewing the English version , The New York Times described Rajakumari as a " buxom beauty " . When Chandralekha was screened in New York City in 1976 , William K. Everson said , " It 's a colorful , naive and zestful film in which the overall ingenuousness quite disarms criticism of plot absurdity or such production shortcomings as the too @-@ obvious studio " exteriors " . [ ... ] Last but far from least , Busby Berkeley would surely have been delighted to see his influence extending to the climactic drum dance . "

Jonathan Rosenbaum said in August 1981 , " The prospect of a three @-@ hour Indian film in Temil [ sic ] with no subtitles is a little off @-@ putting , I would say ? wouldn 't you ? " However , he had " surprisingly little trouble following the plot and action " of the film , and added , " this made @-@ in @-@ Madras costume drama makes for a pretty action @-@ packed 186 minutes . " In June 2009 , K. S. Sivakumaran of Daily News Sri Lanka called it " the first colossal Tamil [ sic ] film I saw " . In October 2013 , Malaysian author D. Devika Bai , writing for New Straits Times , praised Chandralekha for its technical aspects ; she said , " at almost 68 , I have not tired of watching the movie . "

= = Hindi version = =

The Hindi version of Chandralekha was Vasan 's first Bollywood project . For this version , Vasan re @-@ shot some scenes and included a slightly different cast . Among the notable differences

between the Hindi and Tamil versions of the film , Pandit Indra and Agha Jani Kashmiri wrote the dialogue only for the Hindi version . Indra was a lyricist for the Hindi version with Bharat Vyas , while Kothamangalam Subbu and Papanasam Sivan were lyricists for the Tamil version . Rajeswara Rao , who composed the soundtrack for both versions , was assisted by Bal Krishna Kalla on the Hindi version . Parthasarathy and Vaidyanathan composed background music for the Hindi version without Das Gupta . While the Tamil version was 18 @, @ 634 feet ( 5 @, @ 680 m ) long , the Hindi version was edited down to 14 @, @ 495 feet ( 4 @, @ 418 m ) .

Rajakumari , Radha and Ranjan reprised their roles in the Hindi version , but their characters ? except for Rajakumari 's character Chandralekha ? were renamed . Radha 's character Veerasimhan was known as Veer Singh in the Hindi version , and Ranjan 's character Sasankan was renamed Shashank . Of the other cast members , N. S. Krishnan , T. A. Madhuram , T. E. Krishnamachari , Pottai Krishnamoorthy and N. Seetharaman appeared only in the Tamil version , whereas Yashodhara Katju and H. K. Chopra appeared only in the Hindi version . Nearly the entire cast were credited in the Tamil version , but only six people ? Rajakumari , Radha , Ranjan , Sundari Bai , Katju and L. Narayana Rao ? were credited in the Hindi version .

= = Legacy = =

With the success of Chandralekha , Vasan became known as one of the best directors in Indian cinema . Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell , authors of the book , Film History ? An Introduction , called the film " the biggest box @-@ office hit of the decade " . Randor Guy later called Vasan the " Cecil B. DeMille of Tamil cinema " , and called Chandralekha his " magnum opus " . According to S. Muthiah , Vasan " pioneered making South Indian films in English " . He inspired producer A. V. Meiyappan , who later became a " master at publicity " . The film demonstrated that if a film was entertaining , it would be commercially successful . The success of the Hindi version gave opportunities to South Indian film producers to market their Hindi films in North India . The publicity campaign for Chandralekha created such an impact that film producers in Bombay ( now Mumbai ) passed a resolution that there should be a limit imposed on advertisements for any film in periodicals . Vasan 's Apoorva Sagodharargal ( 1949 ) is often considered an unofficial sequel to Chandralekha ; it was also a major commercial success .

Chandralekha enhanced Rajakumari 's and Ranjan 's careers ; both became popular throughout India after the film 's release . Its climactic sword @-@ fight scene was well received , and is thought to be the longest sword fight in Indian cinema . The drum @-@ dance sequence is often considered the film 's highlight ; later producers tried unsuccessfully to emulate it . Producer @-@ director T. Rajendar said he drew inspiration from the drum @-@ dance for a song sequence budgeted at ? 10 million ( equivalent to ? 30 million or US \$ 450 @, @ 000 in 2016 ) in his 1999 film Monisha En Monalisa . Film historian Firoze Rangoonwalla ranked the Hindi version eighth in his list of " the top twenty films of Indian cinema " . Chandralekha was also a major influence on Kamalakara Kameswara Rao 's 1953 Telugu film Chandraharam , featuring N. T. Rama Rao . On 26 August 2004 , a postage stamp featuring Vasan and the drum dance was released to commemorate the 35th anniversary of his death , and his centenary .

In July 2007 , S. R. Ashok Kumar of The Hindu asked eight Tamil film directors to list their all @-@ time favourite Tamil films ; two of them ? J. Mahendran and K. Balachander ? named Chandralekha . Mahendran said , " If anybody tries to remake this black and white film , they will make a mockery of it . " Balachander said , " Just like Sivaji today , people talked about Chandralekha in the past . Produced at a cost of Rs 30 lakhs ( a huge sum at that time ) , it has grand sets . I have seen it 12 times . " In December 2008 , S. Muthiah said , " Given how spectacular it was ? and the appreciation lavished on it from 1948 till well into the 1950s , which is when I caught up with it ? I 'm sure that if re @-@ released , it would do better at the box office than most Tamil films today . " In a 2011 interview with Indo @-@ Asian News Service ( IANS ) , South Indian Bollywood actor Vyjayanthimala said although people consider that she " paved the way " for other South Indian female actors in Hindi cinema , " the person who really opened the doors was S.S. Vasan " . She said , " When [ Chandralekha was ] released , it took the North by storm because by then they



haven 't seen that kind of lavish sets , costumes and splendour . So Vasan was the person who opened the door for Hindi films in the South . "

Chandralekha was K. Ramnoth 's last film for Gemini Studios . Although he is often credited with shooting the drum @-@ dance sequence , Ramnoth left the studio in August 1947 , before the sequence had been conceived . Director Singeetham Srinivasa Rao told film critic Baradwaj Rangan he disliked Chandralekha when he first saw it , realising that it was a classic only after 25 years , " a fact that the audiences realised in just two minutes . " G. Dhananjayan told The Times of India , " When you talk of black and white films , you cannot resist mentioning the 1948 epic Chandralekha . " In April 2012 , Rediff included the film in its list " The A to Z of Tamil Cinema " and said it " boasted an ensemble cast , great production values and a story that ensured it became a blockbuster all over India , the first of its kind . "

Chandralekha has been screened at many film festivals ; it was screened in December 2012 at the 10th Chennai International Film Festival , which was a tribute to 100 years of Indian cinema . To mark the same anniversary , it was also screened in April 2013 at the Centenary Film Festival , which was organised by India 's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and National Film Archive . In 2014 , Chandralekha was one of eight Indian films that were screened at the 28th edition of the Italian film festival Il Cinema Ritrovato , as a part of " The Golden 50s : India 's Endangered Classics " ? the first Indian cinema retrospective at the festival . M. Suganth of The Times of India , in his review of Baahubali : The Beginning ( 2015 ) , noted that the film 's director S. S. Rajamouli had " take [ n ] his cues from varied sources " for its visuals , such as the grandeur of Chandralekha . In an interview with Sangeetha Devi Dundoo of The Hindu in November 2015 , actor Kamal Haasan noted , " Visual appeal has always gone hand @-@ in @-@ hand with content , since the days of Chandralekha and [ Mayabazar ] , not just after Baahubali . "