

SCREENWRITERS ASSOCIATION PRESENTS
5TH
INDIAN SCREENWRITERS
CONFERENCE
2018



WHERE
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
**THE MIND IS
WITHOUT FEAR.**

“Before an audience can see it,
before a camera can capture it,
before an actor can perform it,
before a director can design it,
a writer must write it.”

— Farhan Akhtar



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Conceived of in 2006, the Indian Screenwriters Conference is a constructive response to the need of screenwriters from all over India to come together as a community. This regular platform allows us to discuss and debate, criticise and complain, analyse and plan action, and forge bonds - individual and collective. In our unity lies our progress, from our growth emerges our success. Let the Indian screenwriting movement rise!

CONTENTS

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THE 4TH INDIAN SCREENWRITERS CONFERENCE, 2016 – AN OVERVIEW – ZAMA HABIB 9

IS THE MIND WITHOUT FEAR? – A CHAT WITH IRA BHASKAR	15
FROM WHISPERS TO CENTER-STAGE: INDIAN LGBTQ CINEMA – SRIDHAR RANGAYAN	25
BUBBLING CURRY AKA HOW TO PITCH A TV SHOW IDEA – CHARUDUTT ACHARYA	29
TAME BLAME GAME ON LYRICS – IRSYAD KAMIL	33
NEGOTIATING CONTRACTS – ANJUM RAJABALI	37
THE DIGITAL GAME IS ON – ABHIJEET DESHPANDE	41
BENGALI CINEMA: STRAIGHT TALK – SUMAN MUKHOPADHYAY	43
THE BIG BINGE THEORY – A CHAT WITH SUDIP SHARMA AND VARUN GROVER	45
CLASS AT PRIME TIME – VINOD RANGANATH	49
ADVENTURES OF DESI SCRIPT WRITER – DEBASHISH IRENGBAM	52
DIALOGUE BAAZI – PALAK BHAMBRI	55
SCREEN WRITING IN SOUTHERN CINEMA – K. HARIHARAN	59
सामाजिक यथार्थ को बेजोड़े लेखक: कै ए अब्बास! - अजय ब्रह्मात्मज	61
गंगापत्र मासम : कुछ यादें - हरीश भिमानी	64
ओ जाने वाले हो सके तो लौटकर आना - जय प्रकाश चौकसे	67
TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR – DIVYA DUTTA	71
THE FEARS AND THE FEARLESS: MARATHI CINEMA – SACHIN KUNDALKAR	73

MIGHT OF THE PEN

"The pen is mightier than the sword"

Over centuries the mighty pen has influenced ideologies, changed mind-sets and captured people's hearts through unforgettable prose and poetry. The written word has given a voice to opinions, and expression to the imagination of the creators.

Through this conference the question we are asking is - is the pen of the screen-writer today really mightier than the sword of the parameters he/she works with?

This battle is not all external. We, as screenwriters, go through a great internal struggle in response to the expectations, conditions and restrictions that are heaped on us by external forces. The greater enemy is the fear within us, which gives rise to doubting and limiting our own creativity. The fear of failure, fear of judgment, fear of letting our own thoughts and creativity flow without any boundaries.

Do we contribute to the continuation of this "fear" by letting it restrict our own thoughts and ideas, or writing to fit someone else's?

We need to develop fearlessness internally, to be able to fight externally. We need to be bold and courageous to strike a balance between creative freedom and client servicing. Only a fearless pen can prove to be mightier than the sword.

Preeti Mamgain
President, Screenwriters Association



WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR...

Rabindranath Tagore imagined a [REDACTED] new and awakened India when he wrote this famous line.

[REDACTED] As the theme of the fifth edition of the Indian Screenwriters Conference, it aptly inspires the imagination of an awakened screenwriter.

As Tagore reveals his own concept of freedom through his poem, we also wish to instill a sense of freedom in the mind of the screenwriter during a time when newer challenges emerge, every day, to creative freedom.

SWA organizes this national conference every two years with the goal of providing a platform for direct dialogue, and networking, for the collective gain of the fraternity of screenwriters. This year's conference aims to explore how the writer's pen can be free from fears like commercial demands, audience choices, intensified censorship and even the disruption caused by the emergence of new media.

Today, it can be said that the primary challenge facing the storyteller is to overcome regressive interferences, which pose greater risks and newer challenges to creative freedom, in a volatile sociopolitical environment.

We wait for the day when the screenwriter would be completely free from external pressures, compulsions of the clichés and formulas, and even the second-guessing of box-office numbers; so that the mind can truly be without fear, and heart full of stories!

Zama Habib
Hon. General Secretary
Screenwriters Association



जिंदा सपनों की खातिर

इस शहर के कई नामों में से एक है 'माया-नगरी'। स्क्रीन की माया भी कुछ ऐसी है कि उसके जादू की गिरफ्त में हर कोई आ जाता है। कोई उसे देखकर खुश रहता है तो कोई उसमें शामिल होने की चाहत पाल लेता है। हिंदुस्तान के मुख्तलिफ शहरों, कस्बों और गँगों से हम चंद रुपये, दिमाग में अपनी जिंदगी के तजुर्बात, आँखों में हजारों सपनें और दिल की पोटली में बंधी कहानियाँ लेकर आ जाते हैं।

और जब स्क्रीन की माया से रू-ब-रू होते हैं तो असली जिन्दगी की शक्ल डरा देती है। इसके बावजूद कुछ अपना मुकाम हासिल कर पाते हैं, कोई जल्दी तो कोई देर से। कुछ लम्बे समय तक जद्वोजहृद करते हैं। कई सिनिकल हो जाते हैं तो कई खुद कहानियाँ बन जाते हैं।

गर क्रामयाब कहानियों को किस्मत भी मान लें, तो भी एक पल बैठ कर सोचना चाहिए। ऐसा क्या था? क्यूँ हुआ? जरा उनकी कहानी में झांके, उनकी जद्वोजहृद, ज़िद, मेहनत और हर पल अपने हुनर को नई धार, नई सोच देने और हमेशा सीखते रहने की उनकी सोच नज़र आएगी। और इसका कोई शॉर्टकट नहीं है। स्क्रीनराइटर्स को लें या निर्देशकों को। जरा इतिहास के पन्ने पलटें। जिन्होंने अपने माध्यम से बड़ा बनने की कोशिश की, या जिन्होंने मान लिया कि उन्होंने सब सीख लिया, ये स्क्रीन उन्हें अपना सबक पढ़ा ही देती है। तय ये करना है कि हमारा रास्ता क्या होगा?

माना ये हिंदुस्तान ही नहीं, एशिया के सबसे महंगे शहरों में से एक है। माना यहाँ जिन्दगी आसान नहीं। माना कि इस रास्ते पर चलने में जोखिम है। माना कि कई समझौते भी करने पड़ेंगे। लेकिन फिर भी तय करना ही होगा की अपनी कहानियों को बचाकर रखें या अपने सपनों को आँखों के सामने मरने दें। पंजाबी के मशहूर कवि अवतार सिंह संधु उर्फ 'पाश' की कविता यहीं बयान करती है -

तड़प का न होना
सबकुछ सहन कर जाना
घर से निकलना काम पर
और काम से लौट कर घर आना
सबसे खतरनाक होता है
हमारे सपनों का मर जाना!

संजय चौहान
संयोजक
5वीं आईएससी



दायरों से परे

सलीम-जायेद की जोड़ी ने लिख दिया 'जो डर गया, समझो मर गया'। तो कोई लिखता है 'डर के आगे ही जीत है'। लेखकों की यही खूबी है। चित भी मेरी, तो पट भी मेरी। किसी भी मुद्दे को हर दृष्टिकोण से देखना, उस पर लिखना और लोगों को यकीन दिलाना।

साहिर लुधियानवी साहब ने लिखा 'एक शहंशाह ने दौलत का सहारा लेकर, हम गरीबों की मुहब्बत का उड़ाया है मज़ाक'। तो जवाब में शकील बदायुनी कह गए 'एक शहंशाह ने बनवा के हंसी ताजमहल, सारी दुनिया को मुहब्बत की निशानी दी है'। ये विधा ही तो लेखक को औरौं से अलग करती है। लेखक के पास अनेकांतवादी दृष्टि होती है। इसी दृष्टि से वो कुछ नया देख पाता है, नया सोच पाता है और नया कह पाता है। लेकिन इस सोच के लिए ज़रूरी है ख्यालों का आजाद होना। लिखने वाले के भी और सुनने वाले के भी।

कहने को तो लेखक आजाद होता है। अपनी सोच को कहीं भी ले जाने के लिए। ये बात सुनने में अच्छी लगे लेकिन सच्चाई ये है कि कितना भी निकर क्यों न हो, लेखक के पैर जाने अनजाने, कुछ स्पष्ट और कुछ अदृश्य दायरों में बंधे होते हैं। जो उसकी परवाज़ को थामे रहते हैं।

फ़िल्म लेखक के पास वैसे भी उपन्यास लेखक के समान आजादी तो होती नहीं। उसे निर्देशक की बाँधी सीमा में ही लिखना होता है। टीवी लेखक तो और भी बेचारा है। उसे तो हर सप्ताह आने वाली टीआरपी के मुताबिक लिखना है। ऐसे में क्या किया जाए कि आप वो लिख पाएँ, जो आप लिखना चाहते हैं? कैसे कुछ लोग इन्हीं दायरों में रहकर अच्छा लिख पा रहे हैं? क्या है हमारी अपेक्षाएं और समाधान?

इसी के लिए आयोजित है ये तीन दिवसीय 'संमंत्रणाधिवेशन' यानि कॉन्फ्रेंस। एक ऐसा सम्मलेन, जहाँ हम सब निर्भय होकर ये चर्चा तो कर ही सकते हैं कि आखिर भय है किस किस से और किस तरह लड़ें उनसे।

चर्चा सार्थक होगी, दायरों से परे, इस उम्मीद के साथ, और इस विश्वास के साथ कि जहाँ एक लेखक को लिखने के लिए समाज से आजादी की दरकार होती है, वहीं आजाद समाज के लिए लेखक की दरकार होती है।

सुनील सालगिया
सह-संयोजक
5वीं आईएससी



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Dear SWA

Greetings from FSE and your screenwriting colleagues in Europe. I wish you every success with the 5th Indian Screenwriters Conference. I was struck by your theme "Where the Mind is Without Fear" as we are living in a world where fear is sadly on the increase and even promoted by those who purport to lead us.

Drama needs conflict but the writers who create it need an open and supportive society in order to thrive. I wish you every success in fighting the forces of fear and oppression where ever they arise, in our industry, in politics or in the wider world. With all best wishes

Robert Taylor
 President, Federation of Screenwriters in Europe

Robert Taylor
 President, Federation of Screenwriters in Europe



**WRITERS GUILD
OF AMERICA WEST**

c/o General Secretary, Screenwriters Association, Mumbai

July 16, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Screenwriters Association,

On behalf of the 10,000 members of the Writers Guild of America West, we send our good wishes to the writers gathered in Mumbai for the 5th Indian Screenwriters Conference.

We hope you make progress as you grapple this week with the Challenges that Indian Screenwriters Face. We join you in the struggle to defend freedom of speech and association, as well as appropriate compensation, protections, and respect for the artists who create entertainment.

Please accept our solidarity as we stand with you in the space where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls.

Stronger together,

David A. Goodman, President

David Young, Executive Director

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Thursday, 19 July 2018

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Olivia Hetreed
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Gail Renard
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Ellie Peers

Dear SWA,

There is increasing pressure on artists and filmmakers around the world to conform to prevailing orthodoxies. Over the centuries we have seen how creative people turn restriction into inspiration and that their work outlives those who would silence them.

On behalf of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, I send all the writers gathered for the 5th FWA conference our warmest wishes for a very positive gathering.

With all best wishes,

Olivia Hetreed
President, WGGB

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British Copyright Council, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, Creators' Rights Alliance, European Writers' Council, Federation of Screenwriters in Europe, Federation of Entertainment Unions, Filmmakers' Alliance, International Affiliation of Writers Guilds, Performers' Alliance, Trades Union Congress, Union Network International, World Intellectual Property Organisation

The Writers' Guild of Great Britain is a trade union registered at 134 Tooley Street, London SE1 2TU

www.writersguild.org.uk

**SO NEAR, SO FAR:
DO OUR STORIES REFLECT INDIA'S REALITY?**

THE 4TH INDIAN SCREENWRITERS CONFERENCE, 2016

AN OVERVIEW

A MILESTONE TOUCHED, YET MILES TO GO!



The Screenwriters Association (SWA, formerly the Film Writers' Association) organized the 4th edition of the Indian Screenwriters Conference, on August 3rd and 4th, 2016, at the St. Andrews Auditorium, Bandra West, Mumbai.

The Indian Screenwriters Conference (ISC) was started with the idea of addressing issues concerning Indian film and TV writers and lyricists, while also encouraging a dialogue on the surrounding social realities, within and outside the film and TV industries. The first Indian Screenwriters Conference, held at FTII, Pune, in August 2006, was attended by 275 writers.

The second, at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, next to Film City, Mumbai, in December 2008; saw 575 screenwriters and writer-directors attending it. 3ISC at St. Andrew's Auditorium, Bandra, in February 2013, had the participation of 700 screenwriters.

As a natural progression, 4ISC saw tremendous support and participation from over 900 delegates and guests. It brought together screenwriters and other media dignitaries of the country for one-on-one sessions, sharing of thoughts and suggesting solutions regarding problems faced by the screenwriters in the current scenario.

The second, at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, next to Film City, Mumbai, in December 2008; saw 575 screenwriters and writer-directors attending it. 3ISC at St. Andrew's Auditorium, Bandra, in February 2013, had the participation of 700 screenwriters.

The renowned Hindi poet, essayist and Sahitya Akademi awardee Ashok Vajpeyi was the Chief-Guest for the inaugural session. Reputed journalist and Ramon Magsaysay awardee, P. Sainath delivered the keynote address, speaking insightfully about the 'intersection of reality' between the rural and urban India.

SWA's current President Ms Preeti Mamgain (then, the Treasurer of the Association); spearheaded the conference as its Convener, while yours truly happened to be the Joint-Convener.

The renowned Hindi poet, essayist and Sahitya Akademi awardee Ashok Vajpeyi was the Chief-Guest for the inaugural session. Reputed journalist and Ramon Magsaysay awardee, P. Sainath delivered the keynote address, speaking insightfully about the 'intersection of reality' between the rural and urban India.

Known as a chronicler of rural distress, Sainath presented some alarming statistics about the rural-urban divide in the country. His scintillating speech, which also called for a standing ovation, was infused with choice quotes, like: "You cannot plead a lack of inspiration of ideas and stories – this is a country where they kick you in the face."



The theme of 4ISC was: 'SO NEAR, SO FAR: Do Our Stories Reflect India's Reality?' While most of the sessions tackled this theme from different angles, other issues concerning the profession of screenwriting were also discussed. Here's a quick summary of the sessions:

DAY 1

Session: THE FEMININE FACTOR

Moderator: Sanyuktha Chawla Shaikh
Panel: Juhi Chaturvedi, Sudip Sharma, Tushar Hiranandani, Swara Bhaskar

The very first session of 4ISC addressed the changing gender equations in films. The panelists shared their views on characters played by female actors, the struggle to tell stories driven by female characters, audience's level of comfort with stereotypical women characters and whether time had come for a more realistic screen portrayal of gender equations. As an extension to this session, women rights activist Dr. A. L. Sharda (director: Population First Foundation) highlighted some of the issues faced by women working in the entertainment industry.

Session: SERIAL KILLERS

Moderator: Saurabh Tewari
Panel: Gaurav Banerjee, Ravina Kohli, Purnendu Shekhar, Ved Raj, Zama Habib

This session drew attention towards the challenges and concerns faced by TV writers, content executives and creative heads, alike. The panelists exchanged thoughts about the assumed divide between popular TV content and social reality. They presented their arguments to understand why the Indian TV seems to be stuck in some unchangeable grooves, where quantity has taken over quality and pondered over the way out.

Session: WRITERS AND PRODUCERS: PARTNERS OR ADVERSARIES?

Moderator: Anjum Rajabali
Panel: Siddharth Roy Kapur, Ritesh Sidhwani, Ronnie Screwvala

The last panel discussion of the day delved deeper into the professional relationship between producers and writers. The panelists discussed ways to make this equation more collaborative, more mutual, and more productive for both.

The differences can be ironed out with mutual respect between these two natural collaborators. The producers must meet writers' fair value and legitimate rights, and the reward of an array of quality scripts, which they seek, will present itself.

Cultural Performance: DASTANGOI

The opening day of 4ISC ended with a performance of Dastangoi, the art of dramatic narration of Urdu stories. Delhi-based theatre practitioners Fouzia and Fazal Rashid, enthralled the audience with intense telling of two short stories, namely 'Dastan Ghummi Ke Kebab Ki', by Ashraf Suboohi Dehlvi and 'Nanhi Ki Nani' by Ismat Chughtai.



DAY 2

Session: WRITERS' RIGHTS: ARE AGENTS AND LAWYERS THE ANSWER?

Moderator: Anjum Rajabali
Panel: Sushrut Desai, Tulsea, Vinod Ranganath

The aim of holding the Indian Screenwriters Conference has always been two-pronged: academic and professional. As a reflection on the same, the first session on the second day of 4ISC addressed the issues related to contracts, Copyright and the emerging trend of agents negotiating with producers and studios on behalf of their writer-clients, against a fee or commission. Through this informative session, the screenwriters acquired a list of legal Dos and Don'ts.



Session: LITTLE BIG FILMS

Moderator: Neeraj Ghaywan

Panel: Rajat Kapoor, Shonali Bose,

Meghna Gulzar, Ashok Mishra

The next panel discussion talked about the idea of writing and producing independent and small-budget films that stand true to their content and quality even if they are believed to be not doing well at the box-office. These films not only pave the way for fresh content and evolution of storytelling, they have also increasingly been ending up as surprise successes. This relevant discussion highlighted the issues faced by the writers and makers of such films, as well as the scope and future of such efforts.

Session: THE DIGITAL EXPLOSION

Moderator: Manisha Korde

Panel: Biswapati Sarkar, Varun Grover, Satya

Raghavan, Chaitanya Chinchlikar, Nikhil Taneja

In the next panel discussion, the exodus of producers & studios towards the digital medium, or simply the web, was talked about. Besides creating a set of new challenges for TV and cinema, the digital platform has also opened up a world of opportunities for the screenwriter. The panelists shed light on the scope, future as well as the business model of the web entertainment, collectively urging their writer-friends to benefit from this new media while answering their creative and economic issues.

MUMBAI • AUGUST 3 & 4, 2013



Session: THE BUSINESS OF TV WRITING:

MAKING OF THE WRITER

Moderator: Vinod Ranganath

Panel: Jayesh Patil, Shashi Mittal, Aatish

Kapadia, Sonali Jaffar, Farhan Salaruddin,
Raghuvir Shekhawat

The final panel discussion at 4ISC was focused on the emerging trend of TV writers becoming producers and show-runners. The panelists talked about the factors which have made this happen and the significance of screenwriters as the generator of original ideas for shows. They also discussed the pros and cons of this development, agreeing wholeheartedly that the growing leverage of the TV writer affects the whole business of TV writing, in a positive way.

FWA Awards: FELICITATION OF SHRI VIJAY ANAND, SHRI SHARAD JOSHI AND SHRI SAHIR LUDHIANVI

The highlight of the closing ceremony was FWA awards, given to three luminaries of the film and TV industries. Late Shri Vijay Anand, Late Shri Sharad Joshi and Late Shri Sahir Ludhianvi were presented the FWA Awards for their contribution to Indian film writing, TV writing and lyrics, respectively. Our senior EC member Rajesh Dubey hosted the award ceremony. Actor Rishi Kapoor graced the occasion to hand over the FWA awards.



Vijay Anand's award was received by his wife Sushma Anand and son Vaibhav Anand, while Neha Sharad, daughter of Sharad Joshi, received it on the latter's behalf. Veteran lyricist-screenwriter and writers' rights activist, Javed Akhtar received the award on behalf of Sahir Ludhianvi. Javed Saahab made the occasion truly special by sharing with the audience his personal anecdotes about Sahir. Such was the power of emotions pouring out of his spoken words that everyone's eyes in the house went teary for a good twenty minutes. I, for one, am never going to forget for the rest of my life, the incident of Sahir's Kafan –Ke –Paise, as narrated by Javed Saahab with a slight tremble in his voice. Moving on, the then Honorary General Secretary Kamlesh Pandey talked about the various FWA initiatives, throwing light on the association's untiring struggle for writers' rights. It was followed by the vote of thanks, delivered by the Vice President Danish Javed.

The two-day conference concluded with a loud cheer for the 4ISC organizing committee, the entire Executive Committee, SWA staff members, volunteers and each and every individual who made the conference a great success.

Friends, we went for the stars while striving for more than three months, to create a grand experience for all the participants. We might have missed the target on a few occasions, for instance when the scheduled delivery of lunch went for a toss on day one, but I do believe that what the audience took home in their hearts was much more significant and worthy of remembrance.

I would gladly raise a toast to what all we could achieve during 4ISC, while welcoming the challenges, opportunities and the excitement of the conferences to come.

SWA Zindabad!

Zama Habib

Honorary General Secretary
Screenwriters Association

IS THE MIND WITHOUT FEAR?



AN INSPIRING CHAT WITH IRA BHASKAR
ON CENSORSHIP, MARKET AND OTHER FEARS
OF THE SCREENWRITER.

SWA: What according to you are the reasons that prevent Indian cinema from being fearless?

IRA: I think there are several reasons. I would say that the main reason would be the concerns of censorship: the concern that this material, whatever you are writing, the film that you are making, will not see the light of day; that films will get banned; that films will attract a repressive onslaught. That's one very big reason.

The other reason that may be preventing Indian cinema from being fearless could be a feeling that writers / film makers may have that they have to continue to survive and continue to work; that they have to see this period through, and that they must project their views in a manner and create something that will somehow not attract the attention of the state.

The third reason would of course be the market. The market is a very very important reason, particularly for films, because they are driven by so much money and box office numbers, and also because mainstream cinema is judged to a large extent by success at the box office. Box office returns are a very important aspect of the way in which filmmakers and writers are conceptualizing their ideas. So I think this is another reason for the constraints that screenwriters may feel.

Another reason that prevents Indian cinemas from being fearless and this is related to the other two reasons I have articulated is that the imagination of writers and filmmakers has been severely affected as to what is possible to imagine.

So while the other two reasons are clearly identifiable... the political issue and the market issue, it is also true that the manner in which the writers and filmmakers, or artists of today, imagine their work, and the imagination of their world is also a reason that prevents untrammelled expression. Our imagination is conditioned by the society we live in and it's conditioned by the market as well. So screenwriters today are keenly aware of both the larger social forces and the structures of film distribution and exhibition that support a certain kind of film. This is not the earlier moment of the Indian New Wave that had an alternate exhibition structure albeit extremely restricted. Even "indie cinema" needs the film industry today in terms of a release structure.

If the film is not released, it's not bought by Amazon or Netflix, or at least the price one gets on Amazon and Netflix is much lower than for films that are released. So it's the way in which the writers imagine themselves and position themselves vis-à-vis their worlds, vis-à-vis their work, and vis-à-vis their industry that is the reason that prevents free articulation of issues, of ideas.

SWA: Specifically, in the last three years, the political situation in the country has changed. Do you feel it has added to the pressure a writer is already reeling under?

IRA: Let's just say that it's not just the screenwriter but also other writers who are facing this pressure. All artists – including painters face this pressure. The biggest threat today is from right wing ideology and fundamentalism. Right wing ideologies anywhere in the world have always been difficult for artists. Not just in India, across the world there's been a rise of right wing and fundamentalist ideologies, which are of course posing a major threat to freedom of expression.

Even in communist Russia, and in China, totalitarian, authoritarian, fascist regimes of one kind or another were dangerous. This is so because these regimes tend to control cultures, or they have a desire to control culture. So writers, artists, or anyone who holds an independent opinion and attempts to articulate that, comes under attack in such regimes.

But I think we also need to make a distinction here between governmental repression and societal repression or societal or cultural fear, or a culture of censorship. So cultures of fear, cultures of terror, cultures of self-censorship are as important as institutions of censorship. Because writers and artists are going to ask themselves, "Can I say this, or is it okay for me to say this? Because it can invite attacks, it can invite punitive measures, and my work will get affected." So I think the most dangerous outcome or consequence of authoritarian/right wing/fundamentalist regimes is that a culture of terror and fear and censorship gets normalized.

SWA: Films have become a target for attacks for religious identities or caste identities. While it is true that the medium of films has a great power to influence public opinion, do you think as an audience we have lost our tolerance?

IRA: I think if the audiences are left to themselves and these films are released, audiences are not going to create 'protests'. I think most of the time these controversies that they hurt this sentiment or that sentiment, these are controversies that are created politically. This is so because there is one particular group or the other that has a vested interest in doing this. And I don't just mean the Hindu right wing. Padmaavat, of course, is one of the recent examples here. Kamal Haasan's film Vishwaroopam faced the same thing in Tamil Nadu. In 1995, when Bombay was to be released, Bal Thackeray asked for the film to be cleared by him. This is after the film had been given a certificate by the CBFC. Muslim organizations then took exception to various scenes in the film, and they demanded that the film should also be screened for them, and that their sensitivities should also be taken into account. These are all extra-constitutional bodies that have taken it upon themselves that they have the right to decide which film is going to be released. And the argument they often use is that our sentiments are hurt. So whether it is the majority community or minority community, it is these social and often political organizations that make these demands.

Because cinema is a mass art form and a film releases to the public in a massive way, it is seen as potentially disruptive. The reality is that most of the time, for example, when Fire released, there was no problem initially in the first few days of its release. But then suddenly, some organizations got into the act and said the film is about lesbianism, which is against Indian traditions, and demanded that the film be banned. They started attacking the theatres, but when the protests died down, and the film was screened, it did very well. The audiences didn't burn the cinema halls down.

Have we become more intolerant as a society, I think the answer is yes. But usually protests against films are politically motivated.

SWA: When a film faces so much protest, the state governments say we are not going to allow the film to be released. A few states didn't release Padmaavat, for example.

IRA: There was no reason to do that. Nobody had seen the film at the time. Three state governments didn't allow the film to be released because of the kind of political clout that the Karni Sena was demonstrating. The logic that these state governments followed was that if they allow the film to be released, the effect would be felt in terms of votes because Rajput communities would be upset. So the state governments out of the fear that their vote base would be affected took these decisions. These demands and actions are completely politically motivated, and completely unjustified.

SWA: Censorship has been an important part in our country. What are your views on the censorship of films?

Censorship of films is considered very important because cinema is a mass form. But the question is why is censorship important? Most of the time, censorship is directed against the depiction of violence and sex and political ideologies. Censorship has been there because there is always a fear or feeling among public institutions and states that films can have a very important influence on the masses. Actually if films were so powerful, they would have changed a lot of things. Censorship exists because the state believes it should be responsible for the moral life of society, and hence its institutions and its officials have accorded to themselves the prerogative of deciding what the general public should see.

This idea that a state should censor what its subjects should see, is a problem. But states do that because they feel that cinema is a form that is potentially very powerful and therefore it can have an impact; but most of the time this insecurity is not necessarily stated by the government, it is assumed by the people who are present on various Committees that are examining films. This is because people don't want to take responsibility. Most members of the Examining Committees are status quoists basically. They want to take the easy way out. They don't want to stand up and take responsibility.

Members should have the guts to say, so what is wrong with what we have cleared; but most of the time people don't want to do that because they have a certain fear that if they let something pass, and it is challenged by someone, then they may be questioned and then lose their appointment. Most of the time, the reasons for censorship are just... inability to stand up for a decision.

But I would also ask writers to think that whatever it is they want to use in their work – is it necessary for the screenplay? If it is necessary and you can justify it then you must fight for it. But don't use words casually...don't use anything casually. You know? What you write has an impact.

So I think that kind of questioning is also very important. And I really want to say on the question of censorship that more of us should constantly talk about certification not censorship. It is logical that the CBFC should certify films and not censor them. Whether it is political issues or sexual issues or violence, we should certify films according to age, because that I believe in. I believe children shouldn't see everything - so yes, I think those categories are important. But allow adult content, allow politically important issues to be discussed, because unless we do that we're not growing as a society. We're not growing as individuals. We're certainly not growing as artists.

SWA: Haven't filmmakers and screenwriters faced similar struggles in the past? Even then we had some writers and filmmakers who produced parallel cinema?

The situation is quite different today from what it was in the 1970s, which was the high point of the New Wave movement in Indian cinema. In the 50s, 60s, 70s, there developed a sharp split between the mainstream commercial cinema and what was considered art cinema. Whether it was films made by Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak or Satyajit Ray or the films of the Indian New Wave that began in 1969, these films were seen as parallel to the mainstream. There was a completely different kind of circulation of these films.

**Subconsciously,
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This idea that a state should censor what its subjects should see, is a problem.

And we've had very strong political critique that emerged during the New Wave. The films of this movement, both those that were released and the unreleased films, circulated in Film Societies and national and international film festivals. Doordarshan also screened the New Wave films. So there was an alternate circuit of exhibition for these films, which is completely missing for 'indie cinema' today.

The 60s and 70s were very important for film society movements. We are talking about celluloid. Films were shot in 35mm or 16 mm. There was a completely different logic of both expectations of production and reception that governed these films. There was a very aware audience for the parallel cinema films as for the mainstream.

And the government investment in New Wave Cinema in the 60s and 70s was very strong. A lot of those films, for example Tamas on Doordarshan, or Benegal's films, were not censored. There was a different kind of an atmosphere. So a lot of critique (against establishment) was possible then.

I also want to mention here what happened in the Colonial period. Before 1947 the British Colonial state was very keenly and acutely aware of the popular anti colonial sentiments of the time and was very concerned that Indians were going to bring about a political revolution. They were very aware of the national movement, and were extremely sensitive to any expressions of nationalism and the desire for freedom. As an example of censorship, there is a film called Bhakt Prahlad which was made in 1921, a silent film, which was banned by the British Censor Board, because Prahlad is seen wearing a Gandhi cap and spinning the charkha, and singing a song in praise of the charkha. The intertitles of the film indicated the words of the song, and because of the reference to Gandhi, the colonial censor board banned the film.

Filmmakers were aware that films were getting banned. They knew that if they articulated their political messages very strongly the film would get censored. So the filmmakers found very innovative ways of articulating their nationalist feelings and their critiques of the colonial power.

One of the most significant and powerful modes of this critique was allegory. A whole cycle of saint films from the 1930s and the 1940s—SantTukaram, Sant Dnyaneshwar, a film on saint Eknath titled Dharmatma, Sant Janabai, among others were films that were biopics of saints from different centuries - 13th, 17th, 18th etc but they all addressed issues of the present. It was a very clever way of bypassing censorship since there was nothing in the narratives that could be related to the present.

SWA: So there are countries like Iran for instance and some other countries where there is very stringent censorship. How are the filmmakers the world over dealing with censorship?

IRA: So Iran is a very good example for us to look at. Iran's own mainstream film industry was destroyed by censorship. It does not have a mainstream film industry at all. But it did in the past. Perhaps most people don't know that the first Iranian film that was made was made in Bombay by Ardesir Irani's Imperial Movietone in 1933.

Currently there is a repressive film censorship regime in Iran. This applies to foreign cinemas as well. An ex-student of mine from Iran who loves Bombay cinema is trying to curate a festival of Bollywood films in Tehran just now, with the help of the Indian embassy. The problem he is currently facing is that a number of scenes in the films he wants to show have to be cut. He gave me the example of even Jodhaa Akbar in which the song sequence towards the end - the scene of intimacy between Akbar and Jodhaa has to be cut for the film to be screened at the Festival. No kind of intimacy or eroticism can be shown on Iranian screens. The portrayal of song and dance is also frowned upon. So regimes are repressive.

Today the filmmakers in Iran - Kiarostami, Majid Majidi, Makhmalbaf, Jafar Panahi -their films have small audiences in Iran, but they have a huge reputation internationally. Do they face censorship? Yes they do. So what do they do? They use allegory. They use children. A lot of the first wave of Iranian cinema was films about and with children. These Iranian films are not governed by the logic of the market, but have a different kind of an independent circulation of films.

I'd like to mention here Brazil and the Cinema Nuovo or New Cinema movement in Brazilian cinema from the 60s. A number of these films of Brazilian cinema countered political censorship in innovative ways, e.g Glauber Rocha and his fantastic film called Terra em Transe - Land in Anguish or Entranced Earth, which is about the politics of Brazil. And the kind of despair that intellectuals and the common people experienced in the 60s due to the nexus between politicians and big business that compromised the interests of Brazil to multinational capital.

Another Brazilian filmmaker Nelson Pereira dos Santos' How Tasty was my little Frenchman is an allegorical black comedy set in the 16th century that addresses the alleged cannibalism of the now extinct Tupinamba tribe directed against French and Portuguese colonizers. Cannibalism works here as an allegorical trope about cannibalizing and destroying native cultures, and the historical genocide of the indigenous tribes of Brazil as part of Western colonialism. Allegory has clearly been an important form to counter censorship in this movement of Brazilian cinema.

Latin American on the whole has had a history of violent state repression, people disappearing, the crushing of revolutions. Argentina, Chile, Brazil have had histories of political opponents just being picked up, even young people open about their dislike for the regime that is in power have been picked up and they've disappeared to never return. Argentina faced several years of dictatorship and repression with a military coup in 1976 that led to mass disappearances and murders of anyone suspected to be sympathetic to left ideologies or just critical of the regime.

With the end of the military dictatorship in 1983 in Argentina, there were a series of films and television series that came out, challenging the regime and what it had done. The public demanded answers from the political regime especially about the missing people? There is a famous movement that continued for years called the Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo. Every week the mothers and grandmothers whose children had disappeared would occupy the Plaza across the street from the Presidential office building with photographs of their children, who had disappeared.

They demanded to know what had happened to their disappeared children and demanded their bodies if they'd killed them. Similarly, in Chile during the military dictatorship between 1973 and 1990, people were rounded up in the National Stadium and killed. Many films have been made on these histories.

Chilean filmmaker Patricio Guzman was making a film recording the elections that were held when the military coup threw out the democratically elected Left leader Salvador Allende on 11th September 1973. This coup was supported by the US though the US denies this even today. Guzman and his cameraman were shooting the elections when this happened. His cameraman was shot dead while shooting, and Guzman and his crew were attacked. Naturally the reels of the film had to be hidden and then removed from the country. Guzman's grandfather hid them in the Swedish embassy, and then one by one they were taken out of Chile to Europe - first to Sweden then to France, and the film was finished in France and Cuba. It was just raw footage when it was taken out. The film was developed and edited to become *The Battle of Chile*. It is there in the film; that shot when the cameraman was shot dead. 23 years later, in 1996 Guzman returned to Chile after the end of the dictatorship with the reels of *The Battle of Chile*, which had never been screened in his country. An entire generation had grown up with no ideas of what life had been like under Allende, and had completely internalized the ideology of the dictatorship that military power and capitalism were the answers for Chile.

Guzman screened *The Battle of Chile* for different groups of people asking them if they could recognize anyone in the sequences and what had happened to them. These screenings were shot by Guzman and form the film, *Chile, Obstinate Memory*. There is a moving sequence in the latter film in which he is showing *The Battle of Chile* to a group of college students, and before the film begins they criticize the then left government without any idea of the atrocities and mass killings of the dictatorship.

And as they watch *The Battle of Chile*, they are in tears. Then during the discussion that takes place, the students keep repeating amidst tears that 'we had no idea'. If you want an example of film changing consciousness, creating social change, this film is a very good example. It's not a fiction film, it's a documentary. But these are very important films.

These are the films that look at the history of the country, the history and politics of the country fearlessly.

SWA: Filmmaking has always been a market driven media. Do you think that there is too much influence on contemporary cinema because of the number game; has the market become the greatest enemy of today's cinema?

IRA: The market is very powerful today. There is a sense in the industry, in the trade, that issue based films are good, but they don't bring in box office numbers. At the same time, this view is always challenged by sleeper hits: the kind of films that weren't expected to do well. *Tere Bin Laden* is a very good example. It's a satirical comedy, set in Pakistan; it is a small film made by a first time filmmaker. And it has no stars, and is made with unknown actors. It released and just by word of mouth it did well. Another small film, *Filmistan*, again a first film of the filmmaker's, ran for more than four weeks. Such films challenge the market norms of the industry. So I think there will always be films that will challenge the numbers game and market trends.

Subconsciously, if not consciously, the spectre of the market looms large over filmmakers and writers because they are constantly thinking how will this do at the box office?

I think the market is a very very big reason I would imagine that writers and filmmakers feel constricted and don't write freely because somewhere there is a sense that this has to do well, we have to position the film in a way that we will get audiences. The audience may not always want very serious social issues to be addressed.

The question then is what to do.

Do writers not want to do something significant that will bring about social changes? I don't think films bring about social change in a major way. But films like any art form have a very important role in transforming consciousness, in expanding the horizon of the audience, and in expanding the realm of what is possible to do. So I think films can play a very important role in that sense.

The question of mainstream commercial vs more serious films will be there in any cinema. I don't think this is true only of India. It's there in Hollywood. It's there in Europe, it's there in Asia or elsewhere. But I think what is happening internationally is that the lines that divide these are getting blurred and it's happening in India too. So there is scope.

I think as writers and filmmakers these are the issues one has to wrestle with internally. And that process is also extremely important. I think the most difficult process is to arrive at the core of one's own truth. That is the struggle that every writer and filmmaker goes through. And that struggle is very important. Even before all these other things come into the picture. Because unless young writers and filmmakers attempt it, how will the situation change? Maybe there will be a time when people will have that vision and more and more such films will get made; then even the industry will have to take cognizance of that. Large production houses have started making smaller films and films with smaller budgets.

SWA: You were talking about how even before the New Wave, there were people writing about social issues and problems. Was the market dominant even then? During the 50s or 60s or 70s... did that impact writers' imagination and how they expressed themselves?

IRA: I think the market was dominant even then. The market was always dominant. From the early sound period, i.e the 1930s onwards, there were a lot of literary people who were involved in writing films.

But in the 50s, the market took over in a major way, and the split between mainstream and parallel cinema occurred. I am not saying that commercial films were not good. Look at the films of filmmakers like Guru Dutt, Mehboob Khan, Raj Kapoor, Bimal Roy, BR Chopra.



So cultures of fear,
cultures of terror,
cultures of
**self-censorship are
as important as
institutions
of censorship.**

Theirs were fantastic films that were made, and very important writers were associated with their films. But yes, the logic of the market had taken over. And as a result the smaller films, the films that were not part of the mainstream - those kind of films became art cinema, parallel cinema. The big budget films like Mother India with songs and dances, their idiom was different.

So I think the mainstream logic was operative from 1950s onward. But it led to other kinds of films. And those kinds of films were also getting screened and were also circulating. And some of them became internationally quite famous. It led to Ray becoming a well-known international filmmaker.

SWA: Today are important issues being sidelined in cinema because everyone wants to enter the 100 crore club?

IRA: Recently a film called Chauranga was released : a very powerful sharp film about caste oppression. But there were hardly any audiences for the film. Now the issue is what do we do?

As a writer you have to make that decision, do I write for 100 crores, or do I write for my vision? That is a crucial question, apart from censorship, that faces writers and filmmakers. Of course there is a problem here because of the stranglehold that the industry, distribution, media, big organizations have over the distribution and exhibition business where certain monopolies control exhibition spaces and that is a problem because films need screens to be exhibited.

Everybody has a responsibility. If there are younger people who want to be in the film business, who want to support something different, and are keen to make a difference, they may support films that are different and are not necessarily the 100 crore film. There are younger producers now who are doing smaller films, or supporting those films. And sometimes those films do quite well. Writers have to try.

SWA: What is the hope for screenwriters and other artists in this country in the context of freedom to be inspired without worrying about political backlash, censorship and commercial constraints?

IRA: In the most dire of circumstances one can still write about what the important issues are. If horrible things can happen then whatever the situation may be, that is our reality. There is an attempt to muzzle people's voices, create a culture of terror, culture of fear. The logic of fear is deployed constantly by those who are in power, even when there is no logic to it. There is an attempt in the present context for a normalization of hatred when the creation of terror and fear is considered normal.

In this situation, what is our responsibility as citizens, as creative people? It is to ask ourselves and our minds to be without fear. We cannot wait for the time and place where the mind will be without fear. The more people become fearless today the greater the chances are that our contexts will become spaces where the mind is without fear.

Ira Bhaskar is an internationally respected film historian with a PhD from the Tisch School of Arts. She is currently Professor, Cinema Studies at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

“Whether you’re a writer or a producer, all you want to do is tell a good yarn.”

- IRWIN WINKLER

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FROM WHISPERS TO CENTER-STAGE : INDIAN LGBTQ CINEMA BREAKING NEW GROUND

— SRIDHAR RANGAYAN

The very word LGBTQ seems to confuse people. What is it? What does it mean? How do we deal with this alphabet soup. And the discomfort is not only for the general public who are trying to formulate an understanding, but also to creative artists who are trying to offer portrayals of the community.

LGBTQ which stands for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer is an umbrella term that is used to denote the diversity of gender and sexuality expressions. There are other alphabets that are used to make it more inclusive – I for intersex and A for Asexual – so LGBTQIA is now more commonly used. But that is to do with political correctness. Creative artists need not break their head over it. What is needed is a sensitive approach; at least an attempt at understanding diversity.

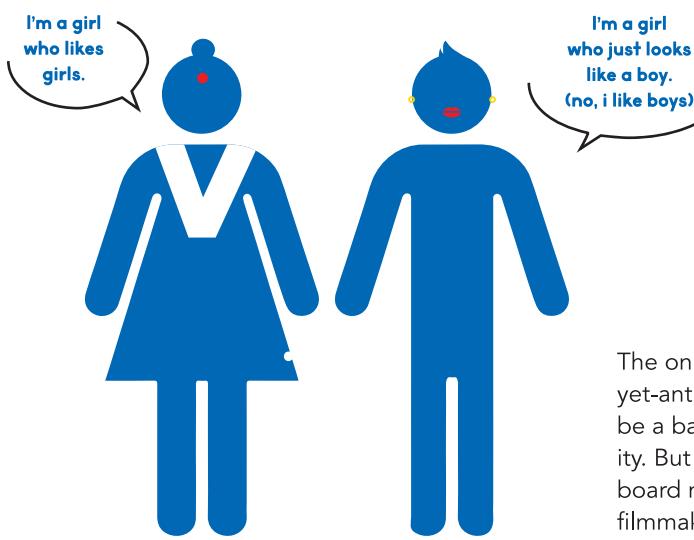
All effeminate men are not gay, all gay men are not Hijras, all women who wear shirt & jeans and cut their hair short are not lesbians. We need to move away from stereotypes. There are men who are as 'macho' as anyone else and their sexual preference could be homosexual. All gay men need not be fashion designers or hair stylists. There are gay bankers, engineers, lawyers, judges, politicians, and of course gay models and actors. There are as many lesbian women who are corporate executives, writers, beauticians and film production crew members. None of them have to wear their sexuality on their sleeve. We need to have narratives of these men and women, and transgender persons who need not always be shown begging at street corners or engaging in sex work. There are well known athletes, police officers, ramp models, screenwriters, cinematographers who are transgender persons. What is needed is respect for everyone, irrespective of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Indian cinema has come a long way in portrayal of the LGBTQ community. From secret whispers and nudge-nudge-wink-wink in the 50s and 60s to some bold (though sensational) portrayals in the 70s and 80s to some more nuanced characterizations 90s onwards. Of course there are always, in every decade, homophobic, misogynistic, transphobic characterization where the gay men is the hero's side kick who is beaten up; or the lesbian couple is targeted and they commit suicide; or the transgender person is stoned to death. These come from a warped understanding of reality.

**"All effeminate men are not gay,
all gay men are not Hijras."**

Many scriptwriters and directors pander to societal perceptions, to please the crowd, rather than go out there and try to formulate a better understanding. Also sometimes it is easy to use the story / character of one particular person you have met or heard about. It is not incorrect, but showing it as the norm is the problem. Of course, in real life, there are gay men who are bitchy, nasty, hateful and predatory; but all gay men are not that. So there has to be a balance in portrayals. While there are several films that show policemen as corrupt and bribe-seekers, there are also so many films that show cops as saviors, heroes, or even ordinary middle-class men caught in a particular situation. We need such diversity of portrayals for the LGBTQ community too.

That can happen only when there are more films being made with LGBTQ persons as prominent characters in a film. More than mainstream Hindi cinema, regional language cinema have broken new ground usually – there are excellent portrayals in Bengali, Malayalam and Marathi cinema.



Apart from mainstream cinema one should look at independent films, documentaries and short films for pushing the boundaries and being more inclusive of diverse representations.

When we started the KASHISH Mumbai International Queer Film Festival in 2010, we came across about 22 Indian LGBTQ films and programmed almost all of them. In 2018, we received about 65 Indian films and we screened 33 of them, with 7 feature films!

Aptly the Country Focus of KASHISH 2018 was India, as a salute to this new wave of filmmaking that offers not only very different storylines related to LGBTQ persons, but also are so technically and aesthetically brilliant, that they can stand up to any yardstick of good cinema anywhere in the world. The filmmakers seem to be more aware, more clued in to contemporary lives and aspirations of the community.

In earlier years, since the community was so underground, one can understand it was not easy for writers and directors to access a closer look at the community or individuals. But now with the Indian LGBTQ community out there in the open and willing to share their stories, it is high time writers and directors get a better pulse of reality. There is no excuse anymore.

The only excuse one can still have is the yet-antiquated censor board rules that seem to be a barrier for stories focused on homosexuality. But that is changing as well. The censor board now gives a more sympathetic hearing to filmmakers who push the envelope. Another barrier is the vicious cycle of only star driven films being considered commercially viable by the industry, and star actors still shying away from challenging roles. But that will change too.

"It is high time writers and directors get a better pulse of reality."

The same way as women-centric stories have taken center-stage now, it is not unimaginable that in the near future LGBTQ-centric stories too will find a voice. What is needed is the courage to break barriers and go beyond stereotypes.

Sridhar Rangayan is Mumbai-based writer and director whose LGBTQ films *The Pink Mirror*, *Yours Emotionally*, *68 Pages*, *Purple Skies*, *Breaking Free* and *Evening Shadows* have been at the forefront of Indian LGBTQ cinema movement. He is also the founder festival director of KASHISH Mumbai International Queer Film Festival, which over the past 9 years has emerged as South Asia's biggest LGBTQ film festival and an important event in Mumbai's cultural calendar.

From A Well-Wisher!



BUBBLING CURRY AKA HOW TO PITCH A TV SHOW IDEA. THE JOURNEY OF AN IDEA - FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO FIRE!

– CHARUDUTT ACHARYA

EXT. MALAD FISH MARKET – MORNING (PRESENT TIME)

Noisy as a fish market can be. Rainy as Mumbai can be. Writer eavesdrops as Mrs. Writer has her weekly chat with the Koli woman, which she has been having for the last 20 years. Koli woman asks Mrs. Writer if the older boy has settled into hostel life at engineering college. Mrs. Writer expresses her anxiety. Koli woman flashes a knowing 1000 watts smile and reassures her that they all settle down well eventually. Look at my boy! He finished his engineering and now is doing his internship in another city. Eavesdropping writer has a FLASH....

EXT. MALAD FISH MARKET – MORNING (20 YEARS BACK)

Same Koli woman expresses anxiety to newlywed Mrs. Writer. She and her husband have been called for an interview in an 'English medium' private school where they aspire to send their little son. Mrs. Writer assures her that all will be well. Finally all kids settle down and manage to do OK.

FLASH ENDS

INT. WRITER'S HOME- LUNCH TIME

As writer is making the fish curry and Mrs. Writer is cribbing and mocking her daily soap episode (yet watching it), writer stares at the simmering fish curry and feels it coming... That sudden flash of events, experiences, dreams, fears, all coming together to give him that 'story spark'. "What if we told the story of these two women's lives? Mrs. Writer and Koli lady? A saga of their lives intertwining in a huge city and through that tells the story of a changing India?"

INT. CHANNEL PITCH ROOM

– A FEW DAYS LATER

"Why! This is such a wonderful, touching and humane idea Writer!" says foreign film school trained channel executive. Plush corporate interiors. Rain silently hits the glass panes. A very different fish market. "Where do you get such really earthy, rooted, connected ideas from?" she asks as she dips her Korean ginseng infused green tea sachet in to her personalized cup.

Writer's mental voice says, "Try living". But he mumbles something polite instead. The team arrives and because she finds it interesting, (she is the newly appointed boss) the entire team goes gaga over this 'earthy rooted' idea. It goes with their mandate of 'being different by making a difference' and writer is commissioned to develop the story. To be made as a realistic slice-of-life mini-series about life in the metro. Writer cannot believe his good luck. He gets to have the fish and eat it too!

"That sudden flash of events, experiences, dreams, fears, all coming together to give him that 'story spark'."

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

Writer does mehenat. Spends several hours in the koliwada. Talks to several people. Talks to Mrs. Writer. Gets out real life characters from the middle –class North Mumbai housing colony. Thinks up various organic plot points that come out of conflict with the city. Digs into his own life, experiences of raising kids, inter-personal relationships...the works. Finally writer has prepared a 'bible'.

INT. DEVELOPMENT HELL- 24 X 7

That writer has been paid to develop the bible, now everyone and his uncle becomes a preacher. An attached production house, a 'film' director between two big star projects, unseen marketing mandrakes and who have you. The 'metro' story now needs a genre. A dramatic hook. Should it be a female Cain & Abel? Should it be a revenge drama between two scorned women? Should it be a love story between the kids? Or should it be a triangular love story with two women in love with the same man? Writer undergoes PTSD. "Wait!" "Please!" "Aare!!" "Hello???"...

Now reference films (Bollywood, Hollywood, European, Iranian and everything available in between) are discussed. Web series are evoked. This meets that. That meets this.

Writer grins and bears it. He has faith. He has faith in that spark he felt while the fish curry had bubbled. He feels it will all come together in the pitch room turned cauldron.

WAITING MONTAGE SEQUENCE

He waits it out patiently. At home.
At the fish market. At Sagar bar, nursing his
Old Monk and staring at the rain.

INT. PITCH ROOM – LATE EVENING

But finally when the story is presented back to the writer as one of surrogacy, where the Koli woman carries the 'building' woman's child and she thinks it's her own. "Mind blowing Na Writer?" she asks offering him some imported 70 percent bitter chocolates. "Our in-house team came up with this killer idea" she adds, as in-house team of two twenty something interns grin like smug cats in the fish market.

Writer decides. I'll say I have to go to the loo, and then just run away, take an auto to Nepal or Mauritius and never be found again. Instead, tugged by his EMI controlled conscience, writer stands up and says, "NO. This is a fish curry. It has specific spices. And a tender hand is needed in making it ma'am. Don't do this!"

"But the shoot is from tomorrow", screams back an anguished chorus. The dip dip executive takes charge. She throws a look at the two in-house cats and they purr out of the room. Now she looks writer in the eye and her pupils dilate with EMI tinted sincerity. "Don't worry writer. Your core idea will be retained. The spirit, the soul, will not be compromised. But from the Dombivili housewife to the Darbanga aunty, we have to be fair to all no? Here try some Korean green tea. Have you watched the latest Israeli show? So real ya! See na if you can come up with something similar? Or you can just take the seed of that show and add your own touches and flourishes. You are so good with these real real things ya!" Writer sips the tea. It tastes like nothing.

"So we lock this story writer." She shakes his hand and gets an urgent call on cue, and heads out of the room. The room is now colder. It matches an operation theatre. A morgue. Maybe a fish storage unit?

SOUND OF BUBBLING CURRY

fades in on to the writer's bewildered face.
For the Nth time in 25 years.

DISSOLVE

Shots of writer at his table and the seasons changing outside his window.
Shots of writer not making eye contact with the Koli woman in the fish market.
Shots of writer watching Israeli show and shutting the TV off. Curling into a Sholapuri chaddar and drawing a fish on his young nephew's stomach, with the navel as the eye.



"Now reference films (Bollywood, Hollywood, European, Iranian and everything available in between) are discussed."

INT. SAGAR BAR – WINTER NIGHT

Six months have passed. Writer contemplates second quarter. Bar is desolate. 'Amar Prem' songs play on the CD player. "Chingari koi bhadde..."

A cricket match is playing on mute on a tiny TV above the writer's head. A Team India cap wearing young drunk changes the channel as Kohli gets out.

Kishoreda sings, "yeh kya hua? Kaise hua?" and the writer smiles at the timing and casually does a double take at the mute TV. He takes his glasses off and rubs his Old Monk soaked eyes. He feels some 'draw'. Something seems 'familiar'. Two twenty something, fair model like girls in stylish saris is in a super mall. It could have been an advert for washing powder. But wait! One of the women is on the other side of the FISH counter. And there is plenty of sisterly hugging and tearing up happening in the mall, with innumerable slow motion close ups. Kishore sings on, "Chhodo bekaar ki baton mein..." Writer orders his second quarter. Home ministry calls. "Writer! Remember that show you wanted to make about me and the Koli woman?" As writer listens to angry rant, his second quarter arrives and he eyes the young drunk who switched channels. He has just been whacked by a barely legal young woman who has stormed into the bar. She stands akimbo, waiting for him to respond to her whack. He does not respond. She takes off his cap, wears it herself and sits down and drains his whiskey. Suddenly both of them are giggling and devouring each other with their flirty eyes.

The writer feels the story spark bubbling.
For the Nth time in 25 years.

INT. PITCH ROOM - FEW DAYS LATER.

The writer has just finished the narration of a thriller show to the team. It's taken him a few months to NOT be 'inspired' by the Israeli show but come up with an original story in the same genre. He feels pretty chuffed about it. Dip dip executive (from now on will be called Bulletproof coffee executive), actually claps and the entire team claps. "This is the story we want for our new OTT platform Writer. We have just one brief. Anti-TV. Anti-Dombivili and Darbanga.

This stuff is for the millennials and everybody who does not watch soaps. We have hit GOLD". Special veg sandwiches are ordered. (They have gone veg since a veg. conglomerate bought them).

"The pilot is perfect but for two minor points," she says chewing on sandwich. "What please?", asks the writer, feeling his heart slowly, squeezing through his arteries and heading towards his sciatica nerve. "Instead of starting the opening of the thriller series with shots of Mumbai docks, we need to start with the hero having wild sex with a faceless woman screaming mother sister endearments. We keep cutting back to him in the episode and finally we reveal, the woman is the woman he shot dead in the middle of the series. Let the audience go WTF. And be bindaas with the sex and gaalis. Push the limits. Push writer. PUSH. Break free! Be yourself!"

"OK this was one little point? There is another little point too? You said two?" Writer asks, gingerly.

"Oh yeah. Second one is really a suggestion only. Remember a few days back you were narrating an incident about a female who walked into a bar and whacked her husband? I really loved it ya! Put it into the pilot somewhere. It can just be an arbit track you know. We can figure how to connect it to the plot later...its cute and so edgy too...do that OK?"

Writer hails an auto to Nepal. It takes him to Mauritius. Writer gives up eating fish and drinking Old monk. For the Nth time in 25 years.
FADE OUT.

"Writer gives up eating fish and drinking Old monk.
For the Nth time in 25 years."

Charudutt Acharya is a writer-director who writes dialogue for Crime Patrol Satark and has worked on several television shows including, Jassi Jaisi Koi Nahi, Siddhant, Haqeeqat, and Kagaar. He has also written and directed the film Sonali Cable and written dialogue for films like Dum Maaro Dum and Vaastu Shastra.

TAME BLAME GAME ON LYRICS

ARE HINDI FILM SONGS REALLY
NOT AS GOOD AS THEY 'USED TO BE'?

— IRSYAD KAMIL

Why do we prefer to forget that earlier films were a reflection of the society whereas today they are a reflection of the likes and desires of the society? Whatever is being made today, maybe doesn't reflect the society, but surely reflects the society's aspirations.

Cinema can never be blindly regarded as a social service. After all, it is an industry like any other, and hence it aims to create products which fetch bigger profits. The benefits or profits of this intent, is a different discussion altogether. And if lyrics are also following this rule book of achieving greater profits, what's wrong with that?

In this chaos of consumerism, 'The Songs' of the movie are the producer's main churning machine to make bigger profits . If we look closely, in the past two three years, there has been a rising trend in the film's music scenario; two distinct music spaces are getting formed in one movie itself. The first music space is that which integrally belongs to the film and hence it is original. The second space is that which has borrowed and dressed up as hit numbers of filmi or non filmi music or even popular songs of Punjabi, Marathi or any other regional language.



If I observe the trend without any prejudice, I can clearly say that lyrics are just where they were, there hasn't been any movement in their trend at all. Songs have always commanded a significant place in movies of the past as well as of today. Now let's address the question as to why aren't the lyrics of the present times as good as they used to be? Well, I find this question itself to be irrelevant. Why is this question only posed to the lyricists? Why don't we ever ask a director as to why isn't the style of direction as it was in the past? Why isn't this demand of relative comparison ever thrown at a screenplay writer, a cinematographer, an editor or a costume designer?

my point to say that no matter what happens on this turf of film music, the marriage of our films and music is literally made in heaven and will stand the tests of all the times. Movies can never abandon the music and music can never breathe without lyrics. Not because of the frivolous emotions which state that our land is the land of music or that even the lowest segments have a connection with music. But because logic says that music is the ONLY part of a film that can yield big profits independent of the movie itself, and many a time at prices which make-up half of the cost of the film. Apart from the music department, NONE other amongst all departments can stand up to do this. So lets not aim to blame lyrics or music instead try to raise the standards of film making overall.

The reason behind the formation of the second space is that the producers want to play safe by putting their money on already hit items and the consumer too is mindlessly liking and encouraging these recycled songs. Here one thing stands for sure; even though the recycled songs are presented as a part of the movie but in all honest introspect, they aren't. This is simply because the soul of the film and the body of the recycled songs can never belong together, they will remain distant forever.

I feel the responsibility of good lyrics and songs should not be thrust upon the lyricist alone. Way more than the lyricist this has been looked at as the shared responsibility between the producer, the director, the music director and to some extent the main hero of the film.

Primarily because all these people are not equally, rather majorly responsible for the choice of lyrics that finally get incorporated in the song. Each lyricist puts in his best effort to give the most apt lyrics for the given situation in the film and simultaneously do justice to the music director's composition. But in spite of this, his lyrics are vigiled through various levels of testing and scrutiny. The music director weighs the lyrics in the balance of his composition, the director tests their malleability according to his situation, the actor examines them in the light of his screen image/stage performance and then the producer looks at them with his foresight of whether the lyrics have the needed ingredients to be a hit song or no.

**"Songs, they just replicate the language we speak today:
Convenient, shallow,
• thoughtless uncultured crap."**



I wonder if stalwarts like Sahir, Majrooh or Shailender had to go through these litmus tests or no. A lyricist today, has to pass these tests each and every time and despite this he still succeeds at offering one-two good or hit songs in each film. If we glance at any technical department of our films, be it direction, screen writing, music direction, editing or any other department of movie making, and compare them with those of the world, I beg I cannot comment, but I can affirmatively vouch for the fact that neither ever before did the lyricist of any other country stand a chance nor does any lyricist of any other nation in the present time stands a chance with us. Our industry might fail to deliver a hit movie every consecutive month, but invariably it does deliver hit songs each and every month.

Now I would address the 3-4 questions listed in the beginning which quite often are posed by the pseudo intellectuals. If we closely study the films of thirty, forty or fifty years ago, all the songs of the films were never hits. We live in this pointless illusion that all the songs of those times were remarkably incredible and were big hits simply because we just listen to a handful of 50-100 good songs of those times again and again.

The listeners of quality songs and lyrics are steadily failing to have their personal point of view about what they are hearing. We are just listening to whatever is being shoved down our ears and minds through radio, TV or the other mediums in the hands of the marketing strategists. Who really bothers to listen to all the songs of a film and choose what THEY like?

If someone is of the opinion that the stature of lyrics writing is on a downslide today, the only reason for this is the degraded choice of the audience. The basic law of economics clearly explains this fact: Supply is equally proportionate to Demand. As for the language used in the songs, they just replicate the language we speak today: Convenient, shallow, thoughtless uncultured crap.

With all these slides and turfs in view, I will end my point to say that no matter what happens on this turf of film music, the marriage of our films and music is literally made in heaven and will stand the tests of all the times. Movies can never abandon the music and music can never breathe without lyrics. Not because of the frivolous emotions which state that our land is the land of music or that even the lowest segments have a connection with music. But because logic says that music is the ONLY part of a film that can yield big profits independent of the movie itself, and many a time at prices which make-up half of the cost of the film. Apart from the music department, NONE other amongst all departments can stand up to do this. So lets not aim to blame lyrics or music instead try to raise the standards of film making overall.

Irshad Kamil is a well-known lyricist in Bollywood whose lyrics-writing credits include films like Sultan, Tamasha, Raanjhnaa, Rockstar, Aashiqui 2, Love Aaj Kal, Once Upon A Time In Mumbai, and Jab We Met.



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NEGOTIATING CONTRACTS: A CHALLENGE OF EMPATHY

— ANJUM RAJABALI

Much as the term may connote business dealings alone, which, by the way, is the Latin origin of the term, negotiation is actually the bedrock of all meaningful relationships. Oxford dictionary defines it most simply: A discussion aimed at reaching an agreement.

For screenwriters, after the creative work of writing is done, the two Ns become critical: Narration and Negotiation! The first too deserves an article by itself, but suffice to say for now that it is a skill that can be learnt by practice and more practice. Here, since the theme of the 5ISC is about the challenges that screenwriters face today, let us see how we can understand the second.

The determinant of your relationship with the producer is the Writer's Contract. It will guide and control your involvement in the film, and the producer's with you. So, take it very, very seriously. There have been just too many instances of writers complaining of unfair treatment, much after having hurriedly signed a contract that made that very unfairness possible! So, while one should approach every relationship from a position of trust, it is imperative for both sides to not proceed in the project without a signed contract. Even if they are friends, or brothers!

SWA is more than aware that the bargaining muscle of an individual screenwriter is much less compared to a producer. In a business environment, money does equal power. Hence it will be tough going, with you having to compromise on some of your points. So, it helps if you make two clear columns in your mind before going for the meeting: Essential clauses, and Desirable clauses. Fight to breaking point for the former; negotiate more flexibly for the latter.

Now, before we hit the clauses, let's see if we can agree on some basics:

1. In this industry, the quality of your work is your biggest asset. Not your CV, not your personality. So, only move towards a deal, if you're convinced that you have a **WORTHY** script. That conviction will show at the meeting, making all the difference in the negotiation.

(But, you may want to be realistic in your assessment of your own work; over-confidence equals arrogance equals a recipe for an eventual fall. Unless you're really a genius, of course; in which case, you needn't read further.)

2. Your script is the basis for the film. Without your work, no one, including the producer, has any work. So, move with that knowledge. Get a sense of the **FINANCIAL WORTH** of your script beforehand. Consult experienced others, read SWA's proposed Minimum Basic Contract.

Fix the figure that you're going to ask for, as well as the figure that you won't go below.

3. The producer is not your **ADVERSARY**. S/he is your collaborator, and shares your aim - to get the best possible film made of your script. So, do not enter with a hostile mindset. Do be alert to your rights and to the law (see below), but there's no need to feel persecuted.

4. You're not looking for a job. And, neither party is doing the other a favour, or giving anyone a break. It is a professional exchange between **EQUALS**. You have something that s/he needs (rights to your script); and s/he has something that you need (fees, and the resources to make the film).

If you're empathetic to their feeling of vulnerability, a resolution becomes that much more possible.

6. When you are offered a contract, do not sign it immediately, even if it feels okay. It's a legal document that should be seen by a legal person.

(SWA has a free legal guidance service for its members. Take their view on your contract. Or, consult your own lawyer-friend, or a senior screenwriter.)

7. If you want to be a strong negotiator, you have to be prepared to **WALK AWAY** from the deal if the terms are fundamentally unfair, or if your dignity is compromised. If you have a well-written script, and/or are a hard-working writer, further opportunities will happen.

"In this industry, the quality of your work is your biggest asset. Not your CV, not your personality."

(sign here)

Have a look at SWA's proposed Minimum Basic Contract. It sets out clauses that you must be careful about, in simple easy-to-understand language. Important ones:

i. **Fees:** Apart from what is mentioned above, be aware that the monies mentioned in the contract are writing fees or for assignment of rights to the script, that's all. Do not agree to 'your fees include advance royalty'.

If you want to be a strong negotiator, you have to be prepared to WALK AWAY from the deal if the terms are fundamentally unfair, or if your dignity is compromised.

(sign here)

ii. **Credit:** Credit should be clearly specified, based on the work that you have done in the script – story, screenplay, dialogue, or a combination. We know that producers are insisting that the final credit will be at their discretion. What we would advise is that if you've already written out the work (story, screenplay, dialogue or all three), then your credit has to be guaranteed, no question. But, if you're still to write your work, then the producer retains the right to engage additional writers if your work doesn't measure up, and hence would like to decide on credits after the final draft script is ready. For that contingency, you need to bargain for a third party arbitration to decide on credit. Maybe a senior writer of mutual choice should be appointed to examine your script, and compare it with the final draft and adjudicate on the credit to each writer. (In Hollywood, all credit arbitration is handed over by the producers to the Writers Guild of America. This way, they protect themselves from any resentment from any of the writers for the final decision! Wise move. SWA is contemplating on such a practice here.)

As regards credit placement, in the film, the writer's credit should appear where the credits of the other heads of the department appear. (In Hollywood films, the writer's credit always appears just before the director's credit, after the producer's credit. By the way, some Indian producers, like Aamir Khan Productions, quite rightly follow the same protocol.)

iii. **Termination:** The contract should list the writer's and the producer's defaults that can lead to termination by the other party. Barring writer's default, the writer's contract cannot be terminated by the producer. If your further drafts are not liked by him, you can be paid your full fee, and another writer engaged to revise the work.

iv. **Assignment of rights:** Producers generally need all your rights in the scripts to be assigned to them in perpetuity. That is the existing business model, and SWA is okay with that, for now.

v. **Royalty:** According to the Copyright Act, a writer will be paid royalty, if her work is monetized outside of a cinema hall (on satellite networks, digital media, for remakes, adaptations, etc.), via a copyright society for writers, as per the rates approved by the IPAB. Of the total royalty generated for a script, the writer and the producer will receive 50% each. The contract should not contradict this protocol, else that clause is bad in law.

vi. **Indemnities:** Be very particular about these. You absolutely have to indemnify the producer for any legally proven claims of copyright infringement that have been committed by you. There is no compromise on this. (However, insist that if the infringement is from the inputs that have come from the director or the producer, then they have to indemnify you!) Other indemnities proposed by them include one that arises because several films that have had their releases threatened by violence, from outfits claiming offense or hurt. So, producers, understandably anxious, want an indemnity from you that if your script causes any reaction, you will be responsible. This is totally unfair.

Once the producer accepts a script, the responsibility of everything in it is his. So, s/he should protect you against such problems that arise because of the script. Likewise, producers have begun seeking indemnity from everyone involved in the film, if any action of theirs, were to provoke a threat to the film's release. Do know that this violates your constitutional right, as a citizen, to freedom of expression and possible self-defense. And, is bad in law.

We do not recommend that you sign any such sweeping clause. What is appropriate is a simple clause for all these anxieties: If the writer says or does anything with the intent of jeopardizing the producer's right to exploit the film, then the contract may be terminated and the producer may take appropriate legal action against him. Please be clear about this whole clause.

It is perhaps unfortunate that us writers, who anyway have to go through arduous creative struggles, have also to be quasi-lawyers and then negotiators to boot.

Unfortunately, today, rights can only be protected with legal knowledge.

So, you can either arm yourselves with that basic legal knowledge, like many of us have done, or you can get an agency to represent you. They will bring you work and handle your negotiations, for a fee, of course.

Finally, always worth remembering: Negotiations are essentially an encounter of needs. Each party tries to make the other feel more needy. Here, remember Salim-Javed. Their scripts were so solid that it was always the producer who needed them more than they needed him!

All the very best.

**"Finally, always worth remembering:
Negotiations are essentially an encounter
of needs. Each party tries to make the
other feel more needy."**

(sign here)

Anjum Rajabali is a leading screenwriter with films like *Drohkaal*, *Raajneeti* and *Satyagraha* to his credit. He has been teaching screenwriting for several years at the Film and Television Institute of India - Pune, Whistling Woods International - Mumbai and at hundreds of workshops held all across the country. He is also a leading SWA activist.

•THE DIGITAL GAME IS ON•

SCREENWRITER READY?

— ABHIJEET DESHPANDE

When I was narrated the material written for Breathe by director Mayank Sharma and writer Vikram Tuli, I thought it had meat. What was needed was work on the characters. My first and foremost job was to write the characters of Kabir Sawant and Danny Mascarenhas. There was a certain line of thought which we needed to define and follow. So we came up with this: 2 men—one broken down by a tragedy, another staring at one, thirsty for each other's blood. A story of redemption and survival. Next was to explore the universe the story is set in. It was my favourite city Mumbai, the city with a million shades, secrets and stories. We gave every character its own style, dialect and language.

Did we want to justify Danny's actions and murderous streak? Definitely not. And therefore thought it was necessary to make a statement on how I view things—beyond the story, as a person, as a writer. And I did that in the last dialogue of the series, where Kabir talks about what happens when we're driving a car and suddenly someone comes in the way. You turn and take evasive action. Thus our first instinct is to save and not kill. And that is who we are as people.

I have been observing the web space for a while and I would like to present my observations and predictions regarding this from a writers' perspective.

4G has changed the game. Buffering is gone. Over the last couple of years, there is a paradigm shift in the way TV is watched in India. Watching TV has always been a community experience. Initially, it used to be with the neighbours or with our own families. When the second TV entered the bedroom, TV viewing no longer remained a family thing. With smartphones and tablets, the disintegration of the family continued further and even daily family dinners & conversations started fading out. Appointment TV, as it is now known, has become a thing of the past. The trend today is that of binge watching. The viewer can watch whatever they can, wherever they can, whenever they can without forced commercial breaks. And therefore it has given the viewer a superpower like never before: the power of choice.

As writers should we rejoice the fall of barriers and getting direct access to the viewer? Should we be elated that we no longer have to write only for the General Entertainment TV Channels (GECs) who make us write shoddy and stupid content? I don't see why not. It gives the pen more power and the mind more freedom.

An average A or B town house is a 5 device house. With direct-to-device content, the viewer is in control of the content. Binge watching changes everything. It's the number one rule, and probably the only rule of writing for anything anywhere in the world: the writing has to engage. Audiences' viewing styles will change and the writer has no control over how their content is viewed: pirated, binged, subscribed, shared. We should be able to excite and engage the audience, or she will switch it off any time.

"But the sooner we acknowledge that writing for Web is about writing better and not just about writing uncensored, the faster we will make headway into it."

And while we celebrate the freedom to write the way we want, with this freedom is a responsibility: to be great at what we are good at. There is a definite momentum in the digital space. But the sooner we acknowledge that writing for Web is about writing better and not just about writing uncensored, the faster we will make headway into it.

For example, a particular web-platform sincerely insists on 'male-oriented' content (read: sleaze). 'Web is about the youth and this is what the youth wants' is their argument. This is representative of the mindset which many content creators and platforms have today. Our understanding of what the youth wants is largely limited. We need to understand and acknowledge that web is not dignified porn. Respect the audience, especially the youth. They are discerning enough to filter out the falsehood in our stories. They will close us down with a click if we are not at our best.

We, as writers, need to tell stories that excite us. We're battling the shrinking attention spans of young viewers. The youth is exposed directly to international content where the writing is several notches higher than what we have in the web space today. The web audience is very smart and has a dignified taste.

We also need to engage with our youth by telling stories that are our own. We cannot compete internationally by being international. One of the ways to conquer the space is to be local.

Currently, there is some interesting work going on in the digital space. With the advent of Amazon and Netflix there are ample opportunities for writers to push the boundaries and explore newer worlds. It's a great opportunity for all the writers. With the advent of Web, the Cinema business will have to change from just a popcorn-samosa business into an actual ticket business. We all have to realise that people can get world-class content on their devices so to pull them out of their homes and get them to the cinema halls, we have to become better at what we are good at. The cost of distribution on the web is nil and the only star that works on the web is 'good writing'. Thus the Film Studios do need to pull their socks and start with respecting the writer. Respect is not just lip service... it is in paying the writer her dues, assuring her credits, giving her royalties and of course generally acknowledging the fact that not everyone with a laptop is a writer. The biggest loser in this game will be GEC TV, the way it is now.

The current trash on TV will no longer sustain the onslaught of good content elsewhere. GECs will have to change their strategies because the audiences will demand better. There is likely to be a huge attrition in the TV writing industry because the web will provide a wonderful escape route to those hundreds of talented writers who are made to write rubbish in the name of GEC content.

Yes as writers we're battling various issues like free speech, denial of monies and credit theft. The battle for royalties will see us emerge victoriously. But it will be a bloody hard fought one. But with advent of the digital era, we as content creators cannot hide anymore. As writers, we need to also acknowledge that our biggest battle is in the one within. We have to fight with ourselves and ensure that our craft is better today than what it was yesterday.

Abhijeet Deshpande is a director-writer who's writing credits include films like Wazir, Natsamrat, Mee Shivajiraje Bhosale Boltoy, Shaitan, Table no.21 and the web series Breathe. He is currently directing his upcoming period film 'Ani... Kashinath Ghanekar'.



It is a very difficult task to write about contemporaries. Being a practicing filmmaker, it is even an arduous task to bring about a certain kind of objectivity in reviewing the ongoing state of screenwriting and filmmaking in Bengal. Still, I am taking the risk to bring up some essential reflections on the matter. But I have decided, at least, not to take any names, be of films or of persons.

To start with a bang, I would say that Bengali films are suffering with a kind of insularity. It applies to both the aspects: the aesthetics and the logistics. By logistics, I mean the production and distribution factors. If we look back at the last ten years of the film industries in India, there is a massive changeover that happened. It is true about any regional industries of India including Bollywood. But Bengal has certain specific and exclusive traits. It is equally true about the legacy of filmmaking we carry and the socio-political ambit we belong to. Nonetheless, independent filmmaking has started its impressive journey with the help of new media explosion and revamping of the distribution system. By citing the revamping of the distribution system, I am indicating both the factors: the arrival of multiplexes and the slow extinction of single screens.

BENGALI CINEMA

STRAIGHT TALK BY SUMAN MUKHOPADHYAY

The alternative content got a new space in the map of Indian cinema. Bengal got new screenwriters and filmmakers (mostly the same person) who marked a new era. But these newfangled talents lost the touch of the roots they bloomed from. I am not expecting or demanding that the contemporary will have to carry forward an unconditional burden of the filmmaking traditions or trail the masters of the soil.

But as the artists voice their creativity in a definite domain of their history and reality it is essential that they innately impart their expressions through certain socio-cultural parameters.

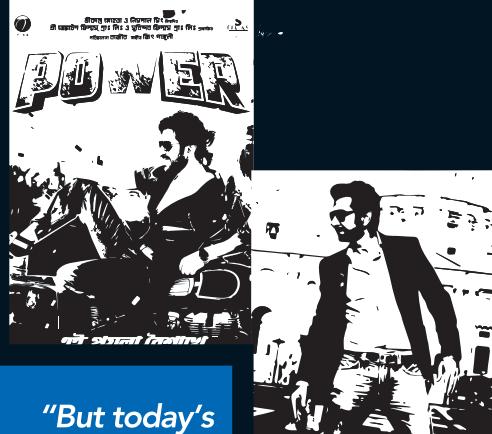
It is about the deep knowledge of the society with its contradictions and the attempt to reveal them through cinematic means. The recent films lack that insight and profundity or even sincere entertainment value. The paradox is that we are watching a number of films that are dealing with ideas that embrace the intense ambiguities of our times. But those intents are getting displaced because of gross superficiality and for a run-of-the-mill cinematic cadence that is found universally off-the-rack. The screenwriting suffers the same profanity. The directors are mostly screenwriters. So the screenwriters are never getting their true space and ground to validate their skills.

The filmmakers from Bengal who are celebrated throughout the country or internationally, have made very diverse and distinctive kinds of films during their times. You can easily make out their specific styles and unique sensitivities from the films. But today's Bengali films, they all look the same. Even the actors are almost the same, little here and there. And the entire production and distribution system is inappropriately monopolistic. This is stopping the other producers and distributors to come up with new voices. If there are any attempts they are nipped in the bud with organized supervision. It is the nexus of the dominant houses and exhibitors. The exhibitors, be it the multiplex operators or the struggling single screens, are helpless agents in this whole scenario. This film cartel is one of the prevailing reasons for the suffering of Bengali cinema. And added to this the political intolerance of the ruling party. Except the monopolistic agencies those are close to the ruling power, Bengali cinema never gets the privileges of the authorities. There is a definite inconsistency of treatment with the producers, makers, directors who are close to them and who are not. One doesn't need privileges, but at least non-interference. From guild rules to the exhibition formalities the independents are stifled.

"But today's Bengali films, they all look the same."

The annual film festival of Kolkata opens with the grand presence of Bollywood stars, but this remains only as a popular exhibition of that particular evening. It doesn't help the filmmakers or the film industry in any manner. Yes, I am portraying a very grim picture of the circumstances. But one needs to address these serious matters with all directness. I would definitely admit there are a few brilliant films that have been made in the last two decades. But they stand like tiny islands of hope amidst a huge dark domain. At least we are slowly moving out of the insufferable photocopy remakes of the Hindi and Southern films. Nonetheless, numbers of film produced have been increased massively, but very few original writing and innovative filmmaking flowered. To mention truthfully, only a couple of filmmakers have been able to push the boundaries and only one producer has made some inroads into this dominant territory. Even the business side of the industry looks very bleak. As any monopolistic economy, it never reveals the true economic overview. It is covert, corrupted and bloated with number games. Bengal's films need its own voice and original thinking. It cannot succumb to political overpowering and monopolistic traders. We need makers, writers and producers who have guts and conviction to take it forward and register that note to the nation and to the global arena.

Suman Mukhopadhyay is a screenwriter and director with films like Asampto, The Last Poem, Kangal Malsat, Chaturanga, and Herbert to his credit.



THE BIG BANG THEORY

A CHAT EACH WITH
SUDIP SHARMA AND
VARUN GROVER ON
THEIR EXPERIENCE
OF WRITING FOR
THE DIGITAL MEDIUM.

SWA: How did you approach the writing of your series? How different is the writing process of a web series from writing a screenplay for a film? Is the grammar different? Does the format of web series allow you to explore the characters more?

Sudip Sharma: The process isn't entirely different from writing a film screenplay, except that it's writing three films at the same time. Structure is extremely important in a film as well, but given that you are creating eight to ten hours of storyline in a series, it becomes even more crucial and difficult here. The big difference is in creating B-stories and giving proper arcs to secondary and tertiary characters.

In films, you are mostly trying to deal with two or three subplots. Here, you are simultaneously creating and complicating and resolving several subplots. In that sense, a series format is closer to the literary form than to films. It really helps you explore characters in far more depth.

Varun Grover: Since Sacred Games is based on a book our approach (Smita Singh, Vasant Nath, and me) was to first grasp the book completely - its themes, its USP, and its screen adaptability. Then we worked on different character arcs before getting into any kind of integrated series arcs. All major characters were discussed and an arc of their journeys made. Only after that, we started thinking about what to do with the episodes.

When it came to episodes, again we started with broad outlines and themes - and then started getting deeper into subplots.

A film is like a short story while a series is like a novel - so the grammar is drastically different. A series needs characters above anything else - characters with compelling journeys and themes that resonate with our times in some way.

In films, you are mostly trying to deal with two or three subplots. For example a show like The Handmaid's Tale, based on a book written 33 years ago and set in a dystopian future, resonates so much with our times and present-day fears.

A film may get away with zero-connect and compensate with lots of other awe-inspiring stuff (craft, plot, VFX, music, actors etc) but a series has to come good on the writing, come good on the emotional connect otherwise no one will invest 8 (multiplied by the number of seasons) hours into it.

SWA: Do certain stories lend themselves better to a series format than a film?
How do you make sure that it has potential to last many seasons?

Sudip Sharma: Stories with multiple plotlines or several characters with their individual tracks naturally lend themselves better to a series format. But it's also a function of how you deal with your stories. For instance, in a film, you're creating a conflict and resolving it in the next hour and a half or so. Here, you're creating conflicts and then playing with them out over eight hours. It requires a slightly different approach. Breaking down of a story with the idea of making it last many seasons can be tricky.

For sure, you want your series to have multiple seasons, but a deliberate attempt to do that can make the first season seem stretched and not juiced out on its own, which is an undesirable scenario. It's early days for me as well with this medium, so I say with rather limited experience that the focus of the first season should be on creating compelling characters. The characters will then hopefully drive the subsequent seasons.

Varun Grover: Any story can be adapted into anything. It's a matter of writers' craft and vision. With SACRED GAMES - since it's a thick book with many characters covering a long time-span - thinking of it as a multi-season thing wasn't difficult. Though it all depends on how the first season is reviewed by the viewers.

SWA: What significance do you see of Writers' room vis-a-vis web series writing? Do you see any downside of having a writers' room?

Sudip Sharma: It's a necessary part of the medium given the sheer volume of writing expected in a single season. Also, thrashing out structure and plotlines and character conflicts with a team helps in making the material sharper.

The downside is that writing is inherently a solitary experience and adjusting to this whole new communal style takes a little time. Also, individual personalities and writing styles can clash and that needs to be managed. A room needs to be fluid enough for ideas to flow but still needs a structure and a hierarchy so everyone knows what they're doing.

Varun Grover: Writers' room is a must for a series because one person alone might just go mad trying to make sense of so much material. Though am sure there are great shows out there written by a single writer (hats-off to those geniuses) but I feel writers' room helps in adding perspective to various subplots.

The only downside to a writers' room is the ego tussles that happen. Writers', like all artists, are emotional and egotistic beings and in a room with 3-4 writers, the chances of your idea getting shot down increase drastically. That results in sulking, manipulations, and bouts of self-doubt. All in a day's work.



Personally, I've mixed feelings about it. I feel if you create material, which is solid and your characters and setting are compelling, the viewers will stick around. Look at 'The Wire' or 'The Rectify' – two of my all-time favorite shows. They never go for the easy way out, but you just can't stop watching them.

Varun Grover: I don't think the burden of making something bingeable should be put on the writers. These are marketing terms designed to exploit writers first and manipulate viewers later. A good show will always be bingeable. Rick and Morty is episodic - there's no (or a very feeble) connect between two episodes and still when I watch it, I go 4-5-6 episodes in one go. Where's the marketing logic in that now?

SWA: Binge is a big word in digital. Why is it so important that viewers should binge? And how does that affect the writing? What are the tricks/tools/ground rules for making content 'binge-worthy'? Do you think this demand puts more pressure on the writers?

Sudip Sharma: We live in the times of information and entertainment overdose. There's just too much to watch and never enough time. The platforms are probably worried about viewers dropping out of a series midway and hence the stress on devices like end-episode hook points and surprises at regular intervals to make the series feel binge-worthy.

SWA: Due to a difference in cost of distribution and because of freedom from censorship - the general belief is that the digital medium allows for more freedom in the treatment and the kind of content creators can explore. Do you believe that is true? And have writers in India been able to explore/exploit that kind of freedom? How can they do it?

Sudip Sharma: It does promise freedom for the time being, especially given the ridiculous censorship process in India for films. Even more importantly, this medium is not star-dependent and that helps in democratizing the choice of subjects, which is always good.

But we also have to remember that internationally the digital platforms are quite powerful and do have a lot of say in the final output. Also, information-wise, the creators in this medium have to operate in a bit of a vacuum. You've no idea how many people watched your series, or any particular episode. So you're really going by what the platform is telling you about what works and doesn't work. And that by itself can be a powerless feeling.

Varun Grover: Digital allows for freedom, yes. But right now writers in India don't need freedom as much as they need skills and ideas. Most of the stuff on Indian web-space is so juvenile and below-par that it's shameful.

SWA: Is the digital new wave going to be the new place of fearless writing? Or, is it just the old wine in the new bottle?

Sudip Sharma: It's early days for the medium and right now we're all jumping on to it out of the sheer excitement of trying something new. There's going to be a lot of churn in this format before we settle down to a new equilibrium. And this means work both good and bad will come out, possibly more bad than good as we try and figure out the head and tail of the beast. But already, a change can be seen in the kind of stories we're trying to tell. And that's the first step.

Varun Grover: No idea. I am not Bejan Daruwalla.

SWA: How do you see the current state of web series in India? Do you think writers have been able to understand and exploit the nature of web series? How have things changed with the advent of international streaming platforms?

Sudip Sharma: Till now, we've been operating in the lower end of the spectrum. A lot of work that happened looked like someone wanted to actually make a film on it but when that didn't happen, they made a web series out of it. But that's because we haven't been exposed to good television in the last 20 years, which ironically is called the golden age of television in the West. The big platforms are bringing with them bigger budgets and better reach. More importantly, they'll expose us to the best of work that's happening internationally in the limited series format. And that's going to be a huge help in raising the standards.

Varun Grover: The current state of web series in India is shockingly, depressingly bad. We are seeing the greatest shows from around the world and are still making college-skit level third-rate videos in the name of millennial coolth.

SWA: Any other particular aspect of your experience with this medium that you would like to share with writers?

Sudip Sharma: This format needs a serious investment of time and can at times feel quite overwhelming. So one should be very sure that one's ready for it before jumping into it. Also, be accommodating of the other guys in the room. Remember, everyone's having a tough day.

Varun Grover: Nothing specific. It's writing - at the end of the day. You have to apply yourself and figure out the strengths and weaknesses of the medium. And tell a good story.

Sudip Sharma, screenwriter with films like NH10 and Udaan to his credit, is currently writing a series for Amazon Prime.

Varun Grover is an award winning lyricist, standup comedian and screenwriter (*Masaan*), he has co-written the series *Sacred Games* for Netflix.

"A good show will always be bingeable.."

CLASS AT PRIME TIME

THE NEED FOR



FOR TV/WEB

- VINOD RANGANATH

When I started my writing career 25 years ago in 1993, there were no classes for aspiring writers to learn the art of writing for TV or Films. Even the FTII didn't have a course in either Film or TV writing. Also, there was not much in terms of literature on TV writing to be found in those days. The first book that I bought during my early years of writing was Syd Field's, 'The Screenwriter's Workbook'. Though the book dealt with Film screenplay structuring, I was able to modify the film structure to the television writing and content of that time. But I still couldn't lay my hands on a book that dealt exclusively with TV writing.

I learnt more about TV writing from the episodes of Hindi TV shows, which I had consumed on DD National during my growing up years and the hit Daily TV soap operas on Star Plus, primarily 'Santa Barbara'. Santa Barbara was particularly amazing since it was a 45-minute daily soap opera which was structured so engagingly that my entire family was hooked on to the show. Their episodes ended with such tantalising freeze points that one was forced to come back the next night to watch the next episode. Apart from these influences what stood me in good stead was my exposure to theatre literature. I was an active theatre enthusiast since my college days and had read quite a lot of plays.

I started off my TV writing career with a comedy on Zee TV which was aired in 1993. It was a weekly show as was the norm in those days. I went onto writing a couple of more weekly shows. All through the writing of these shows, I was struggling to come to terms with how to write a 21-minute TV show and that too of different genres. In 1994 October I was offered to write a daily Soap Opera called 'Swabhimaan' based on a concept of Ms Shobhaa De. I went into it not knowing how to go about writing a daily soap. All I had was my determination and 'Santa Barbara'.

The writing of the initial episodes was but naturally a struggle but somewhere along the line a structure emerged and the creative team decided to stick to this structure for all future episodes of 'Swabhimaan'. Luckily for me, the show went on to become a huge success and a great learning for me. 'Swabhimaan' along with 'Shanti', which was the first daily soap to be aired, paved the way for the trend of DAILY SOAP operas.

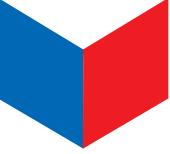
The realisation, that for TV shows one needed to structure a four-act story instead of three acts, which was the film structure, was a big learning. I hit upon it by sheer trial and error. A lot of work followed which is when it occurred to me that there was a dearth of trained and experienced writers who could write in this new format of television. Around the same time, I had started formulating a TV writing course and was keen to share my experience as a Daily Soap writer with newcomers and enthusiasts who wanted to learn TV writing. That was when the idea for a TV writing course emerged.

Around the beginning of 2002, I happened to meet Mr Anil Wanvari the promoter and Editor of the portal Indiatelevision.com. Mr Wanvari heard me out and was encouraging. That was when 'Qalam' happened, a short-term TV Writing Course. We had four batches that went through a rigorous six-month course. Our first batch was in 2002 and the last batch was in 2005.

"All I had was my determination and 'Santa Barbara'"

Next, Mr Anjum Rajabali approached me to conduct a TV writing workshop at the FTII and at Whistling Woods International in 2009. He was the Head Of Department of Screenwriting at both the film schools then. I lapped up the opportunity and after a few sessions, we designed a five-week comprehensive TV writing workshop for Film students. At the end of the workshop, film students would come up with a comprehensive TV BIBLE.





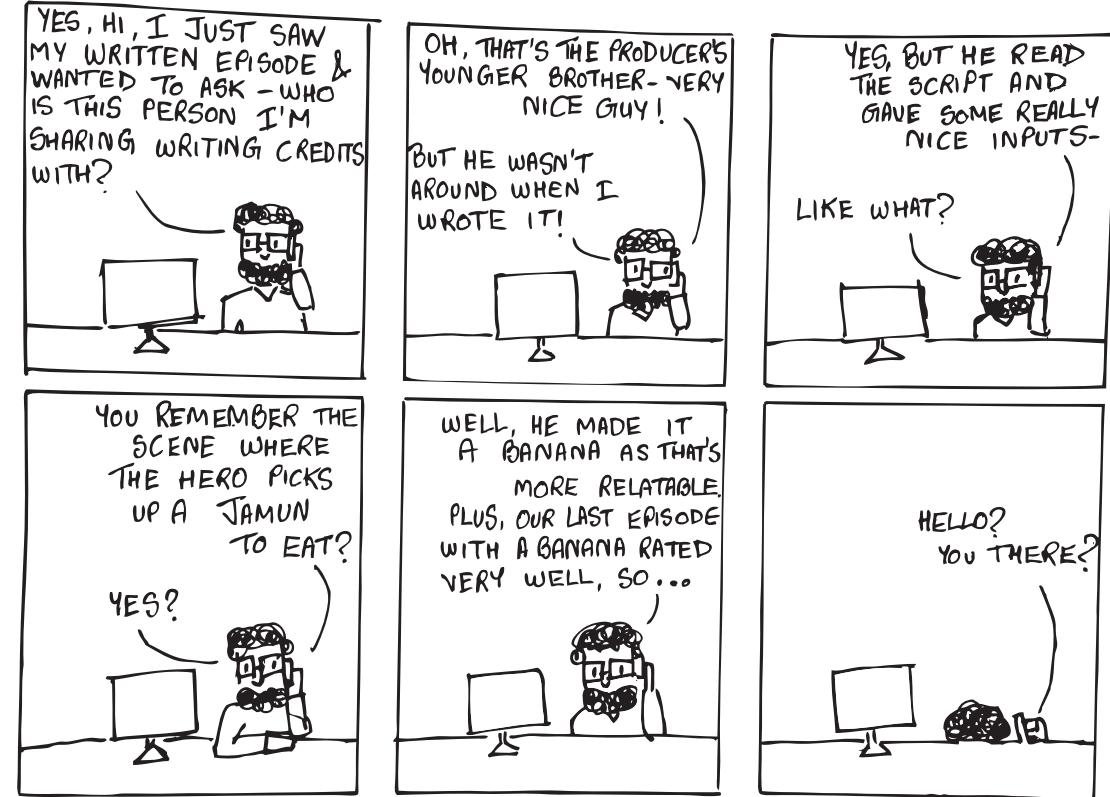
Over the years Satellite TV channels proliferated and became a huge platform for content. This but obviously resulted in more opportunities for aspiring television writers. Today at any given point of time every mainstream channel has around 10 shows of 5 hours of original programming. This translates to work for about 40-50 writers for a channel. We have 10 mainstream channels, so the requirement is for about 500 odd writers. Channels realised the need for trained writers and started looking out for trainers and trained students. It was around this time that FTII approached me during mid-2016 to conduct a five-month TV/Web writing course under their Short Term course initiative.

“Swabhimaan along with ‘Shanti’, which was the first daily soap to be aired, paved the way for the trend of DAILY SOAP operas.”

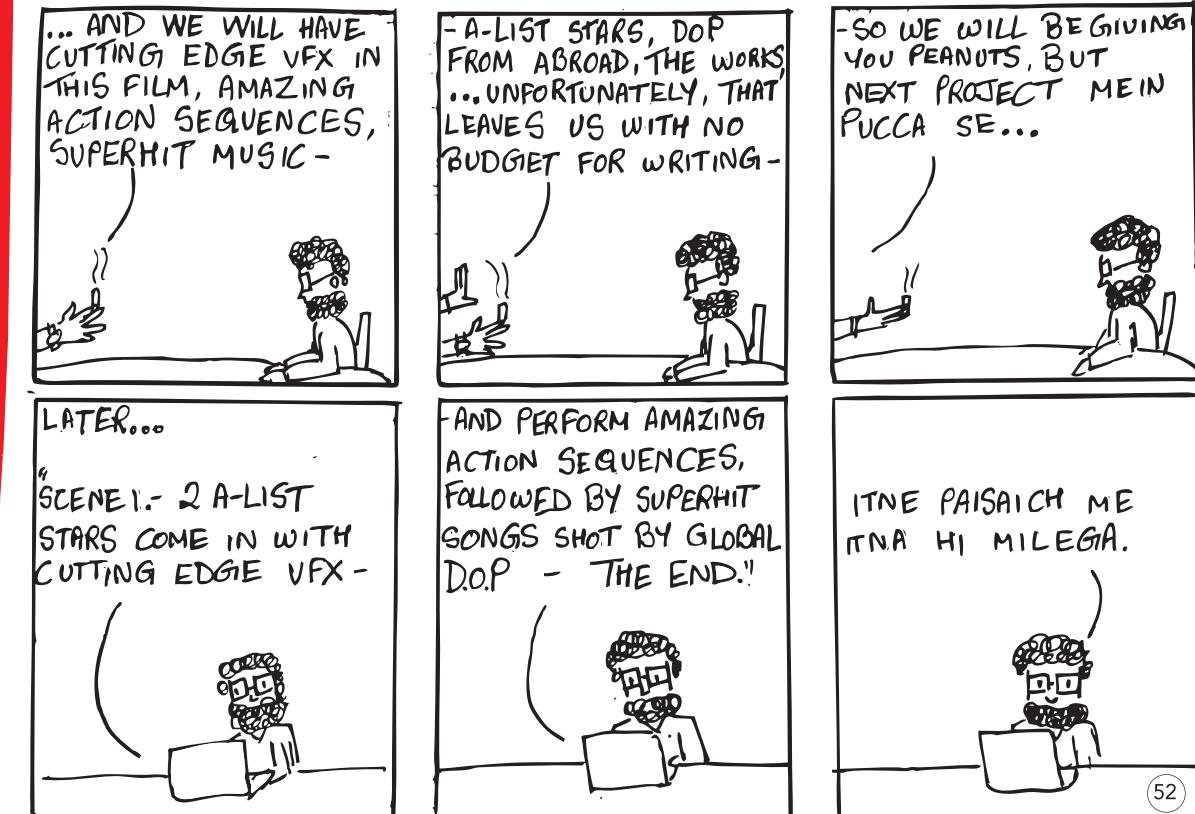
I accepted the offer. FTII got close to 70 applications from all over India for 15 seats. The First batch began on 3rd. July 2017 and passed out in November 2017. The course is structured as a two-semester course. In the first semester, students have to prepare a Bible for a relationship based drama series of 13 one hour episodes. The Bible includes a concept note, a broad story document, character sketches, four one hour episodes, episodic story and the pilot episode. During the two-week semester break, the students get exposed to 6 shot and 10 shot exercises conducted by the TV Direction department of FTII. In the second semester, the students have to prepare a ‘genre specific’ Bible. The students themselves choose the genres. The students also have well-known masters of TV and Web who come over as guest lecturers and conduct master classes and genre-specific workshops. The students are also exposed to International, Hindi and regional web and TV shows. Most of the satellite channels and Web & Digital portals were enthusiastic about meeting the newly passed out students and interviewed them for in-house writing posts. The Second batch of the TV writing course has begun since March 19th. 2018. Based on the feedback and our own learning it's now structured as a 24-week course.

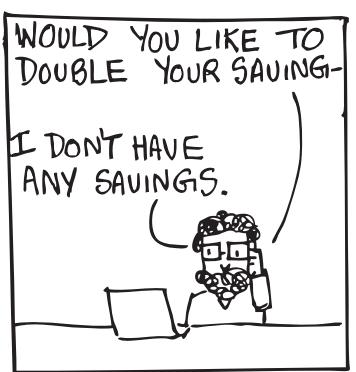
I am happy that over the years young aspiring TV writers have realised the need for structured learning and are willing to pay to learn the craft of TV/Web writing. It's a new beginning but I am hopeful that in a vast country like India more courses are started for TV/Web writing.

Vinod Ranganath has been writing for television for many years with shows like *Swabhimaan*, *Mere Agne Mein*, *Saaya*, *Kitty Party* and several others to his credit. He has also written films like *Mast* and *Ishq Vishq*. He teaches screenwriting at Film and Television Institute of India, Pune and Whistling Woods International, Mumbai and is a senior SWA activist.



ADVENTURES OF DESI SCRIPT WRITER BY DEBASHISHIRENGBAM



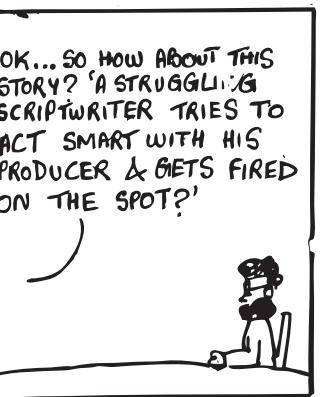
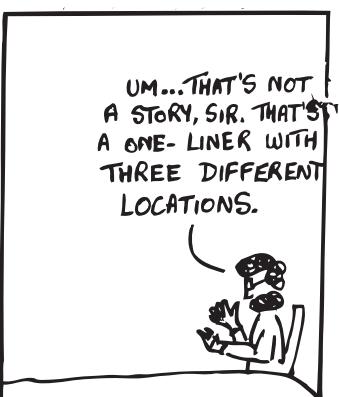
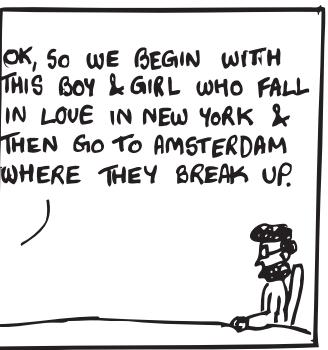


ADVENTURES OF DESI SCRIPT WRITER BY DEBASHISHIRENGBAM

Debashish Irengbam is a scriptwriter and novelist based in Mumbai. He has written episodes for TV crime thrillers and youth-based shows like Adaalat, Aahat, Dil Dosti Dance ... He is also the author of two novels, "Charlie Next Door" and "Me, Mia, Multiple" that were published by HarperCollins India.



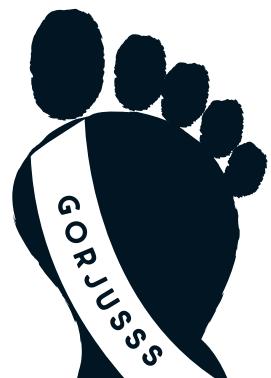
SURE,
SIR



DIALOGUE BAAZI

COMPILED BY
PALAK BHAMBRI

SOME ICONIC
FILM DIALOGUES
THAT HAVE
BECOME PART OF
OUR LANGUAGE...



"Aapke paon dekhe,
bahut haseen hai.
Inhe zameen par
mat utariyega,
maile ho jayenge"

Pakeezah (1972)
Dialogues by:
Aman and Kamal Amrohi

"Main aPni
favourjite
hoon"

Jab We Met (2007)
Dialogues by: Imtiaz Ali

"Jaa
Simran Jaa
jeele aPni
zindagi"

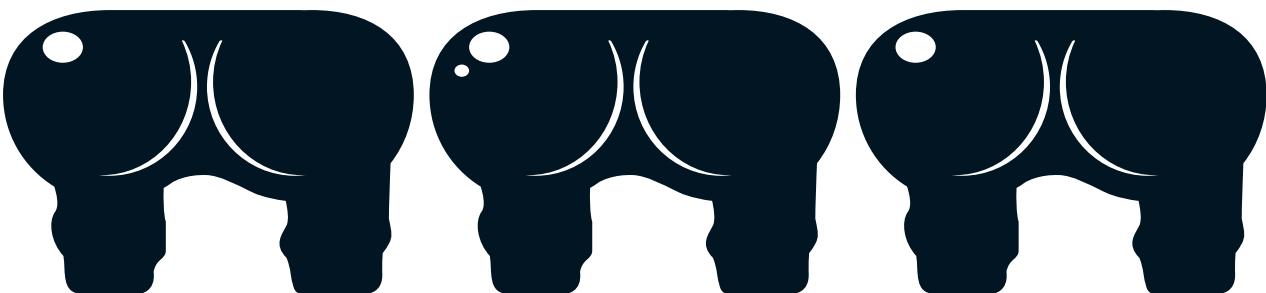
Dilwale Dulhania
Le Jayenge (1995)
Dialogues by:
Javed Siddique
and Aditya Chopra

THANKS
DAD!
YOU TOO.

"Bade bade shehron
mein aisi chhoti
chhoti baatein hoti
rehti hain"

"Aaall Iss
Well!"

3 Idiots (2009)
Dialogues by:
Abhijat Joshi,
Rajkumar Hirani and
Vidhu Vinod Chopra



"Adrak ho gaya hai
ye aadmi, kahin se
bhi badh raha hai"

"Mere aankhon
se mere khwab
na cheeniye
shehzaade,
mai marr jaungi!"

"Salim tujhe
marne nahi dega
aur hum, Anarkali,
tujhe jeene
nahi denge"

Mughal-e-Azam (1960)

Dialogues by: Aman, Kamal Amrohi,
Ehsan Rizvi and Wajahat Mirza



"Pushpaaa,
I hate
tears!"

Tanu Weds
Manu Returns (2015)
Dialogues by:
Himanshu Sharma

Amar Prem (1971)
Dialogues by: Ramesh Pant



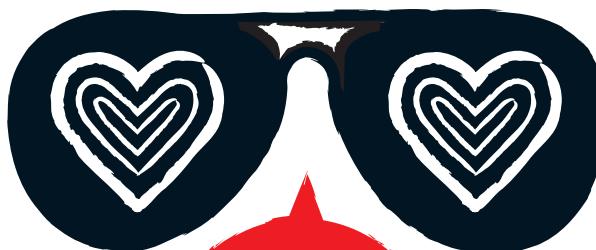
MERA BAAP CHOR HAI

**"Aaj mere paas
gaadi hai, bungla hai,
bank balance hai...
tumhare paas
kyo hai?"**

**"Mere paas,
maa hai"**

Deewar (1975)

Dialogues by:
Javed Akhtar
and Salim Khan



**"Thappad
se darr nahi
lagta sahib,
pyaar se
lagta hai"**

Dabangg (2010)

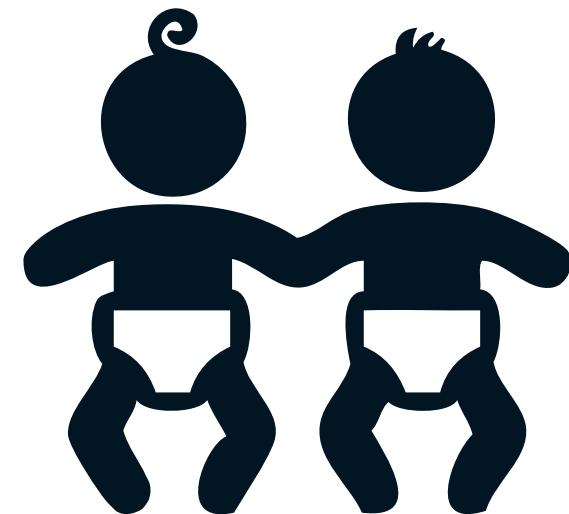
Dialogues by: Abhinav Kashyap,
Dilip Shukla and Suatanu Gupta

**"My name
is Khan and
I'm not a
terrorist"**

My Name is Khan

(2010)

Dialogues by:
Shibani Bathija and
Niranjan Iyengar



**"Mere Karan
Arjun aayenege"**

Karan Arjun (1995)

Dialogues by: Anwar Khan

**"Rishte mein toh hum
tumhaare baap lagte hain,
naam hai shahenshah"**

Shahenshah (1988)

Dialogues by: Inder Raj Anand

**"Tareekh pe
tareekh milti
rahi par insaaf
nahi mila"**

BIZZY
RE!

Damini (1993)
Dialogues by: Dilip Shukla
and Suatanu Gupta

**"Mogambo
khush hua"**

Mr.India (1987)
Dialogues by: Javed Akhtar and Salim Khan

**"Dosti ka ek
usool hai, Madam
– no sorry,
no thank you"**

LADKA,
LADKI,
DOSTI?
AOOH...

Maine Pyar Kiya (1989)
Dialogues by: Sooraj Barjatiya

**"Don ka intzaar
toh baarah mulko
ki police kar rahi hai,
par ek baat samajh lo,
Don ko pakadna
mushkil hi nahi,
namumkin hai"**

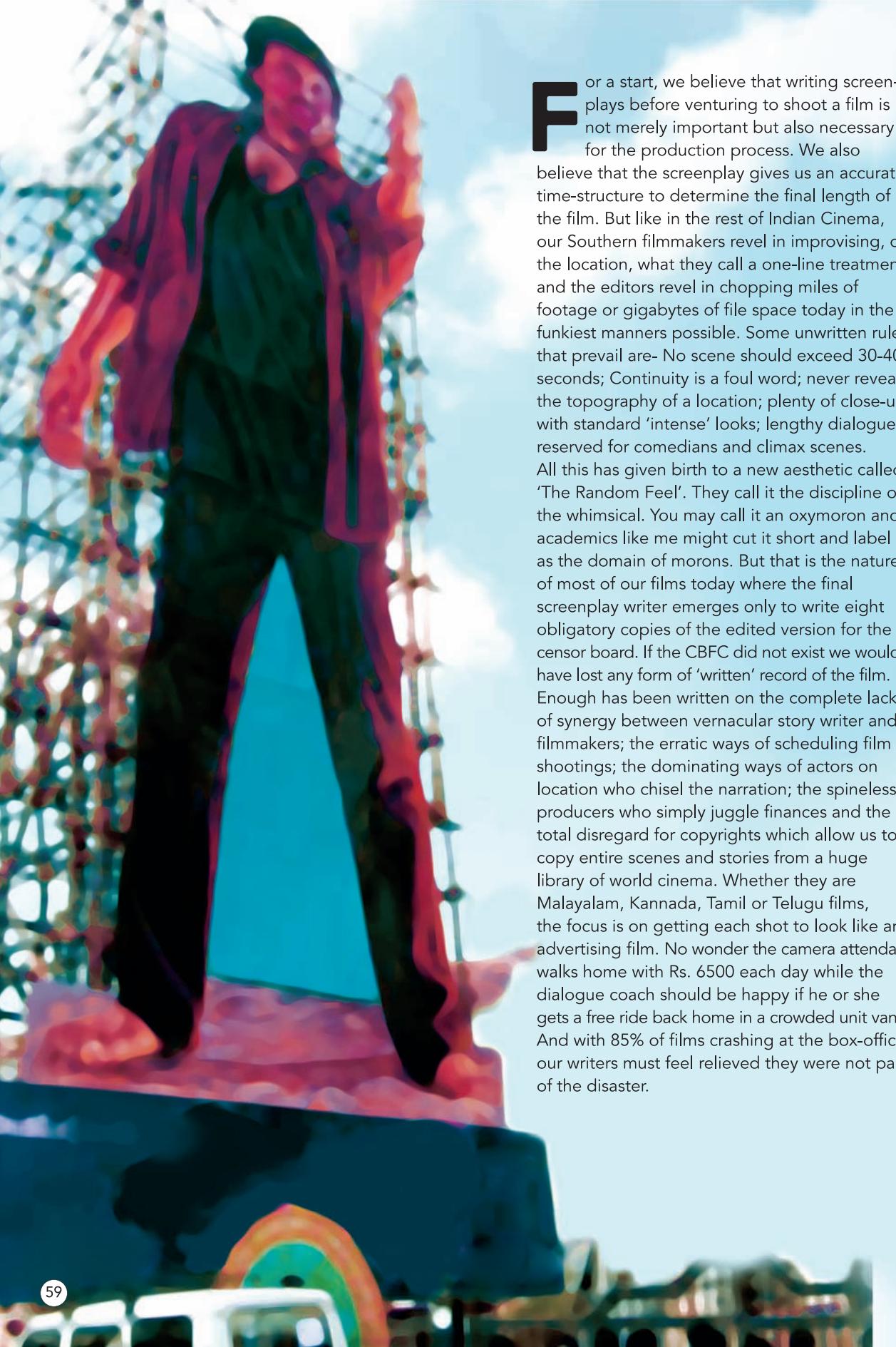
Don (1978)

Dialogues by:
Salim Khan and
Javed Akhtar

**"Kabhi kabhi
kuch jeetne ke liye
kuch harna bhi
padta hai, aur
haar kar jeetnay
wale ko baazigar
kehte hain"**

Baazigar (1993)

Dialogues by: Robin Bhatt,
Akash Khurana and Javed Siddique



For a start, we believe that writing screenplays before venturing to shoot a film is not merely important but also necessary for the production process. We also believe that the screenplay gives us an accurate time-structure to determine the final length of the film. But like in the rest of Indian Cinema, our Southern filmmakers revel in improvising, on the location, what they call a one-line treatment and the editors revel in chopping miles of footage or gigabytes of file space today in the funkiest manners possible. Some unwritten rules that prevail are- No scene should exceed 30-40 seconds; Continuity is a foul word; never reveal the topography of a location; plenty of close-ups with standard 'intense' looks; lengthy dialogues reserved for comedians and climax scenes. All this has given birth to a new aesthetic called 'The Random Feel'. They call it the discipline of the whimsical. You may call it an oxymoron and academics like me might cut it short and label it as the domain of morons. But that is the nature of most of our films today where the final screenplay writer emerges only to write eight obligatory copies of the edited version for the censor board. If the CBFC did not exist we would have lost any form of 'written' record of the film. Enough has been written on the complete lack of synergy between vernacular story writer and filmmakers; the erratic ways of scheduling film shootings; the dominating ways of actors on location who chisel the narration; the spineless producers who simply juggle finances and the total disregard for copyrights which allow us to copy entire scenes and stories from a huge library of world cinema. Whether they are Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil or Telugu films, the focus is on getting each shot to look like an advertising film. No wonder the camera attendant walks home with Rs. 6500 each day while the dialogue coach should be happy if he or she gets a free ride back home in a crowded unit van. And with 85% of films crashing at the box-office our writers must feel relieved they were not part of the disaster.

SCREENWRITING IN SOUTHERN CINEMA- A REALITY CHECK

- K. HARIHARAN

Yet 2017 also saw the first big blockbuster truly 'Indian' film in 'Baahubali' written originally in Telugu, by Vijayendra Prasad who also happens to be the father of the film's director SS Rajamouli. Attracting massive audiences in all its language versions without big stars, the film undoubtedly set some high standards in sheer industrial professionalism. In many ways the screenplay challenged most of the conventional tenets of character-based psychological realism and chose to dip deep into the various Puranas and mythological legends to provide a visual spectacle and create the necessary 'awesome'* look - I have yet to find out why 'awesome' means brilliant while 'awful' means horrible! Prasad also chooses to write in a way, which navigates the story through long scenes, a slower pace in dialogue delivery and cleverly crafted rhetoric. It is not surprising that he is also the writer for 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' and the Tamil blockbuster 'Mersal' starring Vijay. It will be indeed interesting to see his forthcoming film 'Manikarnika' – The story of Jhansi Ki Rani, starring Kangana Ranaut.

The kind of films which Prasad seems to be working, also requires drafting reasonably elaborate storyboards for compositing effects and graphics.

This technological detail mandates providing precise time and perspective details which in turn impacts the narration's flow on-screen. Similar CG effects seem to have become commonplace in several Southern TV serials too and this forces writers to step out of their whimsical 'random' seats to write with more precision. It is at this juncture that Amazon, Hulu and Netflix have opened their shops in South India. Suddenly we see struggling writers chomping away on keyboards drafting stories 'a page a minute' and submitting multiple copies to junior Anglophilic executives. After dishing out eight different story-scripts a young harassed writer-director tells me 'Sir...They just don't know how to read screenplays'. But how do you tell this to corporate executives? That could be the subject for the next seminar.

K.Hariharan has directed films like Ghasiram Kotwal, Current and Dubashi. An FTII alumni himself, he is currently Professor of Film Studies at Ashoka University



सामाजिक यथार्थ का बेजोड़ लेखक - के ए अब्बास!

ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास को 5आइएससी के दौरान सिनेमा लेखन में उनके विशेष योगदान के लिए एसडबल्यूए अवार्ड से सम्मानित किया जा रहा है। इसी उपलक्ष्य में, प्रस्तुत हैं उनकी लेखन-यात्रा पर एक नज़र। - अजय ब्रह्मात्मज

सन् 1927 में इंडियन सिनेमेटोग्राफ कमेटी ने सिनेमा के बारे में महात्मा गाँधी की राय जानने के लिए एक प्रश्नावली भेजी तो उन्होंने जवाब में लिखा, “मैं आपकी प्रश्नावली के उत्तर के लिए अनुपयुक्त व्यक्ति हूं। मैंने कभी कोई सिनेमा नहीं देखा और मैं इसके प्रभाव से अनभिज्ञ हूं। अगर इस माध्यम में कोई अच्छाई है तो वह अभी सिद्ध होना बाकी है।” महात्मा गाँधी के इस जवाब से परेशान होकर ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास ने उन्हें एक खुला पत्र लिखा था।

उन्होंने गांधी जी से फिल्म माध्यम के प्रति सकारात्मक सोच अपनाने की अपील की थी। अब्बास साहब के पत्र का अंश है - “आज मैं आपकी परख और अनुमोदन के लिए अपनी पीढ़ी के हाथ लगे खिलौने - सिनेमा को रखना चाहता हूं। आप सिनेमा को जुआ, सट्टा और घुड़दौड़ जैसी बुराई मानते हैं। अगर यह बयान किसी और ने दिया होता, तो हमें कोई चिंता नहीं होती। लेकिन आपका मामला अलग है।

इस देश में या यों कहें कि पूरे विश्व में आपको जो प्रतिष्ठा मिली हुई है, उस संदर्भ में आपकी राय से निकली छोटी टिप्पणी का भी लाखों जनों के लिए बड़ा महत्व है। दुनिया के सबसे उपयोगी आविष्कारों में से एक को ढुकराया या इसे चरित्रहीन लोगों के हाथों में नहीं छोड़ा जा सकता। बापू, आप महान आत्मा हैं। आपके हृदय में पूर्वाग्रह के लिए स्थान नहीं है।

हमारे इस छोटे खिलौने सिनेमा पर ध्यान दें। यह उतना अनुपयोगी नहीं है, जितना दिखता है। इसे आपका ध्यान, आर्शीवाद और सहिष्णु मुस्कान चाहिए। इस पत्र से जाहिर होता है कि ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास सिनेमा को 20 वीं सदी के लिए कितना उपयोगी और जरूरी माध्यम मानते थे।

ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास की पैदाइश आज के हरियाणा के पानीपत में हुई थी। पढ़ाई के लिए वे अलीगढ़ गए। यहां उनका रुझान अखबारी लेखन की तरफ हुआ। वहां से प्रकाशित हो रही पत्रिका ‘अलीगढ़’ ने उनके लेख नहीं छापे तो उन्होंने अपने विचारों की अभिव्यक्ति के लिए ‘अलीगढ़ ओपिनियन’ नामक वीकली प्रकाशित करना आरम्भ कर दिया। पत्रकारिता का यह चर्स्का दिल्ली आने पर परवान चढ़ा। दिल्ली में वे साइकिल से पुलिस स्टेशन और अस्पतालों में जाते थे और रिपोर्टिंग करते थे। ऐसी ही एक रिपोर्टिंग के दौरान चांदनी चौक इलाके में निकल रहे जुलूस पर पुलिस की ज़्यादती देखी तो उनसे नहीं रहा गया। वे उस जुलूस में शामिल हुए और गिरफ्तारी दी। इस घटना का उनके उनके जीवन पर गहरा असर हुआ। समाजवाद और इंसानियत के विचार और भावनाओं को उन्होंने लेखन और जीवन में उतारा। आगे का उनका अखबारी और फिल्मी लेखन इन्हीं मूलभूत विचारों से प्रभावित रहा। उनके दादा ख्वाजा अल्ताफ़ हुसैन हाली ने कभी लिखा था...

“फ़रिश्ते से बढ़ कर है इंसान बनना
मगर इसमें लगती है मेहनत ज़ियादा।”

ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास की लेखनी और ज़िन्दगी समाजवादी विचारों को लेकर इंसानियत की राह पर आजन्म चलती रही।

दिल्ली से मुंबई आने पर ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास ने ‘द बॉम्बे क्रोनिकल’ में नौकरी की और मशहूर सासाहिक कॉलम ‘द लास्ट पेज’ लिखना शुरू किया। ‘द बॉम्बे क्रोनिकल’ बंद होने पर वे ‘ब्लिट्ज़’ में आ गए तो वहां भी यह कॉलम जारी रहा। बाद में तो यह अंग्रेजी के साथ हिंदी और उर्दू ब्लिट्ज़ में भी छपने लगा। उर्दू में इसका नाम ‘आज़ाद कलम’ और हिंदी में ‘आखिरी पन्ना’ था। इसी दरम्यान फिल्मों में उनकी दिलचस्पी देखते हुए संपादक ने उन्हें फ़िल्म-रिट्यू लिखने के लिए भी प्रेरित किया।

कहते हैं बॉम्बे-टाकीज के हिमांशु राय ने एक बार किसी पार्टी में उन पर तंज किया कि फ़िल्में देखकर उनमें नुक्स निकलना तो आसान है। कभी फिल्म बनाओ तो जानें। यह बात ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास को भेद गयी। उन्होंने पत्रकारिता के अनुभवों को लेकर ‘नया संसार’ की स्क्रिप्ट लिखी और बॉम्बे टाकीज की लीड जोड़ी अशोक कुमार और देविका रानी ने काम किया। फिल्म चली और ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास फ़िल्मों के लिए लिखने लगे। उन्होंने तीन फ़िल्में लिखीं, मगर कहानी के साथ हुई निर्देशक की काट-छांट से अपनी खिल्ली जाहिर की। फिर से किसी ने कहा कि ऐसी बात है तो खुद ही निर्देशित क्यों नहीं कर लेते?

तब तक मुंबई में इप्टा की स्थापना हो चुकी थी। समाजवादी विचारों के ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास इप्टा के संस्थापक सदस्य रहे। इप्टा अपने नाटकों से मुंबई में समाजवादी सोच के प्रचार-प्रसार में सक्रिय भूमिका निभा रही थी। चेतन आनंद, बलराज साहनी और कैफ़ी आज़मी आदि बहुत एक्टिव थे। इप्टा ने फिल्म बनाने का इरादा किया और उसकी बागडोर अब्बास साहब को सौंपी गयी। उन्होंने विजन भट्टाचार्य के नाटक ‘नवान्न’ और कृष्णा चंद्र की कहानी ‘अन्नदाता’ को मिलाके ‘धरती के लाल’ लिखी और निर्देशित की। बंगाल के अकाल और युद्ध की पृष्ठभूमि पर बनी यह फिल्म भारतीय सिनेमा के इतिहास की पहली यथार्थवादी फिल्म थी। यह फिल्म व्यवसायिक दृष्टि से सफल नहीं रही। लेकिन इसी ने चेतन आनंद की ‘नीचा नगर’ की ज़मीन तैयार की। इसकी पटकथा अब्बास साहब ने ही लिखी थी। कान फिल्म समारोह में इसे गां पी अवार्ड से सम्मानित किया गया। हालाँकि इस अवार्ड के बावजूद इस फ़िल्म को अंग्रेजी सरकार ने भारत में रिलीज़ की अनुमति नहीं दी।

किस्सा है कि 'आवारा' की स्क्रिप्ट लेकर अब्बास साहब महबूब खान के पास गए थे। वे चाहते थे कि दिलीप कुमार मुख्य भूमिका निभाएं। फिल्म में यह सन्देश था कि जन्म और किस्मत से इन्सान का चरित्र निर्धारित नहीं होता, सामाजिक वातावरण ही उसका चरित्र गढ़ता है। महबूब खान को यह स्क्रिप्ट राज कपूर के लायक लगी। राज कपूर ने उसे ले भी लिया और फिर 'आवारा' का इतिहास रचा गया। कम लोग जानते हैं कि 'आवारा' की सफलता के बाद नरगिस के कहने पर अब्बास साहब ने इसी कहानी को उलट कर महिला किरदारों के साथ 'अनहोनी' लिखी थी। उसमें नरगिस का डबल रोल था। बहरहाल, राजकपूर और ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास के बीच अच्छी निभी और दोनों ने मिलकर हिंदी सिनेमा को समृद्ध किया। राज कपूर की फिल्मों के प्रगतिशील और मानवीय विचारों के सूत्रधार ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास ही थे।

उन्होंने खुट के लिए लिखना भी जारी रखा और समय-समय पर फिल्में भी निर्देशित करते रहे। व्यवसायिक दबावों के आगे वे कभी नहीं झुके। उन्होंने अपनी फिल्मों के जरिये देश और समाज की ज्वलंत समस्याओं, विसंगतियों और विराधाभासों को मुखर अभिव्यक्ति दी। बराबरी के सिद्धांत पर आधारित सुन्दर समाज की कल्पना, उनकी फिल्मों की थीम रही। 'शहर और सपना', 'मुन्ना', 'दो बूँद पानी', 'बम्बई रात की बाँहों में' और 'द नक्सालाइट' में उनकी प्रतिबद्धता देखी जा सकती है। गोवा की आजादी की लडाई को लेकर बनी 'सात हिन्दुस्तानी' में उन्होंने अमिताभ बच्चन को पहला मौका दिया था। अमिताभ उनका ज़िक्र करते समय उन्हें फिल्म इंडस्ट्री में पॉपुलर उनके नाम 'मामू' से संबोधित करते हैं।

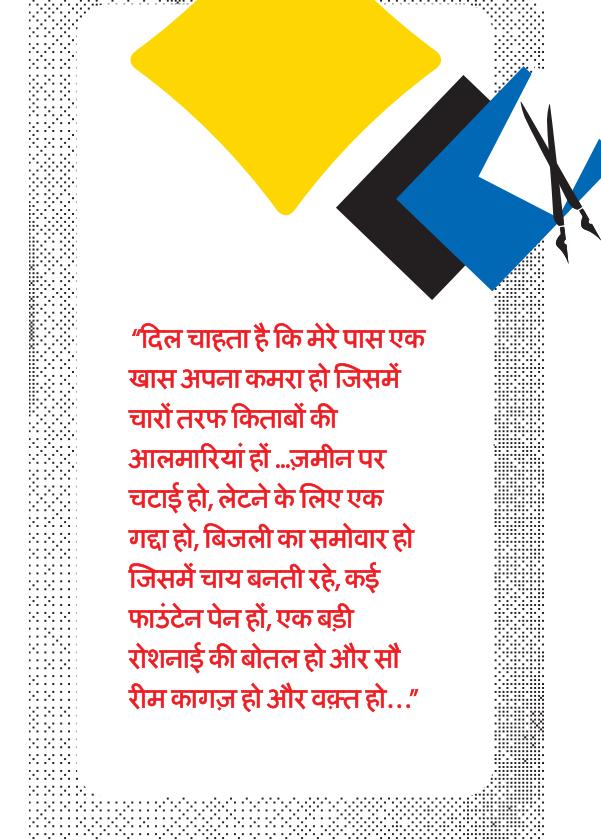
दैनिक जागरण के पूर्व फिल्म संपादक अजय ब्रह्मात्मज इन दिनों 'jagran.com', 'The News Laundry' और 'लोकमत समाचार' के लिए नियमित स्तम्भ लिख रहे हैं। हिंदी सिनेमा के इतिहास और वर्तमान में उनकी खास रुचि है।

"दिल चाहता है कि मेरे पास एक खास अपना कमरा हो जिसमें चारों तरफ किताबों की आलमारियां हैं... जमीन पर चटाई हो, लेटने के लिए एक गद्दा हो, बिजली का समोवार हो जिसमें चाय बनती रहे, कई फाउंटेन पेन हों, एक बड़ी रोशनाई की बोतल हो और सौंसौ रीम कागज हो और वक्त हो..."



एक इंटरव्यू में उन्होंने कहा था, "दिल चाहता है कि मेरे पास एक खास अपना कमरा हो जिसमें चारों तरफ किताबों की आलमारियां हैं... जमीन पर चटाई हो, लेटने के लिए एक गद्दा हो, बिजली का समोवार हो जिसमें चाय बनती रहे, कई फाउंटेन पेन हों, एक बड़ी रोशनाई की बोतल हो और सौंसौ रीम कागज हो और वक्त हो..."

कमबख्त, वक्त ही तो नहीं रहता इन्सान के पास! जाते जाते अब्बास साहब अपने कॉलम 'द लास्ट पेज' में अपना 'द लास्ट विल' लिख गए... उस पर फिर कभी।



गंगापुत्र मासूम

- कुछ यादें



डॉ. राही मासूम रजा को उनके एक साथी कलाकार की ओर से श्रद्धांजलि। टीवी लेखन में विशेष योगदान के लिए डॉ. रजा को 5आइएससी के दौरान एसडबल्यूए अवार्ड से नवाज़ा जा रहा है। - हरीश भिमानी

शायद मैं अकेला होऊँगा जिसने राही साहब से बगैर फ़ीस दिए मूल्यवान शिक्षा पाई। प्रयत्न के लिए प्रोत्साहन पाया। स्नेह पाया तो डॉट भी खाई। गुर सीखे तो अनुशासन की आदत भी पाली - और, अव्वल तो दूसरा व्यावसायिक जन्म पाया!

मैं क्यों न कहूँ उन्हें मेरे दूसरे पिता जब राही साहब "तीन माँओं का बेटा" थे? बल्कि वे तो मेरे दूसरे बाल्दैन माने जाएँगे! संतान का विचार भी उनका था और ('समय' को) रूप-आकार-रफ्तार देने की प्रसव-पीड़ा भी उन्होंने ने सही! नामकरण भी तो उन्होंने का किया है!

यह तो बहुत बाद में पता चला कि सूत्रधार के उनके इस अनूठे से तसव्युर के बगैर वह इस महाकाव्य के 'टीवीकरण' से जुड़ना ही नहीं चाहते थे। और यह उन्होंने दिल्ली में बैठे देश के घरेलू मनोरंजन का फैसला करने वाले हाकिमों को दो टूक बता दिया था।

वैसे बी. आर. चोपड़ा के प्रस्ताव के बावजूद वे महाभारत लिखना नहीं चाहते थे। पहले व्यस्तता के कारण, और फिर व्याप के कारण! इस पर भी जब चोपड़ा साहब न माने और राही साहब के नाम की घोषणा कर दी तो बवाल-सा उठा।

कई दिशाओं से उभरे इस विसंगत, बेसिरपैर के विरोध ने उन्हें राही मासूम से राही 'मुहिम' बना दिया। "क्यों नहीं? अब तो ज़रुर लिखूँगा। जब मैं इस भारत का हूँ, तो महाभारत मेरा क्यों नहीं?" ऐलान कर दिया उन्होंने, "अगर इस देश को मुझसे कोई ज़्यादा जानता है और यहाँ के पानी को - गंगाजल को - मुझसे कोई ज़्यादा पवित्र समझता है तो आए मेरे सामने और शास्त्रार्थ कर ले!" अब तो टीवी माध्यम

के आशंकित अफसरों ने भी हामी भर दी! एक महाकाव्य के महा-अभियान का आरंभ हुआ। यूँ ही तो नहीं हम उन्हें छुप-छुप कर 'राही मतवाने' कहते थे! अपनी धून, अपना तर्क, अपना तरीका... मनवाकर ही रहते। उनका अंदाज अलग था। जो था बस उनका अपना ही था - परिधान से लेकर परिप्रेक्ष्य तक।

'महाभारत' से पूर्व उन्होंने कुछ ऐसा ही ढब टीवी सीरियल 'बहादुरशाह ज़फर' में अपनाया था। पर परिणाम अपेक्षाकृत नहीं था। यह 'ऐनेलिटिक्स' शब्द तो बहुत बाद में आया। गूढ विशेषण और अन्वेषण उनके स्वभाव का अभिन्न अंग था। इसलिए अबके उन्होंने कड़े प्रशिक्षण पर विश्वास किया। पहले कुछ एपिसोड की रेकॉर्डिंग के दौरान मेरी क्लास क्या लगती, अच्छी खासी परेड होती। यह उन्होंने की सीख थी कि, "आवाज तो केवल गहना है। अंदाज से अवाम को अपना बनाओ।"

महाभारत का एक साल पूरा होने के उपलक्ष्य में एक पार्टी के दौरान मैंने उनसे कहा था कि 'समय' का लेकर लोग चाहे लाख मेरी तारीफ करें, पर समय का असल प्रभाव तो उसके सटीक लेखन में है।

बकौल राही साहब,
"फिल्मी दुनिया में लेखक के सिवा और सभी लेखक होते हैं। इसीलिए कुछ ज़हनी दबंगई करतई ज़रूरी है।" राही साहब जो भी लिखते, पढ़ते हुए लगता कि सामने बैठकर, गालों में

पान का बीड़ा खोंसे अपनी मौज में बतिया रहे हैं।

आता, वैसे ही एक राइटर को तराशता है वह जो लिखता नहीं, लिखवाता है - डाइरेक्टर। और अल्फ़ाज़ में से लफ़ाज़ी छानने की शिक्षा मैंने उठते-गिरते ही पाई। एक बार मैंने एक लंबा सीन लिखा था और डाइरेक्टर ने ऐसा काटा कि ऐसे तो कोई बकरे को झाटके से न काटे! लेकिन उसके बाद मैं खुद अपना आलोचक बन गया।

पहले मैं लिखता! फिर मैं भूल जाता और फिर एक अजनबी की तरह पढ़ता - एक बेरहम क्रिटिक बनकर।"

उन्हें लिखते हुए देखना भी एक अनूठा अनुभव था। लेखन तो एकाकी प्रक्रिया होती है न! होगी औरों के लिए। अक्सर लेखक लिखते हैं कलम से काग़ज को काला करके न। नहीं। राही साहब लिखते बक्त जानते थे कि उनके शब्द बोले जाएँगे - सो बोलकर लिखते... बाँह हाथ में धरे माइको-कसेट रेकोर्डर में बोलते हुए... और वह भी अकेले नहीं - भरी पूरी मीटिंग में, सोचते हुए, बहस करते हुए, दूसरों की राय सुनते हुए, तृ-तृ मैं-मैं तक करते हुए।

बल्कि एक बार की बात है, चौंकि महाभारत लेखन एक सामूहिक प्रक्रिया थी, सीनारियो लिखने वाले एक सज्जन तर्क-वितर्क के भँवर में सबको घसीट रहे थे। तब राही साहब ने अपनी आवाज में कुछ मिसरी घोलकर कहा, "हाँ, बेशक बोलते जाइए क्योंकि डिमार्कर्सी है। पर यह याद रहे कि हम सुन रहे हैं और गहराई से सोच भी रहे हैं। रुकिए मत, बोलते जाइए, क्योंकि डिमार्कर्सी है।"

बकौल राही साहब, "फिल्मी दुनिया में लेखक के सिवा और सभी लेखक होते हैं!" यानी नुक्ताचीनी तो एक खेल होता है जिसमें लेखक के अलावा सब जीतते हैं। "इसीलिए कुछ ज़हनी दबंगई करतई ज़रूरी है।"

पर राही साहब जो भी लिखते, पढ़ते हुए लगता कि सामने बैठकर, गालों में पान का बीड़ा खोंसे अपनी मौज में बतिया रहे हैं। मेरा हमेशा से यह मानना रहा है कि राही साहब पढ़ने के लिए कम और सुनने के लिए ज़्यादा लिखते थे, और इसीलिए वह पहले खुद ही स्स्वर पठन करते - अपने ही लिखे शब्दों की जुगाली करते। अगर इस अमल से वे मुत्मिन होते, बल्कि लुत्फ़अंदोज़ होते, तभी उन शब्दों को स्क्रिप्ट का दर्जा हासिल होता। लेकिन इस लेखन प्रक्रिया का दूसरा पहलू भी होता - नितांत एकाकी। दिनभर के लेखन-बहस के बाद अपने घर जाकर एक मोटे से क़ालीन पर नवाबी शान से पसर के बैठते, गौं-तकिए के सहारे उस स्क्रिप्ट को 'फ़ाइनल' करने से पहले एक-एक किरदार में खो जाते। उनके कहे मुताबिक यह काम ही तो दिमाग़ी तौर पर सबसे थका देनेवाला होता था।

उन्होंने एक बार कहा था कि यह जो मैं अंदर से हर किरदार बन जाता हूँ न... यही मुझे कभी जिस्मानी तौर पर ले डबेगा। और शायद वही हुआ।

एक संवेदनशील शब्द-शिल्पी किरदारों में खो गया, और एक अनबूझा-सी सोच छोड़ गया।

डॉ राही मासूम रजा की पुस्तक 'सीन:75' से...

वसीयत

मेरा फ़न तो मर गया यारो
मैं नीला पड़ गया यारो

मुझे ले जाके शाजीपुर की गंगा की गोदी में सुला देना।
मगर शायद वत्न से दूर मौत आये
तो मेरी यह वसीयत है

अगर उस शहर में छोटी-सी एक नदी भी बहती हो
तो मुझको

उसकी गोद में सुलाकर

उससे कह देना

कि यह गंगा का बेटा आज से तेरे हवाले है।

मैं तीन 'माँओं का बेटा' हूँ। नफिसा बेगम, अलीगढ़ युनिवर्सिटी और गंगा।

यह 'सीन:75' अपनी तीनों माँओं को भेंट करता हूँ। नफिसा बेगम मर चुकी हैं। अब साफ़ याद नहीं आती। बाकी दोनों माँयें जिंदा हैं और याद भी हैं।

- राही मासूम रजा
(‘सीन:75’, पृ.5)

लेखक, एंकर और जाने-माने वॉइस-ओवर कलाकार हरीश भिमानी सर्वाधिक जाने जाते हैं महाभारत सीरियल के सूत्धार, समय' को आवाज़ देने के लिए।



ओ जाने वाले हो सके तो लौटकर आना!

यादों के झरोखे से गीतकार शैलेंद्र को एक सलाम! शैलेंद्र को 5वीं आइएससी के दौरान गीत लेखन में उनके विशेष योगदान के लिए एसडब्ल्यूए अवार्ड से सम्मानित किया जा रहा है। -जय प्रकाश चौकसे

शैलेंद्र रेल्वे के रख-रखाव वाले विभाग में कार्यरत थे और एक तबादला उन्हें मुम्बई ले आया जहाँ उन्होंने इप्टा की गतिविधियों और कपड़ा मिल मज़दूरों के संघर्ष में भाग लेना शुरू किया। वे कार्न मार्क्स के दर्शन से प्रभावित थे और 'दास कैपिटल' प्रायः अपने साथ लिए होते थे, जैसे कुछ लोग गीता, बाइबिल या कुरान लिए होते हैं। इप्टा के लिए उन्होंने जो गीत लिखे उनमें से निम्न पंक्तियों को हर सभा और आंदोलन में दोहराया गया - "तू जिंदा है तो ज़िंदगी की जीत पर यकीन कर, अगर कहीं है स्वर्ग तो उतार ला ज़र्मीं पर!" उस दौर में उनकी लिखी कविताओं में राजनैतिक नारेबाजी के तत्व शामिल थे। उनकी कविताओं का संग्रह सन् 1955 में प्रकाशित हुआ और संकलित कविताएँ साम्यवाद के प्रचार की सामग्री लगती हैं। अगर वे उसी तरह कविताएँ लिखते रहते तो उन्हें साहित्य में कोई स्थान नहीं मिलता। परंतु फ़िल्मों के लिए लिखे उनके गीतों में साहित्य का स्पर्श है और कुछ गीत तो ऐसे हैं जिन्हें पाठ्यक्रम में शामिल किया जा सकता है।

शैलेंद्र के जीवन में बड़ा परिवर्तन उस समय आया जब मुम्बई की चौपाटी पर आयोजित एक कवि सम्मेलन में उन्होंने कविता पढ़ी, "बगिया में मेरी आग लगाय गयो परदेशी" और "मेरा जलता हुआ पंजाब"

पृथ्वीराज
कपूर की
अध्यक्षता में
आयोजित कवि सम्मेलन
में श्रोताओं की दीर्घा में युवा

राज कपूर मौजूद थे। सम्मेलन समाप्त होने पर वे शैलेंद्र से मिले और अपनी फ़िल्म में गीत लिखने का निमंत्रण दिया जिसे शैलेंद्र ने ठुकरा दिया। जिसके सीने में मार्क्सवाद धड़कता हो, वह किसी महिमा-मंडित काम में शामिल नहीं होता। उन दिनों पढ़े-लिखे लोग सिनेमा को महत्व नहीं देते थे। भारत

आज की तरह फ़िल्ममय नहीं था। बहरहाल, राज कपूर ने उन्हें अपना विजिटिंग कार्ड दिया और कहा कि वे जब किसी कष्ट में हों, उनसे मिले, वे सहायता देंगे जिसके साथ गीत लिखने की या अन्य कोई शर्त नहीं होगी।



**"जीना यहाँ,
मरना यहाँ,
इसके सिवा
जाना कहाँ!"**

शैलेंद्र की गर्भवती पत्नी की तबियत बिगड़ी और महँगे इलाज की ज़रूरत पड़ी। उस परेशानी के क्षण में अनायास उन्हें राज कपूर द्वारा दिए गए आशासन की याद आई। राज कपूर ने उन्हें माँगे गए धन से दोगुना दिया और साथ ही ये भी कहा कि इसके साथ कोई शर्त नहीं है। उन दिनों राज कपूर अपनी दूसरी

फ़िल्म 'बरसात' बना रहे थे और नौ गीत रिकॉर्ड किए जा चुके थे। शैलेंद्र ने दो गीत लिखे। पहला गीत था "बरसात में, हमसे मिले तुम सजन, तुमसे मिले हम, बरसात में।" अपने पहले प्रयास में शैलेंद्र मात्र तुक मिला रहे हैं

और बहर के अनुरूप लिख रहे हैं। इन गीतों से उस तूफान का अनुमान नहीं लगता जो उन्होंने आगे जाकर बरपा किया। आवारा' के निर्माण के समय शैलेंद्र को माध्यम से प्रेम हो गया और उन्होंने पूरी तन्मयता से गीत लिखे।

टाइटिल
गीत 'ज़र्मों से
भरा सीना है मेरा,
हँसती है मगर ये
मदमस्त नज़र, दुनिया...
दुनिया में तेरे तीर का या तकदीर
का मारा हूँ, आवारा हूँ, आवारा हूँ,
अन्यंत लोकप्रिय हुआ। रूस, चीन और
खाड़ी देशों में आवाम के दिलो-दिमाग पर जादू
की तरह छा गया। राज कपूर और उनके बीच कुछ ऐसा संवाद था कि दोनों एक दूसरे के साथ बैठते और एक शब्द भी नहीं बोला जाता था, परंतु बात बन जाती थी। 'मेरा नाम जोकर' का आकल्पन राज कपूर ने शैलेंद्र को सुनाया और स्नान करने चले गए। जब राज कपूर लौटे तो शैलेंद्र जा चुके थे परंतु सिगरेट के डिब्बे पर उन्होंने लिखा था - "जीना यहाँ, मरना यहाँ, इसके सिवा जाना कहाँ!" क्या शैलेंद्र के अवचेतन में दबे पाँव मृत्यु भीतर आ चुकी थी? कुछ प्रश्न हमेशा अनुत्तरित रहते हैं।

रेणु और शैलेंद्र को भय था कि औद्योगीकरण और आधुनिकता परिवर्तन की लहरों को जन्म देंगे जिनमें भारतीयता डूब जायेगी। आज हम महसूस कर सकते हैं कि उनका भय निराधार नहीं था! शैलेंद्र को यह भी भय था कि भारत के साथ ही भारतीय फ़िल्में भी गैर-भारतीय लगने लगेंगी, और यह भी कि महात्मा गांधी को लोग भूल जाएँगे। तब क्या ऐसे में हीरामन लोगों को गांधी की याद दिलाएगा?



शैलेंद्र का जन्म 30 अगस्त 1923 को रावलपिंडी में हुआ था, हालांकि उनके पिता और दादा विहार में जन्मे थे। शायद इसी कारण फ़णीश्वरनाथ रेणु की कथा 'तीसरी क़सम उर्फ़ मारे गए गुलफ़ाम' उनके दिल में समा गयी। रेणु और शैलेंद्र के सपने और भय समान थे। दोनों को भय था कि औद्योगीकरण और आधुनिकता परिवर्तन की लहरों को जन्म देंगे जिनमें भारतीयता डूब जायेगी। आज हम महसूस कर सकते हैं कि उनका भय निराधार नहीं था! सच तो यह है कि शैलेंद्र अपने गीत सृजन में गय लेखक रेणु का ही काम कर रहे थे और रेणु 'परती परिकथा' और 'मैला आँचल' में शैलेंद्र के भय और सपनों को अभिव्यक्त कर रहे थे। शैलेंद्र को यह भी भय था कि भारत के साथ ही भारतीय फ़िल्में भी गैर-भारतीय लगने लगेंगी, और यह भी कि महात्मा गांधी को लोग भूल जाएँगे। तब क्या ऐसे में हीरामन लोगों को गांधी की याद दिलाएगा?

शैलेंद्र की मृत्यु 14 दिसम्बर 1966 को हुई। उन्होंने लगभग डेढ़-सौ हिंदी तथा छः भोजपुरी फ़िल्मों के लिए गीत लिखे। गीतों की संख्या 200 के पास रही। मात्र तियालीस की उम्र में शैलेंद्र की मौत का कारण उनके मृत्यु प्रमाण-पत्र पर 'स्टियटोसिस ऑफ़ लीवर' लिखा है परंतु वे नैराशय के कारण मरे। किसी बेहद अपने के दगा देने के कारण उन्होंने शराबनोशी की, जिसने उनके प्राण लिए।

शैलेंद्र इतने लोकप्रिय गीतकार थे कि 'तीसरी क़सम' का संदिग्ध घाटा मात्र एक वर्ष के गीत लेखन से चुका सकते थे। इस फ़िल्म को सर्वश्रेष्ठ फ़िल्म का स्वर्ण-पदक मिला परंतु हमने हीरा खो दिया। वे मिल नहीं सकते परंतु उनकी जुदाई में जादू है। शैलेंद्र के इस गीत में उनके सदैव बने रहने का राज़ छिपा है - "चलते चलते थक गया मैं, और साँझ भी ढ़लने लगी, तब राह खुद मुझे, बाहों में लेकर चलने लगी।" स्मरण रहे यह गीत किसी फ़िल्म में नहीं आया है।

वरिष्ठ पत्रकार और फ़िल्म समीक्षक जय प्रकाश चौकसे अपने कॉलम 'परदे के पीछे' के लिए खासे मशहूर हैं। आपको हिंदी सिनेमा का एनसायक्लोपीडिया माना जाता है।

Let's write the future. Together.



PRODUCERS
GUILD
OF INDIA

TWINKLE TWINKLE

ARE CHILDREN LOSING THEIR INNOCENCE IN



On one of my trips to Delhi, I met a neighbourhood aunty who was flaunting her grandson "Beta ji , our little child is a star! He is amongst the finalists in the ongoing dance reality show!! Now the other neighbours are also wanting to send their children!! So we are also in your celebrity league!"

I was shocked to hear these words, are parents that ambitious for their children and their dreams or they are just obsessed with social status, one-upmanship and pressures? I wonder if they are even aware of how the child is doing emotionally and psychologically after so much exposure of every kind at such a tender age!

I met that aunt's grandson, the star child, except that there was no child left in him. He shook his hands with me like a mature overconfident guy who seemed to have jumped a few years of his life those few years being the precious ones we call childhood.

I wondered how tough it must be for children to be on the sets. I don't doubt at all that the children are well taken care of on the sets and pampered.

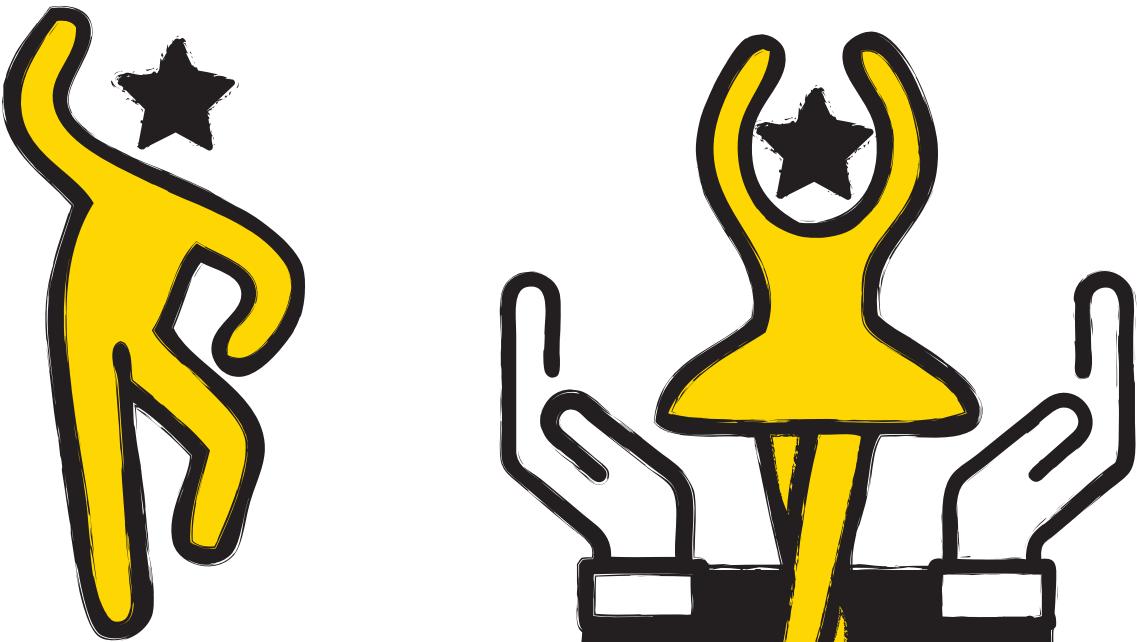
But we do forget the demands of a reality show - many days away from home to rehearse and participate, lots of peer pressure to perform so you remain in the finals, the TRP driven emotional banter they get into, makes them grow up prematurely.

I distinctly remember, to show how popular a certain actress judge was on a certain reality show, the 5-year-old participant was asked to propose to her and say lines he must not even know the meaning of. I mean, what are we doing to their innocence? Also, do we realize that when a child is rejected on a show, it might be very tough for him to accept that and go home unscathed unless of course, a strong parental support sorts him out. On the other hand, would those little minds know how to handle so much success and recognition unless well guided?? And do we give them normal education or keep letting them to bunk school to attend rehearsals? Do we give them enough sleep in those endless practices and late night shoots?

LITTLE STARS

TELEVISION REALITY SHOWS?

- DIVYA DUTTA



I still cherish my childhood with the pranks, playing hide and seek, marbles, cricket, until parents would call out to come back home. Can these children also have memories beyond the shooting sets?

I just have one thing to say, all is good with kids doing reality shows, but it is important that we handle them with care, no stress, no pressure.. No mature lines that don't belong to them. Let them enjoy the shows they participate in, let them enjoy each and every moment of their precious childhood doing what they are supposed to do before it's too late and those magical moments are gone.

We would never want a child who is grown up too soon in the hectic life of shoots to someday look back and say, 'koi mujhko lauta do bachpan ka saawan, wo kaagaz ki Kashti, wo baarish ka paani.....'

"All is good with kids doing reality shows, but it is important that we handle them with care, no stress, no pressure.. No mature lines that don't belong to them."

As adults, it is our moral responsibility to give the children what's due to them, their childhood and the innocence that comes with it.

Divya Dutta is a popular National award-winning actor with several Hindi and Punjabi films to her credit. She has also appeared in several television shows.



THE FEARS AND THE FEARLESS

MARATHI CINEMA AND
ITS MANY POSSIBILITIES
— SACHIN KUNDALKAR

In my career as a writer – director working in the small but significant space of Marathi cinema, I do not remember any film that was constructed around any actor or a star.

Thankfully actors in our cinema come on board, they act and then they go. The films are created around the idea. The directors' work with the writers patiently to create the screenplay from the seed of the story and then if they are lucky the films are built on them.

Our society has been trained for generations to watch many layers of storytelling through theater. We have a solid foundation of literature and theater that has groomed the sensitivity and the patience of our common audience. We are the industry where we speak in our mother tongue while at work. We know the past that has brought us here and we generally tend to respect the written word. Contrary to the trend that has been emerging in modern times, we still are a society, which reads more than we see.

Marathi cinema is not funded by studios. Most of it is created by independent producers and directors who allow the film to breathe. We live in the same space where big bang Hindi films are produced and distributed, contrary to our Tamil and Malyalam regional counterparts we live under the fear of the release slate of major Hindi films. There is a specific reason for it. The kind of films we produce and make do not allow our audience to dream big. They do not give them the botox dose of hyper emotionality and romance the way any Hindi film would do. We create realistic stories, social dramas and personal memoirs that are made on necessary but tight budgets and strict timelines. Today many of the fresh directors who are telling dynamic stories are writer-directors. They are absolutely sure about the material they are creating and they have a strong and personal reason to make a particular film. Since we do not live under the fear of studio system, and independent producers nurture our films we get the necessary freedom that one needs to help evolve a good film. The Fridays and Monday morning collections do not scare us and we are still able to avoid the vulgarity of declaring the collection figures. Our production system is supported by satellite and digital sales. A studio like Zee with its strong arms in both the above zones has been always instrumental in inviting writers, directors to collaborate on good scripts and help them to convert them into films.

Another positive reason for these fearless creations is the exposure that young writers and directors are getting through watching the content on new web platforms. We get to see a good Malyalam or a good Tamil film with subtitles. We respect the content driven south Indian cinema that is nurtured in these two states. Most of the young directors, unlike our senior generation, do not look up to Hindi cinema as a space that would respect or nurture a good film. If you see the release slate of Hindi films, very rarely do films like Kapoor and Sons or October come to us as great examples of solid film writing. If you see those films you get a feeling that a writer there

If you see those films you get a feeling that a writer there is respected. The rest of the industry is packaged around actors' dates and studio slates. I feel blessed that we still have the old institution of individual producers intact in our working space.

Marathi cinema is not funded by studios. Most of it is created by independent producers and directors who allow the film to breathe.

The fear still remains. The fear of creative honesty in creation. Because film is a collaborative work and you depend on your team to convert an idea into a film. But we must welcome this fear since it's a positive fear. The fear of performance, the fear of extending your boundaries – these are positive fears in which a writer must always work. I cherish and welcome those fears but I refuse to accept any fear coming from a film actor, producer or the state.

When I sit and wonder why I am able to make good films in constant flow, I pause and pay my respect to great playwrights, dynamic poets who developed a sense of abstract in the minds of our audience. Our audience is patient and most importantly our working industry allows a creative mind to make mistakes.

That's one amazing thing in the air around us.

Sachin Kundalkar is a writer and director. He has Marathi films like Gulaabjam, Nude: Chitraa, Rajwade and Sons, Vazandaar: Biggie amongst several others, to his credit.

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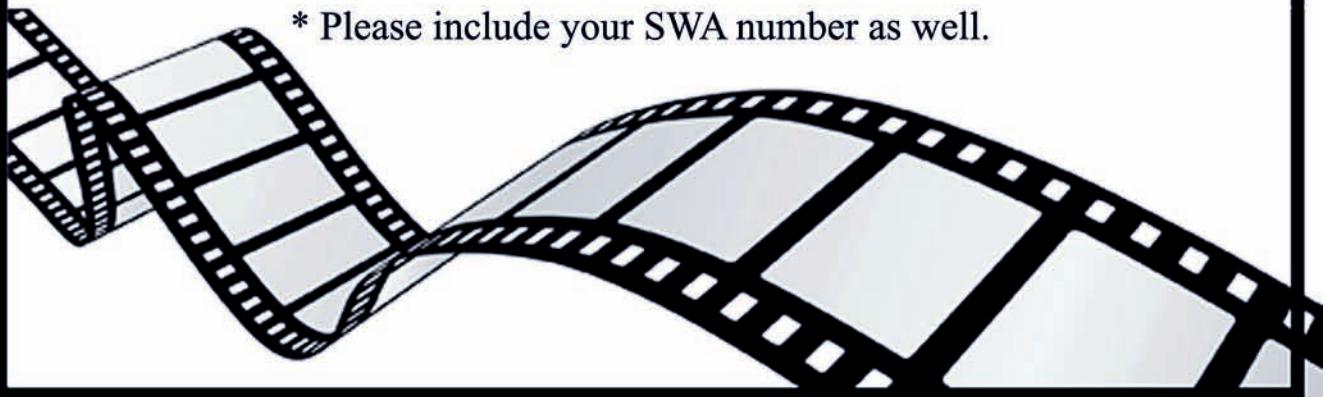
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