

THE

# PEACOCK

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# गोंयची फोवां दिवाळी

Illustration by Nishant Saldanha

दामोदर मावजो

गोंयची दिवाळी आदलेवरी उरूंक

ना अशें म्हणपी जायते मेळटले. पूण म्हाका विचारशात तर हांव म्हणन- आदलें थोडें शेणलां, नवें थोडें जोडलां. पूण फोवां दिवाळी फोवांचीच उरल्या हें शत प्रतिशत खरें. म्हाका भुरगेपणांतली दिवाळी येवजता तेन्ना आदले ते उगडास आंगार लकून येतात. नरकासूराचो वध करून दिवाळेचो दीस उदेतालो ते दीस! पयलीं अभ्यंगस्नान. बरें सुवासीक तेल बी लावन. सुवासीक म्हळ्यार कासणी भर खोबरेलांत दोन थेंबे चेर घालपाचो आनी आंगभर तेल चोळपाचें. तायकिळ्याच्यो बियो बेसनांत वाटून घरा केल्लें उटणे चरचरीत आंगाक घांसून मान्यांत वचपाचें. आनी आदले राती रोजांची माळ घालून न्हेसयिल्ल्या भाणांतलें उदक न्हेसयिल्ल्या तांबयांत घेवन वासाचो साबण लावन घसघशीत न्हावपाचें. हें सूख घेतलां तांकांच हातूंतलें सूख समजतलें.

मागीर ओंवाळणी. सरभोंवतणी रांगोळी घाल्ल्या पाटांचेर उजव्यान पयलीं जाण्टे मागीर भुरगीं लायनीन उबीं रावतालीं. बायलो मागीर तबक घेवन ओंवाळपाक येताल्यो. कुटुंबाचें घर आसल्यार पिराये प्रमाण जाण्ट्यो बायलो पयलीं ओंवाळटाल्यो. दादले ओंवाळून घेतकच तबकांत दुडू वा भेटवस्त घालताले. प्रत्येकाच्या समकार एक कारीट आसतालें तें जणएकल्यान पांयान फोडपाचें आनी ताचो रोस बोटान जिबेक लावपाचो. तें कोडू कारीट मागीर फोव खावपाक मेळटले हे आशेर आमी भुरगीं तोंड धापुन तशें करतालीं. ही कारीट फोडून चोखपाची रीत हेर कडेन आसत अशें म्हाका दिसना.



गोंयचे दिवाळेक धाकली दिवाळी वा फोवां दिवाळी अशेंय म्हण्टात. देशांत हेर कडेन दिवाळेक तरेकवार मिठाई हाडटात वा करतात. चडशें गुलाब जामून, नेवऱ्यो, कलाकंद, जिलेबी, लाडू, कापां असलें सुकें खाण आसता. पूण गोंयां मात फोवाचे विंगड विंगड प्रकार करतात देखून हे परबेक फोवां दिवाळी म्हणटात.

फोवांचो आनी दिवाळेचो संबंद कितें असो प्रस्न कोणाकूय पडूं येता. नरकासूराचो वध करून पर्जेक थाकाय दिवपी भगवान कृष्णाक फोव आवडटाले खंय. ताचीय एक सर्वश्रुत काणी आसा. कृष्णाचो भुरगेपणांतलो इश्ट सुदामा खूब गरीब आवतिकायेंत जियेतालो. द्वारकेचो राया जिवाभावाचो इश्ट आसूनय तो इतली दरिद्री जीण जियेता म्हूण ताची बायल ताका सदांच खेपताली. सुदामान ताका आपणाले आवतिकाये विशीं सांगलें जाल्यार कृष्णराया तागेलें दारिद्र्य ना करून ताका गिरेस्त करतलो अशें तिका दिसतालें. मनाक पुटवनासूनय तिचो आग्रो मोडूं नज जावन सुदामा एक दीस कृष्णाक मेळपाक भायर सरलो.

कृष्णाक दिवपा सारकें ताचे कडेन कांयच नासलें. पूण रित्या हातान कसो वतलो म्हूण ताणें थोडे फोव कांडिल्ले आसले ते वाल्याक बांदून ताची पोटली खांदाक लायली. रायालो तो वैभवसंपन्न वाडो पळोवन सुदामाक आपणाल्या दारिद्र्याची लज दिसली. कृष्णान ह्या बालमित्राक पळयनाफुडें आफोवन

म्हालांत भितर व्हेलो आनी खबरो मारूंक लागलो. 'आरे सुदाम्या, म्हाका कितें हाडलां?' अशें कृष्णान विचारतकच सुदामाक लज जाली. तो फोवांची पोटली लिपोवपाक लागलो. ती ओडून कृष्णान उकती केली. फोव पळोवन तो इतलो भुल्लुसलो की थंयचे थंय ते सुके फोव खावन सोंपयले. सुदामा इश्टाक मेळून इतलो खोशी जाल्लो की परततना दान मागपाचें विसरलो. वाटेर तो चिंतेंत पडलो. आतां बायलेक तोंड कशें दाखयतलो? पूण घरा कडेन पाव जाल्यार घराचो पुरायन कायापालट जाल्लो. घर गिरेस्तकायेन उपाट भरिल्लें. ही काणी हेर कडलो लोक विसरलो जावंचे, पूण कोंकणी लोकांनी कृष्णाक फोव कितले आवडटात

तें घट मतींत दवरलें. ताकाच लागून गोंयची दिवाळी ही फोवां दिवाळी जावंक पावली. नरकासूराक सोंपोवन बरे दीस पळोवंक दिले हाचो आनंद मनोवपाक गोंयांत फोवांचे तरेकवार पदार्थ करतात. म्हज्या भुरगेपणांत आमगेर उणेच म्हळ्यार स तरी प्रकार रांदतालीं. आमी भावंडां भुरगेपणांत घरचे फोव खावन मागीर इश्टांगेर वतालीं. थंयचेय फोव खातालीं. आयज तो उगडास काडल्यार काणयो दिसतात. ते आदले दीस उरूंक

नात खरें, पूण फोवांत फरक पडूंक ना.

गांवठी तांबडे फोव, भायले धवे फोव, पातळ फोव अशे जिनसावार फोव चार दीस पयलीं घरांत येताले. ते आसुडप, वेंचप आनी दिवाळे दिसा रांदप हीं कामां बायलांचीं. कितें रांदू कितें नाका अशें तांकां जातालें. तरा म्हूण कितल्यो? फोण्णा फोव, रोसांतले फोव, कडयेंतले फोव, दुदांतले फोव, कालयिल्ले फोव, ताकांतले फोव, तळशिल्ले फोव, तिखशे फोव, अश्यो तरा तरा आसताल्यो. आजून चलतात. तेभायर वाटाण्यांची उसळी, आंबाड्यांचें रायतें आनी मयडोळीं केळ्यांचो हालवो. आजूय गोंयच्या घरांनी जाता ती फोवां दिवाळी. सात-आठ थंय दोन-चार तरी नग रांदतातच. मागीर घरांतली बायल सुगरण आसतकच खातल्यांचे जिबेक सुमार उरना. हे दिवाळेक म्हगेले धुवेन खंय चवदा तरा केल्ल्यो. आयिल्ल्या सगल्यांनी पोटभर खालें हाचो आनंद ताच्या मुखामळार उदेल्लो पळोवनच म्हजें पोट भरलें.

व्हडले दिवाळेक तुळशी-लग्न जायसर दिवे लायिल्ले उरतात. देखून समेस्तांक आवडेंतां- दिव्यांचे हे परबे निमतान हुनहुनीत परबीं.

SHORT TAKES



For me, films are a way to visit your childhood because that is where the seeds of storytelling are sown.

**Aditi Moghe**  
Screenwriter  
Mumbai



I've met quite a few interesting people, including the animator for *Return of the Jungle*. I enjoy frame-by-frame, 2D animations.

**Ahmed Sikander**  
Illustrator  
Mumbai



I'm a film enthusiast and was impressed to see how many Middle Eastern and Iranian films there are at IFFI.

**Ameena Sulthana**  
Artist  
Kerala



Selecting films is a tedious job. Last night I kept waking up every half hour to check if I could book a ticket for the movie I wanted, but I wasn't able to.

**Alok Tewary**  
Retired Banker  
Lucknow

# Woman in Charge

BY SACHIN CHATTE

For someone who is at the helm of managing an event of the magnitude of the International Film Festival of India for the very first time, Delilah Lobo is both relaxed and composed. The Vice-Chairperson of the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG), the nodal body that organizes IFFI along with the National Film Development Corporation, has several verticals to handle and many of them can go sideways. But she tells *The Peacock*, it's nothing to get fazed about: "I have been serving the public for over 15 years, but I have no experience with the entertainment industry and cinema. Nonetheless, there is always a first time for everything, so I am using my experience from the past to handle the festival and hopefully, I have been successful."

Lobo says every new experience is different and challenging, and comes with a responsibility to fulfill it to the best of one's ability. "In the past few days having interacted with filmmakers and other artists, I have learned so much about their craft and the hard work they put in" she says.

When asked how it is to deal with a partner like NFDC, she paused for a moment before replying. *ESG aani doosre mhantlyar aamche sogle Goenkar* she said, switching to Konkani to say that "with ESG and other vendors, they are all Goans so there is no issue". In the relationship with Mumbai-based NFDC, she feels it is a matter of building a rapport with the organization, which has been accomplished: "They have seen what the ESG and Goa government is capable of and even the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Shri Anurag Thakur mentioned it in his speech about how Goa has successfully hosted the National Games under the leadership of the Chief Minister Dr. Pramod Sawant and now this is the 20th edition of IFFI in Goa."

Lobo is fond of movies but being a public figure doesn't give her much time to watch them in cinemas too often now. As a result, she ends up watching bits and pieces at home. Like so many of us, *Sholay* (1975) happens to be her all-time favorite, and she has seen it countless times. "When I hear good things about a movie, I make time to watch it in a theatre. But I always check the ratings first, I think the story is more important than the stars in the film. For me, cinema is something that should offer more than just entertainment", she said.

ESG should play a bigger role throughout the year, says Lobo, apart from hosting IFFI. She says the organization is capable of handling other events, and the fact that it is called Entertainment Society of Goa means that it was envisaged to play a bigger role in the entertainment industry in general, and through that, become self-sustaining and generate revenue as well.

Lobo told *The Peacock* the upcoming film city project will definitely help the state in terms of revenue and employment: "Goa is known as a premier film location. I live in Parra and there are so many people on the famous road for photoshoots" referring to *Dear Zindagi* (2016), where Shah Rukh Khan and Alia Bhatt cycle around near her home, on a road where there are coconut trees on either side. When asked about her other plans, she said "I would also like to incentivize the Goan filmmakers and I hope to have a scheme in place which will encourage them to make more films and good quality films".



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

SHORT TAKES



I enjoy experimental pieces like *Cat Soup*. I'm looking forward to the interactive sessions with students and professionals.

**Amen Shan**  
Design Student  
Shimla



Films help us express how we see the world. When I see someone else's film, I connect with the characters.

**Arjumand Banushujmona**  
Associate  
Director  
Chennai



Being from Goa, we're a part of the culture. When you're born here, IFFI takes you way back and shows you the actual culture; what it was like before.

**Bonie Chen**  
Choreographer  
Goa



Commercial films usually have the same vibe, but here you see diversity. We get to see how other people live, without actually being there.

**Arya K.**  
Illustrator  
Goa



Photo by Michael Praveen

# Manipuri Dreams

BY SUDIPTO MULLICK

**A**ndro Dreams is the story of a spirited 60-year-old lady who is at the helm of a girls' football club, and has been coping with economic and societal challenges on her own. This feature-length documentary by Dr. Longjam Meena Devi, a National award winner, was the opening film in the non-feature category, at the Indian Panorama at the International Film Festival of India this year.

**How do you like the festival and Goa in general?**

Indeed, this is my second time. I had previously visited with my debut film *Autodriver* in 2016, which won best documentary in the social issue category. I, of course, would like to visit again and again. It is a paradise, who wouldn't want to come here?

**How did you take up documentary filmmaking?**

It was quite accidental actually. Manipur is always embroiled in some problem for the other and I felt that as a humanitarian, it is my bound duty to tell the unheard and untold stories of Manipur. That's how it started and with the success of the first came the next and here I am with my third documentary.

**The story of the football club is quite fascinating.**

I came across Laibi in a snippet in a digital newspaper on social media. On reading about it, I immediately felt that I could do a documentary and started to dig deeper about this 60-year-old lady running a girl's football club all on her own. Initially, it took me 2 years to build the relationship and another 3 years to complete it.

**How was it associating with a silent revolutionary like Laiba?**

Well, she's a very sweet lady. When I first spoke to her, she was a bit apprehensive, saying that the

infrastructure and the condition of her house are not ideal, so it would not look good in a film. People have this idea that film means all glitz and glamour. So I had to convince her just a little bit initially, but now she is very happy and proud. Incidentally, she is the fourth girl child and her parents initially didn't want her. Ultimately, she became the first matriculate, and the first primary teacher of her small village and now, she has completely revolutionized Andro village.

**The club's girls must have been shy. How did you convince them to participate in the documentary?**

It was very organic actually. The protagonists of my last two documentaries were also women. Documentary is such a medium that you let them forget that there is a camera around you. I didn't give any instructions and just followed their daily routine, practices and tournaments. Nothing was planned at all. But as a rule, first, you have

to build relationships to create that comfort between the camera and the subject.

**In the film, we hear Laibi say that local boys taunt the girls. Has this documentary itself brought about a change in the attitude?**

Actually, you know the film is yet to be screened in Manipur because of the current situation in the state. But people have heard about the film and its success and we're hoping that it will bring in some change.

**Does working on these resilient women cause you to reassess yourself as well in their light?**

Yes absolutely. Working with such spirited women, I sometimes feel that I may not be doing much for society. I have come across people who have achieved so much without much education and resources. I have the education and the knowledge, and I question myself, shouldn't I be able to do a bit more?



SHORT TAKES

I like realistic films that portray social issues without being too gloomy. I'm here to pitch a script, and I'm looking for collaborations.

**Deepa Pathak**  
Writer  
Uttarakhand



I enjoy films that are clever, but also those that can have an emotional impact. I like stories about the human condition that have a message.

**Fraser Scott**  
Writer  
Versova



One of the things I love seeing at the festival is movies that tackle difficult issues, like the film *Children of God*.

**Dr. Rashmi Tewary**  
Retired Professor  
Lucknow



Even though the films are only a couple of hours long, they can give you an experience that lasts a lifetime.

**Jonathan Vas**  
Art Student  
Goa

# Mirror to the Truth

BY AILEEN CARNEIRO

“The one who departs grieves, but, far more, the one who is left.”

Upon hearing this lyric sung by a little girl at the beginning of *Moro* (2023), which played at IFFI on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November and Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November, I knew it was going to be unforgettable.

Brillante Mendoza’s film based on true events tells the story of a family belonging to an ethnic group of the troubled Mindanao region of the Philippines. A woman has a blood-splattered dream of her living son being taken away by her deceased husband, and wakes to the dead man’s photo staring at her ominously. As scenes shift between foreboding dreams and grim reality; as lines blur between hero and villain; as a mother sets out to reconcile her feuding sons, government troops sweep the cornfields and the community’s lives in a violent aggression. “It became a very controversial issue in the Philippines, because there was an ongoing ceasefire that that time,” says Mendoza.

Mendoza hails from Luzon, in northern Philippines, but *Moro* is one of several films he has made about the conflict-ridden southern region. “We cannot shoot in Mindanao. The actors are not allowed to travel there. Before the pandemic, we were able to visit, research and to talk to the families and the victims,” he says.

“In The Philippines I was asked if this was some sort of advocacy, as it’s not common for a filmmaker like me to make films about Mindanao,” Mendoza told *The Peacock*. “There are filmmakers from Mindanao, but they tend to be so engrossed in their culture, that, sometimes, their films become propaganda and too one-sided.” He feels that the various ethnic groups are not well-represented in the films that come out of the region. “I want them to be heard and their stories to be told, in The Philippines, but, also, abroad, so that people are enlightened.” Mendoza feels that his voice as an outsider to the region would remove bias in his storytelling.



“Most of the film was shot before the COVID-19 pandemic,” Mendoza recalls. Besides the obvious challenges posed, the director had conflicting schedules to contend with. “They are all professional actors from The Philippines. Piolo Pascual who plays the older son, is a superstar. Laurice Guillen who plays the mother, Mangindra, is a filmmaker, director and actress. Christopher De Leon used to be a heartthrob in the 80s. They made this film out of passion for the project, and not for the money.”

Their varied dialects threw another spanner in the works. “Even though we couldn’t understand the dialect of the *Moro* people of Maguindanao, the specific region of Mindanao where the film is focused, the cast had to memorise the lines with the guidance of the people from that community. According to the

locals, they delivered successfully.”

Mendoza started his career in advertising. “I’m a late bloomer. I made my first feature film only at 45.” *Masahista* (2005) went on to win the Golden Leopard Award at the Locarno International Film Festival. “In advertising, we try to enhance the product and make it more appealing. I decided that if one day I was going to make a film it was going to be realistic. Sometimes, the environment is not pleasing to the eye, but, that’s our reality in the Philippines. I try to be as close as I can to my environment and to my roots, and let the audience see the soul of my film. It’s not easy, but, I never get tired as that’s my cinema, the ugly truth. As a filmmaker, this is what matters to me.”

The first from his country to win the Best Director Award at Cannes

Film Festival for *Kinatay* (2009), he said “I don’t provide the actors with the script. I want them to become their character. I’m just the instrument that delivers the story. Filmmaking is not just a passion, for me, but, a commitment to tell truthful stories. Our storytelling has the power to change people’s lives.”

Mendoza would like the world to know that the Filipinos are a very resilient people, who remain light-hearted despite everything they endure. “As a country, we experience catastrophe almost every year. That’s nature, and you cannot stop it. Our political situation is very colourful, too. All these things are a part of our existence as Filipinos. This is what makes us strong, resilient, and, at the same time, this is what makes us adapt to whatever is happening.”

SHORT TAKES



IFFI has a focus which we don’t get to see in L.A. There are movies here from Asian countries to which we normally don’t pay a lot of attention.

**Fari Behnam**  
Film Director  
Los Angeles



I’m scouting for films to screen at our festival in Sydney. Personally, I love any movie that’s surreal or weird. I enjoy the works of David Cronenberg.

**Justin Martyniuk**  
Festival  
Programmer  
Sydney



Cinema is my favourite form of art. I like dramas like *The Fountain*. Goa is so beautiful, friendly, and warm.

**Svetlana Bolshakova**  
Actress  
Moscow



Film is a necessary element of society. It’s a tour guide that allows me to connect with new cultures, and traditions.

**Kewal Kartik**  
Actor  
Sikar

# “Every film should make money”

BY AJAY KAMALAKARAN

What are the chances of an independent Bengali film with a moderate budget of Rs 2.14 crores (excluding theatrical distribution and publicity) turning into a runaway hit with four Filmfare awards? One may argue that this may not be very low, but now imagine the same film being screened commercially in 75 cities in the United States and breaking into markets with a minuscule Indian diaspora such as Taiwan?

36-year-old Prasun Chatterjee, director and main producer of *Dostojee* (Two Friends), which was commercially released in Kolkata in November 2022, has figured out how to meet with success, both on the festival circuit and the box office. “I always believe that when I am making a film, as a filmmaker, I am an artist,” Chatterjee told *The Peacock* on the sidelines of the Film Bazaar. “The moment the film is ready it is a product, and I have to sell it. So, again I am more creative when it comes to business.”

The film, set in a village near the India-Bangladesh border, is about a friendship between two 8-year old boys that face challenges after the Babri Mosque is demolished in 1992. Chatterjee spent a year in a village near Murshidabad to write the script, which did not initially find takers among producers. Chatterjee decided to produce it himself, bringing in friends and well-wishers as co-producers, a strategy that he says helped him immensely.

*Dostojee* was selected by NFDC for the Festival de Cannes in 2020 and began to get a lot of attention at film festivals in countries as diverse as Sweden, Japan and Bangladesh, where according to Chatterjee, most viewers believed it was a Bangladeshi film. “Whenever the film was featured in festivals, it made it to the news, and then I thought ‘let’s encash this,’” he said.

Initially distributors in West Bengal were not keen on taking on the film as they didn’t believe wider audiences would be interested in watching it in the cinema hall. “For me *Dostojee* is a highly commercial film and had a commercial purpose,” Chatterjee says, emphasizing that “every single film should make money.”

He decided to pay the initially-reluctant distributors a fee for access to their channels.

25 shows were staged on the first day. Chatterjee and his team also had a unique marketing plan in mind. Instead of inviting reputed filmmakers and celebrities for the premier, the audience comprised of school principals. Satisfied with what they saw, the principals began to arrange bulk bookings for school children.

At screenings for children, a toy that was popular in the 1980s and 90s was given out as gifts, to get their parents both curious and interested. This helped bring in families. What started out with 25 shows turned into 120 within a week. Kolkata’s Nandan cinema alone screened it for 50 days.

*Dostojee* was then distributed in 6 large Indian cities with a significant Bengali population. “In Bangalore it ran for four weeks,” Chatterjee said. The marketing team used analytics from Meta products and X to identify places where they could screen it, something they believe was instrumental in their success.

Bengali diaspora networks helped get the film released in places like the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, but it was again, a unique business practice that opened up the film to uncharted territory. Co-producer Ivy Yu-Hua Shen arranged for the film to be distributed in her native Taiwan. “You don’t always have to get a co-producer on a project with money,” Chatterjee said, adding that he made different arrangements with co-producers where the consideration was a skill or service that could be monetised. The film, which Chatterjee said was the first Bengali-language film to be released in the country, won over the local press and audiences. It was screened for over 4 weeks and the director and main producer spoke with pride about the Taiwan Plus tv channel mentioning in a report that film goes had a third good option along with *Oppenheimer* and *Barbie*.

While not delving too much into financial details, Chatterjee said the best way to earn large profits is by being on OTT. He hopes his film will find its way to a platform in the next few months. For budding filmmakers who attended his Wednesday talk, Chatterjee said that no matter the film, a good marketing and commercial plan were essential parts of the process. There is an “ethical responsibility” to make sure that every person involved in the making a film is financially rewarded, he added.



Photo by Michael Praveen

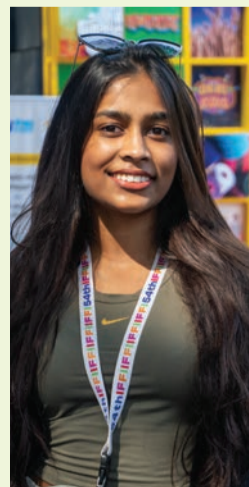
## SHORT TAKES



I only speak Tamil, but I can understand films in any language without subtitles. The way they’re shot and depicted is enough to tell a story.  
**Puranjai Sunder**  
Media Student  
Chennai



The opening movie was too commercial for me. I love how quiet it is in the theatres; the silence means I can enjoy the movies peacefully.  
**Hajjul Nasra**  
Actress  
Calicut



Most people are not willing to appreciate art, they want to be entertained. The purpose of films is to introduce us to something we haven’t experienced before.  
**Paro Salil**  
Film Student  
Chennai



The infrastructure here is great, but it would be helpful if the app had more information about what else goes on at IFFI.  
**Nandini Kanhere**  
Film-maker  
Pune

# “Censor is a colonial term”

BY PRAGYA BHAGAT

“There is an empirical propaganda against women that we are intrinsic multi-taskers. Even if I were to say yes, that’s true, being true to oneself is still a challenge.”

Meet Vani Tripathi Tikoo: 9th time member of the IFFI Steering Committee, 8th time member of the Central Board of Film Certification (“I’m the junior most veteran on the Board”), activist and advocate for women’s rights (“gender equality is not a term; it’s a consciousness”), promoter of youth leadership, and author of a children’s book, written from the perspective of her daughter.

“I hail from Uttaranchal,” Tikoo says. “It’s a very emancipated state when it comes to women.” She tells *The Peacock* most of the women from her mother’s side, the *pahadi* side, held PhDs “at a time when the rest of India did not have enough women graduates.”

Both of her parents were professors at Delhi University. “My father was a feminist. He believed in women’s education more than he believed in anything else. I was allowed to choose and explore exactly what I wanted to do.” Her biggest inspiration, along with her parents, was her guru, theatre director Ebrahim Alkazi.

Tikoo has worked in over fifty plays, nearly forty television serials, and six films, but her current focus is with the IFFI Steering Committee, which “has grown from strength to strength. The new word is ‘content’ now.” In this edition of the festival, she holds two responsibilities. First, she’s on the International Committee. “Our bouquet is really vibrant this year.” Second, she’s the Convenor of the Film Bazaar. “We are increasingly becoming more immersive,” Tikoo adds, “AI is going to rule our lives very soon. The sooner we wake up and get out of the traditional mentality, the better.” What about the Hindi film industry feeling bogged down by this change? “Remember,” she says, “we are the largest film producing nation in the world. And we are also the most influential film industry in the world.” She holds great reverence for



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

Indian cinema, with its representation of more than forty languages.

An observation held out by some cinephiles of the 54<sup>th</sup> edition of IFFI has been about decline in the overall quality of films. Tikoo responds frankly. “The SAG-AFTRA strike just got over a few days ago. Remember, for all international film festivals, it’s a mandate that you have to get premieres—either Asia or region or international premieres. If you look at Toronto this year—it’s one of the biggest film festivals in North America— they really suffered. Our friends who love movies have to give us feedback, it is imperative. We will try to pull up our socks up next year.”

Tikoo is open to learning, whether

it’s from her work in film production, curation, or her activism with the youth, who she claims are “extremely exposed, super intelligent, and amazingly sharp. With the advent of social media, the discussion boards are very quick. The macro becomes the micro in thirty seconds.” The power of the tweet, she says, can make or break a film. “We are already at an algorithm-generated consciousness.” She points to the QR code on her IFFI pass. “If we are resistant to change, we are going to lose out.”

The CBFC is often called the “censor board,” a term Tikoo is uncomfortable with. “Censor,” she says, is a colonial term. “We are a certification board. Age-related classification is what

we are doing, but we are also a hypersensitive democracy, where nuances of gender, caste, class, and rights of women, children, and animals need to be secured. We are an old civilization but a new democracy.” There is a great deal of work that remains to be done, but the attempt, Tikoo says, is balance. She prides the current board as being one in which “every single person is from the arts. There is a creative instinct to certification which remains.”

Tikoo hopes to continue speaking her truth through storytelling. “We are a land of *katha vachaks*. I belong to this tradition. I want to keep telling stories that become mirrors to our own selves.”

SHORT TAKES



A few days ago, I passed by and it was such a mess, but just a day later everything was suddenly perfect. I call that Indian style!

**Renata Lanciaprima**  
Retired  
Italy



We’re excited to get to know what is happening in the industry. Young, aspiring film-makers are very lucky to attend IFFI!

**Rahul Joshi**  
Executive Producer  
Belgavi



This is my first time at IFFI. I enjoyed *The Archies* talk yesterday. I love the liveliness and variety of the festival.

**Vishaka Barnwal**  
Assistant Section Officer  
Delhi



India is so much more diverse than I thought it was. I’m looking forward to hearing new, distinct voices and stories I’ve never heard before.

**Ramfis Myrthil**  
Film Producer  
New York

# The Most Secure Actor

BY MAAZ BIN BILAL

Vijay Sethupathi, one of the most nuanced actors of contemporary Indian cinema—working across Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, and Hindi—entered the Kala Academy at IFFI wearing a dark-blue cotton shirt, a pair of black jeans, and a pair of black crocs. A watch and a simple *kada* were the only accessories. The simplicity and humility of his dress is consistent with his demeanour and acting style which have endeared him to cinephiles across the country. While respectfully declining the request for an interview—citing paucity of time and the lack of mind space prior to the on-stage conversation, *Living the Actor*, with the Tamil actor and politician, Khushboo Sundar—Sethupathi continued to use the polite address “sir”.

He entered the auditorium to rapturous applause and cheers from his fans. Sundar kept the conversation sharp and focussed on the actor’s practice and technique, beginning with the actor’s entry into the world of acting. Was acting always a dream? “No.” A longer answer cajoled out of him reveals that Sethupathi came to acting accidentally, being “a failed businessman,” going with the flow, falling in love with the woman he eventually married and who prevented him from going to Dubai. Initially, he even went to dub for a crowd in a film.

Is Sethupathi a method actor or spontaneous? He doesn’t know method, he claims, “I know that I don’t know—so I try to understand through films.” This is a sharp comment at a time when too many rely on Whatsapp University to claim all knowledge. “I am interested in where the story comes from, I understand nuance by asking stupid questions of directors.” Such interaction, he claims, helps him understand people and their stories, why is a character saying what it is, where does that motivation come from, what is the intention of the director, the writer. By observing people, he learns body language and the way people use words. He tries to



Photo by Aman Bagali

understand his directors to understand the film and his characters. Listening to Sethupathi makes one feel that he must be a director’s dream actor.

Sundar remarks that he has to be “the most secure actor” when he had the guts at a young age to play an old man with a paunch such as in *Orange Mittai* (2015) or playing a villain from early on in his career, or the trans-gendered Shilpa in *Super Deluxe* (2019). Playing the character, she says, has always been more important to him than playing Vijay Sethupathi. Sethupathi’s own response begets resounding applause, “audience comes to see story and character, not star.” Despite being happily married, his wife and he are now bored of looking at his own wedding photos, he adds. “Something must be made to hold the audience there... Just to be there, not take pressure, understand the idea of the director and to go with that flow is important. If there is something to celebrate that’s through the directors.”

With age and experience, Sethupathi feels that he has lost the fear of failure. He thinks there is “no hero, no villain” in life, and he is secure and comfortable enough now to play a hero, a villain or any character role on screen as per demand, and that he is enjoying this “mode”. Although, it is evident he remains a canny businessman, when he responds to a question from the audience by saying that he cannot do too many roles of a “villain” since that would typecast him and therefore be bad for business. Yet, he remains honestly committed to his practice. Feeling recently that his “brain is drained, it is not thinking in new perspectives” he hired an acting coach, Pooja Devariya, to continue his development. She is the one who suggested acquiring the businessman mannerisms of Jeff Bezos for his role in *Vikram* (2022).

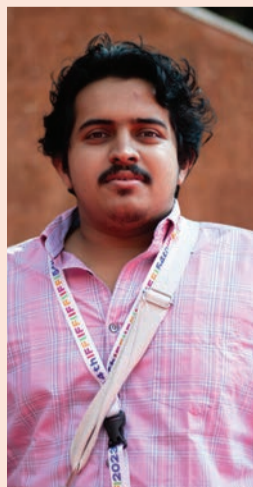
Sethupathi’s responses to some quick fire questions from Khushboo reveal further shades to his own character: “Comedy or serious?”—“comedy”. “Money or Role?”—“Role with money”. “Awards or success?”—“love”. “Hindi or Tamil?”—“language”.

## SHORT TAKES



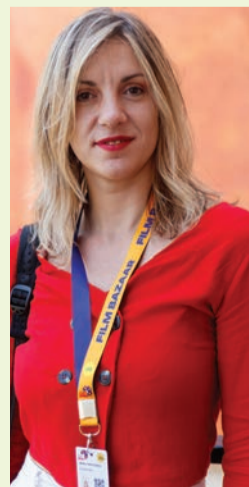
I really liked *Gandhi Talks* and I’m looking forward to seeing the Spanish film *Adentro* later.

**Renu Nanda**  
Retired  
Marketing  
Executive  
Dona Paula



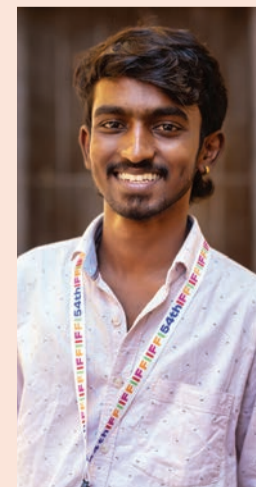
I really enjoyed seeing the movie *The Last Birthday* set in Afghanistan. It’s been tough to get tickets for some of the the movies.

**Salwan Salwan**  
Film Producer  
Calicut



It’s so beautiful and colourful here in India; the people are so open and cheerful. I’m hoping to buy art-house movies for world cinema.

**Senka Radivojevic**  
Sales Agent  
Serbia



It was my dream to come to Goa; it’s so peaceful and friendly. I’m a junior artist, but I’m able to talk freely to the film-makers here.

**Venkatesh A.**  
Student  
Chennai



# Cereal Thrillers

BY MIGUEL BRAGANZA

Mexico is the hub of research in cereals like wheat, and its Guadalajara province has the Geographical Indication for tequila just as Goa has for cashew *feni*, among other things. Incidentally, the cashew tree and our carnival originate in Brazil, a country between Mexico and Argentina, the countries of one adjudged as 'Talent of Guadalajara', Anabel Caso who directed the Spanish language film *Wheatfield* (2022). It had its Asia premiere in the Cinema of the World category at the 54<sup>th</sup> IFFI and its name caught my attention. The original Spanish title *Trigal* was a familiar word to me since I did some editing work for the Rice-Wheat Consortium (RWC) of CIMMYT, the Centro Internacional para Mejoramiento de Maiz y Trigo or the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre from where India obtained Dr. Norman E. Borlaug's "dwarfing genes" for wheat and rice. *Trigo* is wheat and *maiz* is maize or corn, which has been replaced with *arroz* or rice in the Asian context. A large part of the film is about the combine harvesters working in the wheatfields and the persons behind the wheels thereof.

Combine machines have revolutionized rice cultivation in Goa by eliminating the need for scarce and costly human labour for manually harvesting the crop. There is one hitch to mechanization of harvesting, and that is the "lodging" or toppling over of rice straw that is unable to withstand the weight of the grain-filled ear-heads in the traditional tall varieties. Rice breeder Dr. K.K. Manohara had done a selection from the local Korgut rice that was dwarf but with white grain, that was not favoured by local consumers. Hybridization with the dwarf Jyoti variety produced the desired result of a dwarf variety with brown kernel that can be mechanically harvested with a combine. The Norin gene from Japan, which came to India via CIMMYT in Mexico, came to the rescue. Harvesting of rice is just over in Goa, and a new crop is being prepared for transplanting while we are watching the films at IFFI.

Transplanting has also been mechanized for rice and we hope to develop mechanical transplanters for finger millet or ragi, too. We already have among young agriculture graduates in Goa, including ladies like Dhannika Dias Barros Pereira driving a rice transplanter and Shweta K. Gaonkar driving a tractor just as their male colleague Joyd Simoes does. Mechanization is no longer a male bastion in Goa.

*Wheatfield* depicted only male operators for the farm machines. Notwithstanding its name, the film is not about agriculture or cultivation of wheat: it is about two girls coming of age and like any other adolescent trying to discover the meaning of physical and emotional

changes. The wheatfields, the crop, the combine harvester and the men driving these machines provide the setting for the story to evolve. Much as one would like to see a full-length feature film on the cultivation of a crop from seed to seed through the entire process, such a film has not been made yet. In fact, a good film on adolescence is also hard to come by. The closest one can think of is the *Summer of '42* (1971) but even that does not provide the answers to an adolescent. There is no good film on agriculture beyond documentary films. Both these critical issues can only be seen as a part of some other story in a feature film.

The Hindi feature film *Lagaan* (2001) is a moving story about farm tax (*lagaan* in Hindi) during colonial rule. However, the focus is on the game of cricket rather on agriculture per se. The film *Upkaar* (1967) was based on the slogan of then Prime Minister of India during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, *Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan* in an era of food shortages in India just years prior to the Green Revolution with the Norin genes and dwarf varieties of cereals. It had a patriotic song that has inspired a more recent film with the name *Mere Desh Ki Dharti* (2022). In all these films, agriculture is only a part of the story. Hope springs eternal for a feature film with agriculture as the focus and major content of the film.

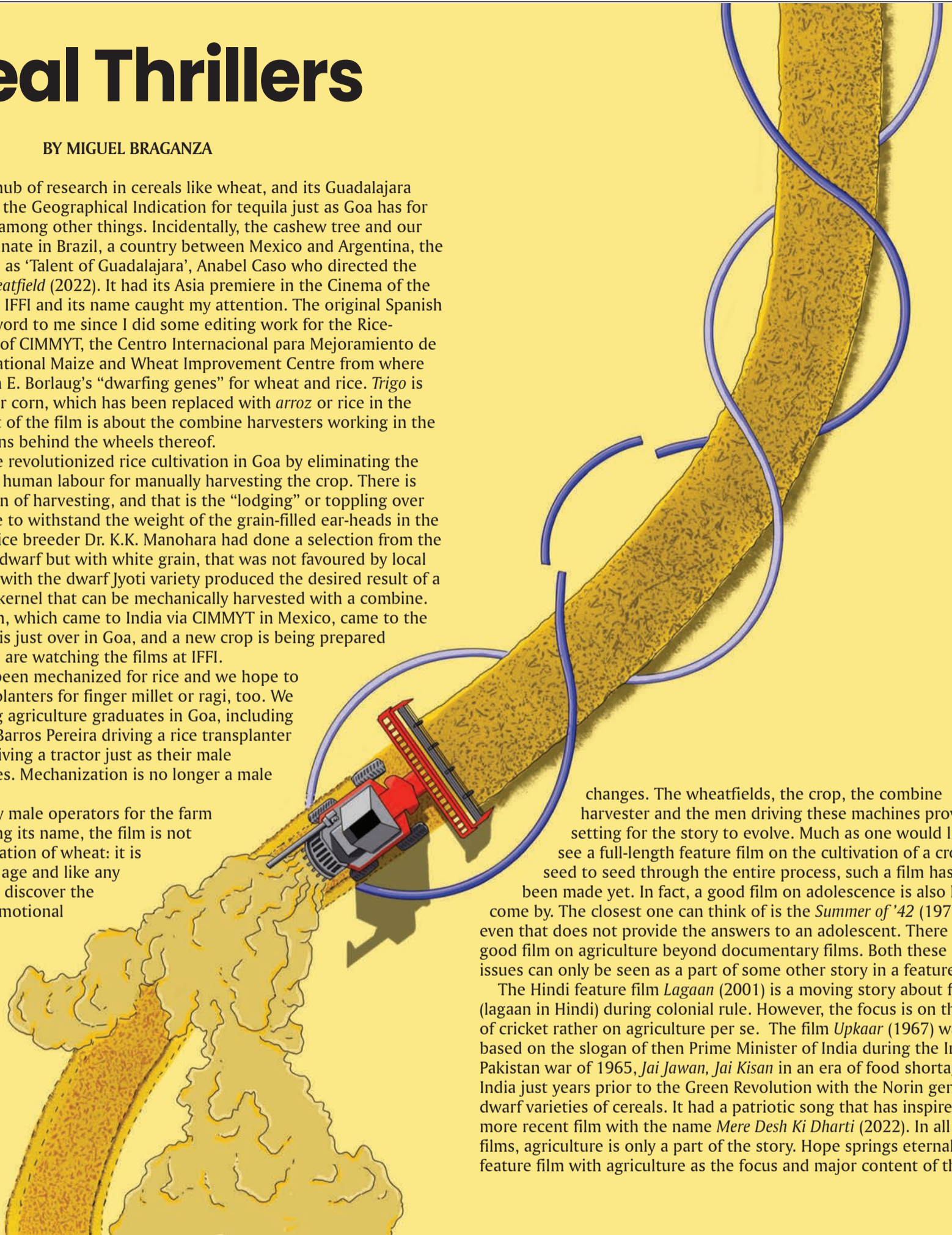


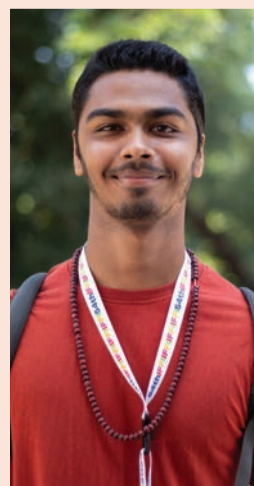
Illustration by Trisha Dias Sabir

SHORT TAKES



As an actor, I'm always looking forward to meeting passionate producers and film-makers. To come here is to be a part of the Indian film fraternity.

**Sheena Chohan**  
Actress  
Mumbai



I saw the short docu-montage *Elegies* and loved it. It was the first time I saw the director in-frame while interacting with his subject.

**Yash Bhujbal**  
Assistant  
Director  
Mumbai



As a producer, I have to look at the films to see what is working now. Mainly I'm excited for the web series.

**Sneha Daniel Shivapur**  
Producer  
Belgavi



The thing I like about IFFI is the chance to watch uncensored international films. I love *The Peacock*! The artwork on the front page is amazing.

**Vrinda Sharma**  
Personal  
Assistant  
Delhi

# The Lost Actor

BY SIDDHESH GAUTAM

She was Malayalam cinema's first woman actor. Her first appearance in the 1928 film *Vigathakumaran* (The Lost Child) directed by JC Daniel was being screened at Capitol Cinema in Thiruvananthapuram. Instead of celebrating the first woman actor, the audience got angry that a Dalit woman had played the role of a Nair. The film reportedly had a scene showing her lover (played by Daniel) kissing a flower she had worn in her hair, and this angered the people so much that they pelted stones at the screen and damaged it. She was subjected to such harassment that she was forced to leave Thiruvananthapuram. Some accounts even say that her hut was burnt down. She is said to have married a truck driver named Kesava Pillai and moved to Tamil Nadu, where she named herself 'Rajammal'.

Everyone remembers the 'first', but PK Rosy was forgotten and disregarded for a long time. Born as Rajamma on 10 February 1903 to Paulose and Kunji, in Nadankode, Thiruvananthapuram, she was a grass-cutter and showed immense interest in acting. She studied Kakkari Natakam at the traditional school of performing arts. This folk art form originally came from Tamil Nadu and uses a mix of Malayalam and Tamil in a musical drama format. Her passion and hard work made her Malayalam cinema's first woman actor.

It took about four decades for Kerala to take an interest in PK Rosy once again. Chelangatt Gopalakrishnan's first article about *Vigathakumaran* and its tragic fate was published in the late sixties while Kunnukuzhi, who traced JC Daniel to Nagercoil, published his first article on Rosy in 1971 in Kalapremi. JC Daniel initially brought Ms Lana, a woman actor from Mumbai, to act in the film. Speaking to The News Minute, film critic GP Ramachandran said, "No woman in Kerala was ready to act in films back then, so JC Daniel brought someone from Mumbai. He even shot a little bit of the film with her, but he wasn't able to meet her requirements and she went back. It's after this that PK Rosy is said to have stepped in. Back then, even those who acted in theatre were looked down upon, and that's probably why Daniel had such a tough time getting an actor."

While some say that Rajamma became Rosamma and eventually Rosy because her family converted to Christianity, others say that it was JC Daniel who changed Rajamma's name to 'Rosy', a more glamorous name. JC Daniel anticipated the trouble that would come their way and did not invite Rosy for the screening of the film at Capitol Cinema. Rosy had supposedly not known that the film would be screened publicly when she shot for it, but was keen to attend the screening.

In an effort to restore her name in the annals of history, the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC) of the Malayalam film industry recently announced that they would launch a film society named after PK Rosy. In a statement, the WCC said, "This act of naming our film society a PK Rosy Film Society is a humble attempt to be sensitive and to take note of all those who have been excluded from dominant cinema histories through their gender, caste, religious or class locations and our own imagination, and have been brought to light by many scholars, historians and activists."

Apart from a still from the movie, there are no existing prints of *Vigathakumaran*, and in the place of Capitol Cinema, which once stood on MG Road in Thiruvananthapuram, there is now Marikar Motors.

Though various organisations and awards were named after Rosy, a real tribute to her can only be by making the film industry more inclusive, thereby creating a workspace where all kinds of stories can be told because there are people who can and will tell them, in their own voice. There has been renewed interest in PK Rosy's life in the past few years, but the acknowledgement of her contribution, from the industry itself, is still mute.

In 2013 the first PK Rosy Memorial Lecture organised at Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi, professor Jenny Rowena discussed the critical responses to the film which pointed out that Rosy was "portrayed as a woman without any mind of her own and as someone who is only capable of showing docility to the Upper Castes to the system of Untouchability and run away after being defeated".

PK Rosy's legacy, however, continues to be kept alive by the Dalit community who celebrate her as a trailblazer in Indian Cinema.



BY VIVEK MENEZES

“Were it not for art,” said the genius painter Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002), “man would have died of boredom.” It’s not just another throwaway line in the Konkan, where the cultural and artistic history extends to the literal dawn of mankind. Here is what UNESCO said last year about the profusion of petroglyphs at sites like Pansaimol in Goa: “the most comprehensive, well-preserved and artistically distinct Geoglyphs evidencing a cultural legacy of 12000 years. The content, composition, scale, quality of imagery and artistic techniques not only provide an insight on the range of mainly faunal life, but also depict the increasing tendencies of depicting abstract and anthropogenic forms onto stone. Further, the Geoglyphs show increasing finesse of artistic skill and evolution of techniques of etching and scooping, that are fundamental to mastering rock art.”

That extent of mastery has extended and accelerated throughout the rest of Goa’s artistic timeline, as the tiny riparian land open to the Arabian Sea has remained one of the most crucial crossroads of what is now called globalization. That traffic exploded in 1510 with the advent of colonialism in Asia. Within less than 100 years, the old city just upriver from our IFFI location in Panjim mushroomed to twice the size of London and Paris of the times, becoming by far the most important international emporium to



Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro

showcase the New World, Europe and Africa in the subcontinent. Everything changed, including in the realm of art and aesthetics – the gorgeous jewellery, furniture, ivories and tapestries born of that early encounter are some of the most exquisite ever created.

Since that crucial juncture in history, Goa and Goans have contributed far out of proportion to Indian architecture, music and cinema, with especial consequence to modern and contemporary art. As the highly perceptive critic and curator (and brilliant poet) Ranjit Hoskote put it

some 15 years ago, the state “has long been an invisible river, one that has fed into the wider flow of Indian art but has not always been recognised as so doing. This despite the presence of [so many] master spirits of Goan origin [who were] active throughout the colonial, postcolonial and globalisation periods.” From the vaunted turn-of-the-century portraitist (and pioneering J. J. School of Art faculty member) Antonio Xavier Trindade to the visionary Shantiniketan-trained Angelo da Fonseca, to Francis Newton Souza and Vasudeo Gaitonde – who kickstarted the seminal Progressive Artists Group

– their impact is incalculable but also curiously lacking in acknowledgement.

It has always been like this, with the situation barely improving at all since Souza himself lamented in his searing *A Fragment of Autobiography* which was published in *Words & Lines* (Villiers) in 1955: “As for me, I was a rickety child with running nose and running ears, and scared of every adult and every other child. Better had I died. Would have saved me a lot of trouble. I would not have had to bear an artists’ tormented soul, create art in a country that despises her artists and is ignorant of her heritage.”

The sad truth is you cannot see even a single painting by Souza or Gaitonde on public display in their ancestral homeland, and even their greatest Goa paintings only appear and reappear in the corner of our eyes as they exchange hands at auction houses for record sums. Some years ago, I happened to be at Sotheby’s on Bond Street

in London for one of that august auctioneer’s subcontinental sales, and was totally taken aback when the magnificent, monumental *The Red Road* (1962) was brought in by white-gloved attendants. It’s an incredible artwork but for people who know the artist’s ancestral village, there is much more there too. This is Saligao, brought to life by one of the greatest painters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it made my jaw drop in astonishment and wonder. Then it sold for over one million dollars, and disappeared forever once again.

## Maaznama

by Maaz Bin Bilal

### Haiku

On the murmurations  
of starlings send me your love,  
the email’s old school.



Illustration by Nishant Saldanha

## PRAGYVERSE

by Pragma Bhagat

### battlefield

imagine the moment of your insertion  
a coin in a slot machine  
follow the jingle jangle  
to decline is to wage war

your body isn’t built for violence  
isn’t blessed by a memorandum of understanding  
your body is a qawwali wafting through dusk

there is nothing hard about you  
even the ground beneath your feet

# IFFI Screening Schedule - 23rd November

INOX SCREEN-I PANAJI	INOX SCREEN-II PANAJI	INOX SCREEN-III PANAJI	INOX SCREEN-IV PANAJI	MAQUINEZ PALACE	INOX SCREEN-I PORVORIM	INOX SCREEN-II PORVORIM	INOX SCREEN-III PORVORIM	INOX SCREEN-IV PORVORIM	SAMRAT AUDI	ASHOKA AUDI	KALA ACADEMY
CA1 MOUNTAIN ONION 9:00AM - 10:30AM CW	CB1 1947: BREXIT INDIA 10:00AM - 11:58AM IP-NF	CC1 FOG 9:15AM - 10:44AM CW	CD1 DR. MINESTEIN 9:30AM - 10:59AM A-AVGC	CE1 THE OTHER WIDOW 9:00AM - 10:23AM IC	CF1 SNOW LEOPARD 10:00AM - 11:49AM FK	CG1 FLAMING CLOUD 10:15AM - 12:03PM CW	CH1 WHEN THE SEEDLINGS GROW 10:30AM - 11:54AM A-BD	CI1 COMANDANTE 10:45AM - 12:47PM CW			CK3 UNIQUE SWAGGER IN EVERY ROLE 12:30PM - 1:30PM IN-CV
CA2 MMXX 11:15AM - 1:55PM FK	CB2 PONNIYIN SELVAN PART - 2 12:45PM - 3:29PM IP-F	CC2 THE LAST DAYS OF HUMANITY 11:45AM - 3:01PM D-M	CD2 SIRA 12:00PM - 2:02PM ICFT	CE2 83 (ACCESSIBLE FILM WITH INDIAN SIGN LANGUAGE) 11:00AM - 1:40PM AI-AF	CF2 MEASURES OF MEN 1:00PM - 2:56PM IC	CG2 UNDER THE NAKED SKY 1:15PM - 2:48PM CW	CH2 THE BEAUTIFUL SUMMER 1:30PM - 3:21PM CW	CI2 SEVENTH HEAVEN 1:45PM - 3:14PM CW	CJ1 BELA AMERICA 10:00AM - 11:43AM CW	CL1 BEES SAAL BAAD 10:00AM - 12:33PM RC	
CA3 THE PEASANTS 2:30PM - 4:24PM ANIM	CB3 KAATHAL - THE CORE 4:30PM - 6:24PM IP-F	CC3 TOXIC 3:30PM - 5:07PM CW	CD4 ANDRAGOGY 6:00PM - 7:52PM IC	CE4 DAMU 4:30PM - 6:30PM UN-IFFI	CF3 THE PEASANTS 4:00PM - 5:54PM ANIM	CG3 HOFFMAN'S FAIRY TALES 4:15PM - 5:44PM IC	CH3 HOTEL PULA 4:30PM - 6:06PM CW	CI3 ANOTHER DAY OF HOPE 4:45PM - 7:04PM CW			CK4 INDIAN DOCUMENTARY ON WORLD STAGE 2:30PM - 4:00PM IN-CV
CA4 HOW TO HAVE SEX 5:00PM - 6:38PM FK	CB4 SANAA 8:00PM - 9:59PM IP-F, IC	CC4 HURRY OM HURRY 6:15PM - 8:42PM GP	CD5 NIGHT COURIER 8:25PM - 10:18PM CW	CE5 SIMA'S UNFINISHED NARRATION 7:00PM - 8:35PM CW	CF4 CLOSE YOUR EYES 7:00PM - 9:49PM FK	CG4 HUNGRY GHOST DINER 7:15PM - 9:11PM CW	CH4 THE ACCIDENT 7:30PM - 9:05PM CW	CI4 GOOD AUTUMN, MOMMY 7:45PM - 9:32PM CW	CJ2 THE LAST BIRTHDAY 2:00PM - 3:20PM CW	CL2 KALEV 2:00PM - 3:35PM ICFT	CK5 THE ROAD TO OSCARS 5:00PM - 6:30PM IN-CV
CA5 CONCRETE UTOPIA 8:30PM - 10:39PM FK		CC5 HE THOUGHT HE DIED 9:15PM - 10:26PM INTG	CD6 DIVINITY 10:40PM - 12:08AM INTG	CE6 HAQEEQAT 9:00PM - 11:58PM RC							



**PANKAJ TRIPATHI**  
IN-CONVERSATION WITH MAYANK SHEKHAR 12.30 PM

**23rd NOV 2023**  
Venue: Kala Academy

**INDIAN DOCUMENTARY ON WORLD STAGE -**  
IN-CONVERSATION WITH KARTIKI GONSALVES, RV RAMANI, MIRIAM CHANDY MENACHERY, SAI ABISHEK, NILOTPAL MAJUMDAR 2.30 PM & ANSHUL CHATURVEDI

**THE ROAD TO OSCARS -**  
IN-CONVERSATION WITH GUNEET MONGA KAPOOR, CARTER PILCHER, RESUL POKUTTY & SONAL KALRA 5.00 PM

For today's striking graphic cover artwork, Govit Morajkar has paid Pop Art tribute to the prehistoric petroglyphs of Goa at Pansaimol on the banks of the Kushavati River. He says that "the ancient rock art sites of Goa narrate stories of life in the distant past. From the carvings, one can identify many animals including the zebu bull, deer, gaur, and the peacock. A gem of a place, located in the interiors of the forest, it is something everyone needs to experience."



**MMXX**  
11:15  
INOX Screen-I Panaji



**The Peasants**  
14:30  
INOX Screen-I Panaji  
16:00  
INOX Screen-I Porvorim

**How to Have Sex**  
17:00  
INOX Screen-I Panaji



**Sira**  
12:00  
INOX Screen-IV Panaji

