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ENG ★ STER

THE FILM WRITING EDITION



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From the Vice-Chancellor



Film-making is an art that reclaims reality for our consideration, even as it changes. It offers us the opportunity to meditate upon what appears to be and on what underlies this appearance. Film teaches us often to be more careful in our observation of the world, and perhaps to be more caring.

The Jesuit and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins gave us the line “There lives the dearest freshness deep down things”. It is perhaps this way of experiencing the world that draws us to cinema; one where we seem to see into the nature of things and find inspiration and questions that engage us, all in one go.

I am glad to hear that the outgoing BA-CPE batch has collaborated on putting together this issue of Engster magazine devoted to film-watching. In a Jesuit institution, the act of reflection upon our experiences is key because it is the moment where we begin to transform ourselves and find the wherewithal for meaningful change.

I commend you for this labour of love. May everything you do carry this distinctive character, and shape your future achievements.

Fr. Dr. Victor Lobo, S.J.
St. Joseph’s University, Bengaluru

The Engster Editorial



The Communicative English course offers an object lesson in the kind of transformation that is possible at St. Joseph's. Students from diverse situations and backgrounds arrive and deposit themselves in our care, moved by very different hopes and aspirations. Over three years, they arrive at various competences with writing, with print design, and with various forms of production. They move thus from diffidence to confidence, from tentativeness to creation. The outgoing batch of 2023 arrived online post the pandemic and weathered many storms before finally being able to come to campus and meet each other face to face. The resilience of spirit they have shown as a class makes them special, and this issue of Engster makes visible that wonderful spirit.

This year, Engster asks what discoveries we might make when we examine ourselves in the act of watching films. I am glad to see that this simple exercise has taken our students across diverse trajectories, and offered us acquaintance with contexts and narrative traditions both familiar and unfamiliar.

I congratulate both elective batches for the sterling collaboration in writing and design that has produced this issue of Engster. Your work makes us proud, and challenges all of us to do better in coming years.

Dear reader, Engster is now yours. I trust that each of you will find a moment to chuckle over, or go a-ha, as you make the acquaintance of our young writers.

Arul Mani
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Comments

MY SHOHAR FROM ANOTHER WORLD
1

SHARING MALAYALAM FILMS
4

BOXES, DISNEY, AND BOYS
6

ZINDAGI GULZAR HAI
7

SHAWSHANK, SCHINDLER, AND
SHAHRUKH KHAN
9

FROM THE SHADOWS TO THE SCREENS
11

MOVIE WATCHING IN AGARTALA
13

MEMORIES OF SURAJ TALKIES
14

RIGHT MOVIE, LEFT TIME
15

BRING OUT YOUR INNER CHILD
17

MANJUPOLURU
PENNKUTTY MAEVE WILLEY
18

BHUBANESHWAR'S BHOOT GHAR
20

INDRANS, NOT HINDRANCE
22

CAN KANTARA? CANT-ARA
24

A JOURNEY OF FAITH, SURVIVAL, AND SELF-DISCOVERY
25

TAVAREKERE'S OWN LUCKY LAKSHMI
26

THE GHOST IN YOUR CAMERA
28

BAKWAAS BOKARO AUR RANGEELA RANCHI
29

DOSAPUTTIDLI FOR THURSDAY?
31

LIGHTS, CAMERA, IMPROMPTU
32

DDLJ, DEFENSIVE PAPAS, AND BOOTLEG VCDS
33

NILGIRIS, NUDGING, AND NEVER-ENDING
SNORES
36

MEMORIES OF POPCORN
37

GANGS THAT WATCH SHOTS BUT DON'T SHOOT
39

KUNNIL THEATRE PAR
40

THE MAN IN CRIMSON HEELS
42

BANK HEIST AND OTHER GAMES
45

My Shohar From Another World

NISHAT ARMIN CHOUDHURY

“What is your ideal type of guy?” asked Archita, leaning on the window, hanging to the second last bench of Class X, section A. I was thrown by her question because a second ago we were talking about the difficulty we face while memorizing the algebra formulas. When you are best friends with someone, you must have the capacity to talk about different things in one conversation- this usually happens in on-line platforms, but we took it to the next level, I guess.

Of course, I could not answer her because I had no “ideal type” in my mind back then. So, she got irritated and continued with- “badde, mur xun” (means- Leave it, listen to mine). Just one name came out of her mouth- Fawad Khan and we were not even surprised. All three of us knew how obsessed Archita was with *Fawad Khan*. He is a Pakistani actor, who dwelled in the Bollywood world before the Governmental hatred threw him out of the country.

The image of Archita’s future husband is, let’s say, Fawad Khan. She was obsessed to the extent that her obsession took turns on Nistha, Shubhangi, and Me. Shubhangi and Nistha got over him with Hollywood actors and anime characters, but mine took me towards a journey of fickle-mindedness.

Fawad Khan was our second obsession- first will always remain Alom Bhai from Bangladesh. The first time we came across Alom Bhai was when we were looking for a funny video to mimic in class. Hence, for the coming 200 days, we did not forget about Alom Bhai even for a day. However, there lies a difference in these obsessions. The difference lies in our blushes and giggles respectively. Alom Bhai gave us fun serotonin, while Fawad gave us love serotonin.

Therefore, Archita’s obsession

turned us towards the world of Pakistani Drama, as Fawad Khan had started his career through dramas. Some of us were limited to only Fawad Khan’s show, while I started to browse through the ‘*Dushman desh*’ – Pakistan drama world. Let’s say, Pakistan went ahead of India.

Their world of dramas and the OTTs made me feel in a way, which changed my perspective towards marriage and relationships. The most common set-up for Pakistani dramas is cousins getting married to one another, falling in love, and eventually flirting with one another. It is like a reverse relationship- you go backwards. It sounds very problematic to me- cousins getting married! There was a point when Archita questioned me, and I questioned my culture about the idea of cousins getting married to one another. I started keeping a distance from my cousins, to be honest. However, in the shows, when you watch “the cousin couples” together hanging out like a married couple, you tend to forget its “problematic” aspect and enjoy it.

The most famous and loved drama that popped up on my first day of YouTube hunting for Archita’s future husband was *Humsafar*, with Mahira Khan. Due to this show, the most tragic happening of 2018 happened to me. I have always loved men with beards; however, looking at Ashar I realized that I fell for a clean-shaven fictional man. Yes, the same happened to Archita. This show made me want to fall for a man who doubts me and our relationship - toxic. However, later, he ends up trusting me and asks me for forgiveness. Now, that I think of this past want of mine, I feel ashamed.

My fictional dream did not end there. This was just the beginning of an endless loop of hopeless-romanticness. While I was watching *Suno Chanda*, I started to have an urge of changing my cousins. I wanted my cousins to have a

relationship like Arsel and Jia- an enemy-to-lovers duo. As someone who found the concept of cousin marriage problematic, I had changed quite a bit. I called it progress, at that instance.

Therefore, as time passed, I realized that I had started to crave a relationship like that of Kharid and Asher, Hala and Hamza, Kashaf and Zaron, Jia and Arsel, or Meerab and Murtasim. Pakistani Men, as portrayed in these shows, became my ideal type. They didn’t portray a culture of dating, instead, they threw the concept of marriage into their audience’s faces. In my eyes, they romanticized the concept of arranged marriage- a loveless marriage, as Ashar would describe it. However, eventually, love blooms in this loveless relationship, and we get a taste of black-and-white romance.

Now, you would ask what is a black-and-white romance? It is a simple metaphor that I gave to the idea of sacrificing everything or supporting your spouse, even when relationships take a trial on you. It points to the intimacy that is pinned upon through eye contact and acts of care. It might sound very weird when I say that every time I watched the mentioned couples on my small dirty screen, I mumbled and sighed about how lovely life would be if all this happened to me at once- including the trials and concerns of their lives.

What if there is a Hamza for every Hala in this world? A man who would fight the entire world for his timid and misunderstood woman. The concept of providing for the woman is everything that *Mere Humsafar* seeks, which is contrasted by Kashaf and Zaron’s story. If I could be Kashaf for a day, I would go to Zaron and clear out all the misunderstandings- also give him a piece of advice for being such a rowdy and self-absorbed person during half of the show *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*.

Let’s be honest here, the con-



cept of vulnerability that a character is exposed to in these shows can make a strong-minded person sob in silence. Hala being picked on all her life by her own family, except for her Dadi, is the peak of this vulnerability. One scene where Hamza won everyone's hearts is when he took Hala's hand and brought her back home when his mother threw her out in the middle of the night. The way it made my heart flutter is inexplicable. Hamza legit came in like a knight in shining armour to save his future woman and took all the tears away from each of his audience's eyes.

Talking about knights in shining armour, let us not forget about Murtasim; he is the trend these days. Murtasim is a man who is no less than a typical brown guy- with anger issues, pride, a craving for respect, a mother's child, and egoism. However, a majority of his negative features were lashed out of the show as soon as the flirting started blooming between him and his "biwi". He took Meerab's hand when she found no one around her, fluttering everyone's heart again. Every wife deserves a husband who is obsessed with her, and not responding to another girl's ply of loving him. I have no idea, why Murtasim's love has not melted down Meerab's heart so far- sigh! (Tere Bin is an ongoing show).

Let's say I would like to have a life mixed with all these characters and their love lives. I want to be as bold as Kashaf, and as timid as Hala. I want to be as clumsy as Jia, and as sorted as Kharid. Well, I am as fickle-minded as Meerab. This way, I thought, I will attract my Zaroon, Hamza, Arsel, Asher, and Murtasim. With the end of our Class X and Board exams, we had months to waste. Shubhangi had written her exams offensively; hence, she was on "lockdown" during those days. So, it was just Archita, Nistha, and me.

As we grew up by another 200-250 days, our perception of love and the "ideal type" of guy also changed. Nistha still made that "ishhhh!" noise with a smile, whenever she heard Archita and me talking on this topic. Archita had an intense crush on a boy from Don Bosco School, it was so intense that Fawad Khan became a secondary actor in her life. On top of this, she had also moved out from the world of Fawad Khan and jumped into the Turkish industry.

The first time, she decided on watching the show 'Aşk Laftan Anlamaz' was after she watched a video on Facebook.

Hence, as she started to like the male protagonist in that show, she started to blast the group chat with Murat's pictures and videos. This time, Shubhangi and Nistha gave up on her obsession. However, for some reason, I found the scene of Hayat and Murat bickering similar to that of Arsel and Jia. Hence, I gave the show a try.

I remember asking Archita to send the show link to me. To this, Shubhangi and Nistha reacted as "aru ata pagla api gol pagla rasta't" (another mad girl has gone down the mad lane). As a beginner in this universe, I was happy even with the dubbed version- Pyar Lafzon mein Kaha. However, it was only after three months or so, that I realized that Turkish dramas don't give "Turkish" vibes without the Turkish language.

I remember sitting in the corner of the dining table, with no one at home, sobbing while staring at the phone screen. What happened, you ask? Hayat and Murat broke up, again.

"I want to be a housewife in Lahore... no, I want to be an employee in Istanbul.... Uh! Uh! I want to be a poor girl in Seoul!"

Of course, not intentionally but due to the unavoidable evil circumstances. Throughout the show, the twists in their relationship did not just make me angry but also made me cry and laugh. Cry- because it was sad- why can't they just be happy with one another? And, laugh- because why can't they just sit and talk things out instead of fighting like Tom and Jerry?

Well, Aşk Laftan Anlamaz is no different than the majority of the dramas from the Turkish drama series. It is about a bubbly girl Hayat falling in love with her calm and "khadus" boss Murat. Most of the shows based in Turkey revolve around the idea of girls with strict parents falling for the 'Boss' who has crooked relationships with either his mother or father. Well, this plot

made me want to have super strict parents, so I could fall in love with an emotionally unavailable boss. And, eventually, turn this boss of mine into a super emotional and understanding husband.

This plot has made me romanticize the office world, which is usually filled with hectic workloads and rejected leave appeals. In addition, the idea of bosses being in their youth also got famous from these shows, in my opinion. In these drama series, we often get to see that the CEO of a company is hardly in his 30s. However, when the reality struck me that in India, the case is twisted, Archita and I were both hurt. Yet, we did not lose hope. There will surely be more young entrepreneurs, who would hire us and fall in love with us one day.

In these office romances, there exist certain characters which make the entire Drama series all the more fun and interesting to watch. No, I am not talking about the vamp sister-in-law or the evil stepmother. Here, I am talking about the tiny friend circle in the office. For some reason, Archita found these circles very annoying and disrespectful. These were rarely funny for her. She pointed once that these characters mostly build on the fight fire between the protagonist with their dumb contributions. But, isn't this how these shows are stretched?

For instance, in the show *Daydreamers*, we have JJ (Cey Cey), Sanem, and Guliz. The friendship among them seems raw and new, yet old. Sanem being the protagonist of the show, who falls for Can Divit (pronounced as Jan), tends to make stupid decisions and attract problems. Within the sphere of these problems, she tends to share her secrets with JJ, who has zero tolerance for secrets and gets panic attacks when he hears one. There was a scene where JJ got to know everything about Sanem and Can, he had so many panic attacks together. That poor soul also ended up being in the hospital, tranquilized. He could not face Can for an entire week until he spoke his heart out to Aylin (Sanem's best friend).

Just like JJ in *Daydreamers*, we have Erdem from the show called *You Knock on My Door*. Erdem's character is not as friendly as JJ's with Sanem. But Erdem is someone who roams around the office of Serkan Bolat, laughing and acting like the boss and messing things up. Initially, I wondered why can't Serkan just kick Erdem out of his office,



but later on, it was revealed that the office building was bought from Erdem's father on the condition that his son remains employed. These are the tiny plot twists, which makes me love Pakistani and Turkish Dramas. This makes the entire plot known and yet unknown to the audience.

Things went on for the four of us in the Turkish world for a while, but eventually, we got busier with our lives, and we had a cut-off from the YouTube World. Hence, the WhatsApp group chat became dry, just like our YouTube video-watching streak. Archita started with her NEET preparation, Shubhangi started with her college entrance preparation, Nistha got busy with her family, and I started my journey with Netflix.

This was also the time when we got a new friend circle. We tried to keep in touch through the group chat, but our friendship started to fade away. I feel this happens to a majority of my school friends. No, our group chat was not named "friends forever"- it was SANN (abbreviation- Shubhangi, Archita, Nistha, Nishat).

Archita got a new crush in Gurukul Grammar School, Shubhangi was still in the lockdown effects of messing up her 10th Boards, and Nistha had little to no interest in Love stories. She liked books and anime. To date, she is focused on this. However, it doesn't matter how much she hides it, she too is a hopeless romantic. How do I know this? I know this due to the suggestions she had made to me about shows.

In school, we had a highly devoted group to the K-pop industry. We never understood, why? There were many who made fun of them for being so devoted towards "non-masculine men"- SANN were too busy with Fawad Khan, and we had no time to look at others. There were many internal political standings and defections due to K-pop standings in these groups. Some of these girls were from our class. Nistha had a very nice relationship with these girls.

I remember Nistha was the one who introduced me to everyone in Class VIII when I joined the school newly. So, it was not surprising to me when she suggested I watch Korean Dramas. However, it was a "suggestion", and not an "obligation". Hence, I did not start watching- rather, stuck to the rom-com Hollywood world on Netflix.

As I jumped into the world of

adults- well, my college started with my brother saying "Amar Moina bodo oi gese, college jaito" (means- my Moina has grown up, she will go to college now)- I felt super intimidated by the K-Drama fans. I saw many people



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: OLIVE ELIAS

bonding over these drama characters and stories. The first thing that came to my mind after looking at this was the soft power thrown by South Korea to the world. It immediately reminded me of my Political Science teacher from Army Public School-Mr Debojit.

Eventually, it came to the point that I wanted to give these dramas a try- mostly because I was desperate to make "permanent three-year" friendships. Hence, I started with the first recommendation Instagram reels made me- and surprisingly it was a nice recommendation. My first ever watched Korean Drama was- "What's Wrong with Secretary Kim?" So far, I have watched it as many times as I have watched Kabir Singh in order to drool over Shahid Kapoor. In the show, Lee Young-Joon is a character who is narcissistic; he believes his "Aura" is just perfect. The show opens with his secretary of 10 years deciding to hand-in her resignation letter for personal reasons. This is the beginning of Young-Joon's journey to find that he is in love with his secretary. The best part remains the smile that Kim Mi-so gives to his "auratic" behaviour. My brain will never delete Mi-so's annoyed smile in front of her boss.

Eventually, they build up their

secret office relationship, which remains a secret no longer. There are small things in Lee Young-Joon and Mi-so's relationship that makes people want to have a green-flag rel-

ationship in the world of red flags. These small things are them understanding each other, without words and eye contact- just makes my heart flutter. Honestly speaking, their aegyo was much better than the romance building through sexual tensions in Turkish dramas (*cries in the corner*).

While I was watching my first show, a drama named "Business Proposal" became famous in our "adult" society. In this show, we get to see strong friendships, trauma, and relationships, which makes us want to crave for having such things. The friendships in the drama reminded me of SANN- the bond and the trust we had. No doubt, we had more friendships, relationships, and indeed traumas, but it is not the same as it is portrayed in Business Proposal. For instance, I would like to have a friendship like Shin Ha-ri and Jin Young-seo. A friendship where one will meet another's marriage prospect, and make an impression to get rejected. A friendship where one is super rich and buys stuff for the other without any concerns. A friendship which is like a sisterhood. A friendship where my mother loves my friend more than me. The show also portrayed a similar male friendship between Kang Tae-moo and Cha Sung-hoon.



The scene where Tae-moo wants Shin Ha-ri to just spend her time with him, and he would be spending all the finances, is the most famous scene of the show. I feel, more than Tae-moo, his black credit card won the girl's heart. The show also provided a list of things for the guys to have so that they could make their girls happy- always has his girl's back, makes plans for his girl, protects her from her mean friends, appreciates the true value of his girl, cancels his important meetings, being understanding and considerate, acting clingy, and being loyal like a dog. The show was where everyone wanted Archaeopteryx (Kang Tae-moo) as their boyfriend.

Moving on from the office world, we have the fantasy world with shows like Goblin and Strong Girl Bong-soon. Personally speaking, these shows made me want to be born again with extraordinary qualities in me. The quality of seeing ghosts and talking to them, the quality of being like Ji Eun-Tak- the Goblin's bride. I am sure, the show made many girls want to be the bride of Goblin. The show made everyone fall in love with the cheesy goblin or the father-aged actor Goon Yoo.

Along similar lines, we have a strong girl Bong-soon who was hired by Min-Min (An Min-Hyuk) as his bodyguard. The Aegyo in their relationship is above all other couples in the K-drama world. The way Min-Min fell in love with her, the way he smiles around her, the way he fixes her hair, and the way he feels shy around her is the much-needed criteria in the world of red flags.

I am sure, when I told Nistha for the first time about my new blooming love towards Korean Drama and Korean Men, she did not make the "ishhh" noise. Instead, she greeted me with a "Mubarakho" (which means- Congratulations). I would share the same news with Shubhangi and Archita; however, time took over the relationship, in this case.

Therefore, through this journey, I finally know the answer to "What is your ideal type of guy?" My ideal type is one who is rich, who is a neon green flag, and one who can create sexual tensions in love through the aegyos. I don't necessarily think this is too much to ask in this diverse world- a world which portrays the idea of love, friendships, and marriage in such a sweet manner. However, what shocks me is the in-

bility of people to either provide their partners with this sweetness or accept this sweetness from their partners due to the irrefragable trauma.

Maybe this is the reason why the romantic world of dramas is not true for a majority of people. For instance, when we talk about relationships in Turkey as portrayed in these dramas, we get to see a lot of exaggeration in the acceptance of love, friendships, and the portrayed culture. However, reality lies in the lives of people who have been through hellfire before easily ending up with their happily ever after. Along these lines, Pakistani dramas have romanticized the concept of arranged marriages. Nevertheless, we must not forget the idea of violence and gaslighting in these marriages. Furthermore, there lies a blood red flag (full of assaults and abuses) in South Korean men, which is just the opposite of what is portrayed in the dramas.

Sharing Malayalam Films

NITHIL LOUIS BOBAN

Malayalam movies are known for their unique storytelling, strong character development, and often touch on social issues, making them both entertaining and thought-provoking. However, watching a Malayalam movie with a non-Malayali friend may pose some challenges like the language barrier. Malayalam is a complex language, and non-Malayalis may struggle to understand the dialogue without subtitles. It is just one of the criticisms that comes with watching a Malayalam movie but that can also be resolved through good friends who can translate certain dialogues for you and also the more you learn from your Mallu friends, the more you can understand without even explaining. However, many Malayalam

movies are now available with English subtitles, which can help the non-Malayali viewers understand and follow the story.

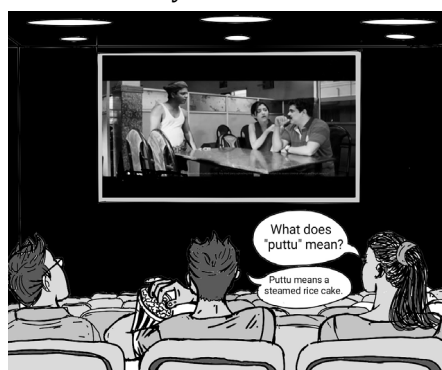


ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: MURALI KARTHICK

The start of everything would always seem very difficult at first but then when you get used to it and the

more you get to know how to tackle that situation is when you know you can do it without anybody's help. Watching a movie in a different language is almost similar to that, because when you start to understand a few words of it then step-by-step you can learn the language as well as know the whole story of the movie when you finish watching it. Some people might take a long time to understand it but for others it might be faster. It all depends upon the interest you have towards it. If you are least interested in watching a movie, the slower it gets over, and the more interested you are, the faster it gets over and you would be wishing to see more of it. Sometimes when you do not understand a language and still watch a movie in it, you might



end up understanding it faster due to the movie scenes and the acting. It is not always the language that makes a movie good.

On a Wednesday evening, all of a sudden Khaleel and I planned to go to our home and spend some time together with our friends. They were seven of us and we all took an SUV to our house. We had tea together and talked for some time and discussed our future plans as college was about to end in another two weeks. Our dear Saba had also come with us, and we all planned to watch a movie together. As all our other friends were Mallus, we chose to watch a Malayalam movie called 'My Boss'. I had watched it before, more than twenty times and it was so funny that most of our friends love it to watch it over and over again because every scene and each character from the movie had portrayed its role fabulously. So, here as Saba was a non-Mallu, the plan for watching a Malayalam movie didn't appeal to her that much, but I put the subtitles on and made sure I personally translated everything she did not understand even after reading the subtitles. The movie started playing and everyone was very excited to watch it. As the scenes kept going, I noticed that Saba was laughing so much because of the jokes and humour of the movie. I did not have to explain much to her. She could understand it quite well without any help, just by observing the scene and the people acting in it. Saba was getting almost all the jokes because I saw her laughing madly when there were funny scenes happening in the movie. This made me wonder if she had actually seen this movie earlier or if she was lying to all of us that she does not know Malayalam. I kept keenly watching her and then slowly when things really made no sense, I paused the movie and asked her how she was able to understand all that was happening in the movie, that most Mallus themselves would take time to understand. That is when she said that she was used to seeing movies in languages she does not know and that she knows to sense jokes and ideas from the characters and a little secret - she has seen a movie that was similar to this one. It was an English movie.

'My Boss' was partially a Malayalam adapted version of the movie 'The Proposal', starring Ryan Reynolds and Sandra Bullock. Saba has watched 'The Proposal' many times

before and certain plots and jokes of the movie were almost alike.

I was really happy to see my non-Mallu friend enjoying a movie from my regional language. She was not understanding certain Malayalam dialogues and she asked me to translate them. I was able to make her understand each and every part of the movie and also made sure that she really enjoyed it. As the movie was mostly based on humour, it didn't make anyone feel bored and I feel like jokes can also be understood from the actions and the performance portrayed by the characters in the movie which made Saba understand the scenes from the movie better and laugh for almost all the jokes in the movie.

The movie was around two and half hours long and no one realised

“Barriers can be broken; new memories can be moulded.”

that so much time had passed by so fast while we were watching the movie. I personally feel like any movie, let it be in any language, what any person can understand is mostly the humour and sentimental parts even when language remains as a barrier. Sometimes I watch Hindi movies and series with subtitles and understand most of it even when I don't know much Hindi just because it has good reviews and the genre of the movie or the series maybe of the type I prefer the most. Again, I also go for non-Malayalam movies with my North Indian friends, and they used to explain to me certain scenes which I didn't understand because of the language. Saba however, on the other hand, used to understand a little bit of Malayalam because she hears me, and our other Mallu friends speak in Malayalam almost all the time and that made it easier for her to understand on-spot and enjoy the movie throughout with our funny little conversations in between.

After all this has happened, we all enjoyed the time we spent together, and Saba was also really

happy to finish watching a Malayalam movie for the third time completely. Her first two Malayalam movies were: 'Bangalore Days' and 'Thattathin Marayathu'. She had watched some parts of these movies but never got to finish them fully and this was the only Malayalam movie in her life that she watched completely in one go. So that was again a new thing for her and a proud moment for me that she didn't get bored at any point. The day ended with all of us having dinner together from a nearby restaurant, which met Saba's expectations. There we had little conversations about what to do for the next day in college and when can we spend some time like this in the coming week. One by one everyone started searching for Rapido and Ola auto to get back home before it got too late and everyone reached safely and we made sure that they all reached by calling each one of our friends, which was a usual thing we do all the time.

Overall, watching a Malayalam movie with a non-Malayali friend can be a fun and an enriching experience. It can help bridge cultural gaps and introduce new perspectives, while also providing great entertainment. It was not a very easy thing to do but it had its own perks and I made sure that I would be able to give her funny and lifetime memorable moments. She enjoyed it to the last bit, and we all were happy to share this experience with her. It was a fun day for us and kind of felt like we did something nice for our dear friend Saba. For the first time in my life, I was able to proudly say that I made my online friend who was a non-Mallu watch a Malayalam movie with me and enjoy each moment to the most.

These kind of things reminds us of how different people can come together, have a special bond with each other through films, songs and even same food taste and can even sometimes bring a friend from another place closer to your heart. "Barriers can be broken; new memories can be moulded". This one line explained the entire experience I had while writing this piece.



Boxes, Disney, and Boys

ANOUSHKA SUDHIR

The slab above the door on my parent's main bedroom shelved many dusty boxes. Some empty, some with junk Amma refused to get rid of, some with my old toys, and a couple with winter clothes that only came out during vacations. If films introduced us to the worlds beyond the four walls of our house, these boxes held many stories from within these walls. One such story is behind our first cable television. The handsome black Philips box TV. I remember holding pride in owning it because it looked much nicer than the grey Onida one that my grandparents back in Calicut had or the tinier versions the neighbors had.

Chechi and I fought for an extra chip on our plate, or for stationary but hardly for the remote. With an 8-year age gap between us, the shows we watched naturally never matched. I was a six-year-old who was obsessed with Oswald and Handy Manny. Chechi was a teenager. So, you might wonder why we never fought. Chechi loved to give me detailed descriptions of the episode she watched of shows or a movie every day. She did these during our evening snack break when we sat at our dining table sipping on juice and showing our faces with sundal or sandwiches. I was a good listener, I've always been.

"He then died in a car accident, but she believed he was still alive. That it was all a lie. That his death was a mere setup," she said in a whispery tone.

"And then what happened?", the young girl asked her 14-year-old sister.

I used to get so invested in her narration that it sparked my curiosity. I really wanted to know what happens next. So slowly I started watching them with her. Initially, it started with me sneakily sitting in the hall with a coloring book and my Camlin crayons. This slowly progressed to sharing the divan with her and sharing chips and juice.

Disney Original movies were our favourites! We never missed the weekend airings. The first part of High-

school Musical had released in 2006 and it aired on Disney India on a summer afternoon in 2007. Chechi had waited for it all week since the airing of its trailer the previous Sunday. All I heard those 7 days was how exciting the plot sounded to her. Nothing could beat a high school romance for a teenager. And for a kid who wanted to be just like her sister, nothing could beat her excitement for it. It was during the summer break and all of us were tied up to our homes because of the intolerable heat in Erode that sometimes went up to 40°C. Only one bedroom in our house had an AC back then and it stayed on through the afternoon while we sat in that heat in front of the TV.

The best mangoes were always in the market during summer break and I remember Amma making juice out of it for us because I refused to get my hands messy. It was usually my reward after cycling around the neighborhood or when I settle down on the Diwan with Chechi. I didn't know much about high school nor about musicals or romance but I sure did sit through the entire movie...or at least most parts of it until Amma told us both off. She scolded Chechi for letting me watch the film with her and me for sitting with her. We spoke about Troy that night. How she liked his blonde hair and how I liked his voice. We downloaded the soundtracks on our tiny red mp3 player and left it on loop till the lyrics started making sense to me. We sat down to choose our favourite characters and came to the consensus that Troy deserved both of us. In the next couple of days, she was stuck to the desktop to find ways to get access to Troy's other films. This is how we got introduced to the world of Zac Efron.

I remember going to school the next day carrying the excitement from our conversation the previous night but sadly none of my friends had even heard of it until I mentioned. Considering we were just 5 years old, it's not surprising. However, back then I was disappointed at that. The conversations I remember having with my peers back

then was mostly surrounding food. They seemed more interested in the mango juice I had than what I watched on TV. The only time we spoke of a show was when one of the girls in our class gave away Hello Kitty pencil boxes to the girls and Ben10 ones to the boys. None of the girls seem to have watched Hello Kitty, no one even realised it was a cartoon. So we were confused but liked it regardless because it was pink and sparkly.

Chechi was probably the reason I was more mature than my peers.

If films introduced us to the worlds beyond the four walls of our house, these boxes held many stories from within these walls. One such story is behind our first cable television.

I knew what the red stain on my panties was in 5 th grade, unashamed and unafraid. I remember just casually walking out of the bathroom to inform Amma. It wasn't a world that was hidden from me. I was a curious child who always had questions Amma says. So, I questioned the pads, heating bottles, and the special drink our helping aunty gave Chechi every month. All my questions were answered with no hesitations. And as I grew up we started sharing the special drink. Funny how women who stay together actually sync periods. I also learnt that girls and boys were very different. Chechi says we are





ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: KRISHI SHAH

from Venus and they are from Mars, and that it takes a lot of effort for both to see eye to eye. I understood this earlier than the rest around me because of Chechi's failed fantasies and boy stories from high school, then college, and later from workspace. She never hesitated, and nor did I. We became best friends. "She is practically like your daughter," Chechi always found herself cringing at that and I mocked her for it. But as we grew, our age gap didn't show as much. This was an issue when she got married because all eyes were on me after the couple that day. It was worse explaining to uncles why my file would remain at the bottom of the pile for the next 8 years. Chechi mocks me for it now. Oh, how the tables have turned.

Our TV-watching sessions have a long history, we waited every Sunday for the clock to strike 11 am for

a Disney Original release. I started getting sick of Troy with every new part as Chechi fell for him deeper. He took over all the devices in the house. A shirtless Zac Efron on her tiny Motorola phone, a poster of the movie on our desktop, and a basketball jersey version of him on the mp3 player. I never understood her obsession with him until soon later when I found EXO, the boys that took over the walls of my bedroom. From Disney movies in Erode, we moved to Hindi serials and Korean dramas in Chennai, to MasterChef and Bigboss in Calicut. We also used to watch the Harry Potter series in December every year until she got married in 2022. It became one of those Christmas rituals where we had to finish the entire series between Christmas and New Year's Day. Like this, we grew up with the TV. The black box TV upgraded to a Sam-

sung sleek model, followed by a much bigger and smart model of VIU.

I still do watch High school Musical when I hear 'I gotta go my own way' or 'We are all in this together' play from my playlist. I suddenly miss the old times. Chechi and I rewatched it a couple of years back and I remember both of our reactions to it being the same, unlike back then. But at the end of the day, nostalgia always seemed to win over everything else. The bad acting or the flaky plot wouldn't stop us from watching the movie another time. Now back in my parent's bedroom staring at the cardboard boxes, I understand why Amma hesitates to get rid of things. They weren't just boxes, but moments. Moments we can only go back to in our memories. Memories of days far gone, tucked away in the dusty shelves of the room.

Zindagi Gulzar Hai

SABA KHAN

My family has always done most of the things together, we eat together on the dining table we'll not most of the time sometimes we sit in the hall and eat while watching films or shows on the television, we make sure to go out even if it's for a drive, at least once a week. We attend functions together, we spend all of our birthdays together. If it is a tradition or habit it is yet to be known but that's how it is.

98% of the films I watched in a theatre have been with my parents and my brother; even if it is with a large group of people they are always with me, and the remaining 2% is with friends now at the age of 20, never before.

My dad hates me watching too many films or shows, he thinks it will influence me in some way or it's just not good for me. Honestly I never understood why he says that, for

everything I do, he blames the shows or films I watch. "All this is because of your Korean shows, I'm sure they always order food and never eat at home and you're copying them", or "Stop fighting with your brother like those Pakistani serial people, fight normally", "stop trying to act like a grown up, this is not an American household, to let you act out like that." He thinks the root of every problem is what I watch. Sometimes my



mom does that too, but not as much as my dad though. She somehow gets carried away with my obsession or craze for the films and shows I watch, she also sits along with me, while watching most of them with me. We watched the entire Twilight movie series together, even Harry Potter, Hunger Games, and many more film series. We can never watch any shows because my mom cannot stop once she starts, while I cannot do one thing continuously; I take breaks, watch other stuff, go through Instagram etc. Though my dad is a little strict he's not absolutely against it, he just wants us to watch family friendly films and shows.

Another thing about my dad and films is, we never watch any intimate scenes if they're ever played in the film, we just look away or pretend to be busy on our phones, but our dad also gets flustered, shy, and awkward and keeps murmuring "Chi don't watch such films man", and my mom says "You're married you don't have to get awkward", and we all have to hold our laughs.



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: SAI LAKSHMI

Though most of these things are pretty much the same but now since everything is available online on OTT platforms like Netflix, Prime and Hotstar and we have access to it through our phones, I watch almost everything on my phone or laptop, it's not because we've grown up or just because it's awkward, it's just that we all have different choices. My dad wants action or comedy films or a mixture of both and no in between, my brother and mom watch literally anything new old but not what I want, and I prefer hap-

py films, fantasy, rom-com, teen fiction etc. Though sometimes we do watch my films together too, but nobody is as excited and totally into it as I am.

Initially I only watched teen films, that too Disney films, and then through recommendations from friends I watched many different genres of films.

It was around 5 years back that I began watching Pakistani shows as well. In the beginning I watched it just for the sake of the actors, and was super obsessed with Fawad Khan. I watched my mom watch his show on the new channel called 'Zindagi' which showed Pakistani as well as Turkish shows, and had no clue what was happening as I only looked at him the entire time. Then one day I watched an entire episode of a show and it was so real and I don't know peaceful? Perhaps. Zindagi Gulzar Hai, that's the name of the first Pakistani show I watched, it was surreal, it was real and so touching, it made so much sense, every dialogue and every characters personality, how life changes how people see the world and how it actually works. The female lead looked very average in this and the male lead was Fawad Khan of course, but I was still more inspired by the female lead, so much so that when the show ended I had a feeling that I must grow up and be like her. Maybe not that rude, but everything else. I still wish the same, Kashaf, the female lead was strong, confident, and very intelligent. She is still a perfect example for me to follow.

After that I expected all the Pakistani shows to be that good, and watched more and uff, it has so many conspiracies, fights, and issues but the interesting part is that they are all so real! Everything I saw felt like it's possible in real life, even the repercussions. Every show had a lesson. My dad wasn't a fan of it for a long time, even until recently, because every time he was around the worst scene would be going on, like the Talaaq Talaaq Talaaq or having 3 wives or the lady being kicked out of the house, so he would say "Watch something good what is this crybaby shows you watch." I too couldn't handle more than two sad emotional shows, but slowly slowly I watched some more.

It was last year that I actually got more interested in Pakistani shows, when I watched shows like, Suno Chanda, Chupke Chupke, Mann Mayal, Bin Roye, Ehd E Wafa, Yakeen ka Safar,

Sinf E Ahan and plenty more, I have a good/bad/weird habit of watching shows non-stop. I even watched Korean shows, Chinese shows, and Turkish shows like this, because I get this empty, hollow feeling in my stomach when any good show ends, so to make that go away I need to immediately start another one, and so it keeps going.

Normal people take a break and not start anything new during exams but I have to watch all the incomplete shows and new ones with films, it's like my brain can do anything else but study.

Normal people take a break and not start anything new during exams but I have to watch all the incomplete shows and new ones with films, it's like my brain can do anything else but study. Weirdly I finish the most shows and films during my exams, even though every time I promise myself not to. And if I ever complain about any paper not going so well my dad taunts me left and right 'Why your Korean guys didn't come and help you? Or is the answer not there in any show you saw?!' How can I tell him that I kept humming the ost's of the shows half the time instead of studying.

OSTs, be it Korean, Turkish, or Pakistani their music is the best! In fact I've started so many shows just because of their theme song, the theme song in the show Ehd E Wafa, is so calming and catchy, I remember hearing it once on Spotify just because other show songs were good, but I didn't like it that much and then when I watched the show and heard the song with it it was an absolutely different feeling, I got so addicted to it that I know it by heart now, how I wish my brain worked the same dur-

ing studies. Anyway theme songs of Pakistani shows are more interesting because I can understand and feel the lyrics which is not the same in Turkish or Korean though I know those lyrics also by heart just without understanding. My mom often stops me from singing most of these songs, as they're all sad songs talking about bad luck, and depressing things. Even though I know it's right the tune and lyrics are just too catchy and unforgettable. Like the song in Bin Roye 'bin kahe sun oo yara' it's so beautiful and also the reason why I

watched the entire show.

Since all the Pakistani shows are available on YouTube I watch them there now, apparently due to some issues they stopped coming on that channel, but this is more interesting I can forward all the overdramatic scenes, or the unnecessary characters in the show like our relatives who like to butt in into the main leads life's and even replay the modest romance scenes full of respect and excitement as many times as I want, and even get to read some funny and interesting comments in the

comment section. My current obsession is the show Tere Bin and only for Murtasim, he is the ideal husband material, his attitude, his care, his personality, his anger, his aura and his perfect choice of words at the right moment, increase my heart beat to another level and make me want to get married soon, but then I realise this is reality and real life marriage is like walking into a trap you know is a trap so then I get over it. But the 35 minutes of Murtasim keep a constant smile on my face which doesn't fade away until disturbed.

Shawshank, Schindler, and Shahrukh Khan

TUSHAR MENON

"The Cinema has no boundaries; it is a ribbon of dream" says Orson Welles. However, "Cinema is the most beautiful fraud in the world" says Jean Luc Godard. Rightly so, the world of art, culture and cinema play a huge role in influencing the people of the society. The plays, dramas and films have always given hope to people and not only entertained through its narration, but also mirrored the aspirations of people and made them think. The world of entertainment has always impacted societies and are a reflection of the real world. The films can be romantic, fictional, action, thriller or a comedy. The films give the audience a greater sense of culture and broadens their horizon by giving an insight into the lives and culture of others.

Movies, based on its genres, are categorized into action, horror, thriller, comedy, romance, social drama etc. Some are historical fiction like the Mughal-E-Azam or Sci-Fi like the Robot. If a movie is able to form a connect with the audience or is relatable, it becomes a hit and part of popular cinema. We can easily learn a new language or culture through its visuals; we can teleport ourselves to new locales during the three hours on 70 mm. We can adapt to a new lifestyle, travel to foreign countries, learn new music and

dance forms or be aware of exotic cuisines etc.

All films leave an impact on the viewers watching them. Films tend to improve the lifestyles, living standards and thinking of the people, thus, emphasising and focusing on the cultural diversity of the respective places where they were shot, or the stories they hailed from. This cultural exchange

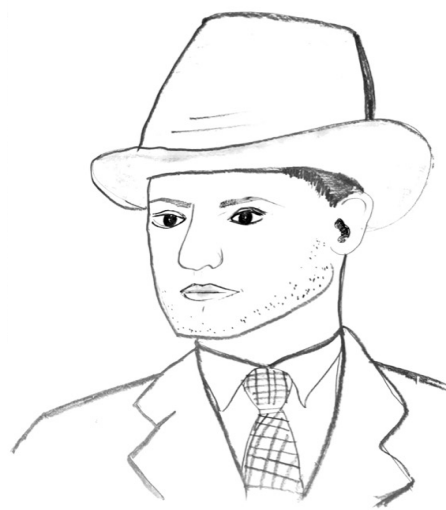


ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: SAI GANESH

of music, dance, art, food and lifestyle forms deeper social connections and helps people break the ice.

A good film is always a director's dream. So he or she tries to analyse and curate things carefully through critical analysis and then decides as to what, where and how a particular film must be shot. He decides on the locales, background score, the star cast, his assistants, the set and innumerable other factors. He also decides on the marketing and release. All he wants to do is tell a convincing story and entertain and satisfy his audience, convey a good message and attain box office success.

Good films like Shawshank Redemption and Schindler's List have left an indelible mark in memory. The concept of both these films are different. While a film like Shawshank Redemption deals with the themes of hope, determination, and commitment through its characters like Andy Dufresne. He is a former financial consultant and head of a firm who is serving his two years of prison sentence for the murder of his wife, gets into a habit of making smart moves and decisions through his prison mates that would eventually revolutionise the entire prison camp of Shawshank by introducing a prison library that is accessible to all the prisoners. His advanced planning and execution of a tunnel made by him to escape from the prison left the entire prison camp shocked, surprised and ashamed de-



spite heavy and tight security.

While people had flawed thoughts to achieve freedom, characters like Andy served as a ray of hope and gave a new taste, twists, and turns to the prison camp and its prisoners by moving as per his plans. I must say that in movies like this, a legendary actor like Morgan Freeman was successful in playing his role of Andy as a support character to the film and having played the lead role in the finest and most furnished way.

Red had the mindset that nothing was possible, but at least keeping hope was important. Later, came the thought in Red's mind that things have the possibility of being changed only if a person has the will and determination to do it with a strong commitment.

This film has provided a parallel between comedy and sad phase of the movie that had brought in much more sense to understand its present performance. Another film like the Schindler's List is one of the most watched films of its time.

The sadness that prevailed in the movie had actually made tears roll out of my eyes with a show of empathy for the person who had taken such great efforts in order to show humanity the light within the darkness. The context of the story revolves around well known German Businessmen and Nazi party member Oscar Schindler rescuing lakhs of jews from going to the concentration camps of the German camps.

I, as a movie watcher would give great thanks to the director Steven Spielberg for his exceptional directional skills to exhibit the sadness in the movie in a way that through the hearts of millions as they could also feel the pains that jews had gone through during Hitler's authoritarian regime.

Sadness was executed in the film as and when best suited for its timing whereas the last emotional scene where Schindler prepares to leave his factory and bids farewell to the Jewish workers has an emotional tagline of its own.

The scene was emotional while also having a sense of happiness, of joy, and freedom living inside the hearts and souls of people as they thank Oscar for every help that he had lend to them. Literally speaking, the cast was well suited for their respective roles in the film and their perfect timing of showing the expressions in their face was an indication

of their character roles as displayed in the movie. The film runs with sadness in parallel of happy and satisfactory life that Oscar Schindler gets after he helps millions to get out of German captivity. Rightly, a captivating picture.

The recent Indian films like Bahubali, Robot 2.0, RRR, KGF 2 or any other film is an indication of the fact that the audience's taste has slowly shifted to historical fiction or futuristic themes. Audiences today like graphics, VFX, sound effects and good cinematography.

Regional films are being dubbed into Hindi for a Pan-Indian audience. The films also portray the sentiments of people of India in general. Films like KGF depicted the violence and nexus of politicians and goons of Kolar Gold Mines. Kashmir Files, a film based on the exodus of the Kashmiri pandits during the peak years of insurgency is another one example of reflecting realism. The ground realities of lives of people of Kashmir and the massacre, garnered wide appreciation.

I have realized that various audiences react differently to watching the same movies at home or in theatre. Earlier, films were watched only in the theatres and then with time they were slowly telecasted through television channels and now they are also watched online on different OTT platforms such as Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, Hotstar etc and we have the total freedom to either binge watch or watch episodes but the subscription has to be paid either on monthly or yearly basis. We have come a long way from the era of black and white cinemas. Albeit OTTs are way cheaper than PVRs.

The melodramatic films bring alive the actors in a real grief-stricken world where the audience get immersed in the scenes and feel moved to shed tears through climax. The likes of Dilip Saheb, Mr. Bachchan or Shah Rukh Khan have formed deep connects with the audience by essaying characters which were heartwarming.

Most of these melodramatic movies have wars and conflicts as their backdrop. They are also about the quest for peace and struggle to find happiness for one's family or country. The main reason for why the audience becomes too emotional after seeing a sad film is because they relive their own agony and pain. Now when a person watches

the same on their TV it is different because they are in their comfort zone.

The external stimuli to the whole experience of movie watching at home is different. The journey and sailing through the movie is all by yourself. One doesn't get to hear the loud claps.

The same goes with comedy movies. It is a genre that gets a wider audience than sad movies. But it also depends on the quality of comedy in the film and the performance of the actors in terms of screen play and dramas. Comedy usually gets huge thumps up and is a box office hit. Not every actor can perform a sad or comedy role unless that particular actor or the artist has the talent and capability to do so and attract a larger audience. Actors with exceptional talent and capability can do comedy. It's all about the comic timing.

However, in conclusion I would like to say that Film making and its audiences have evolved over the last century. There is a generational shift as far as acceptance of film making is concerned. It can be broadly classified into black n white, the 1920s to 1960s era and from the 1970s to the present generation. The change of audience and their taste and preference has led to innovation in script writing and experimenting in filming. The major reason for that is the world is having a mature audience.

"I feel movies are a very powerful medium and are of inspiration and information. They delimit us, the human race, break the boundaries, allows cultures to be blended and accepted. Films help us in becoming world citizens.



From the Shadows to the Screens

REUBEN SAM ABRAHAM

Just like the first day of the new year, school annual day and the birthday of close ones, there was one other special day in my life every year. This day was the day of rejection to a specific request by my parents. Just like the annual budget I present a report to my parents on how my friends are allowed to go watch films in a theatre and why I should, too. This bill is never passed as it is opted out with maximum majority.

I started requesting my parents for permission from the fifth grade to go watch a film in theatres. The times when Mohanlal and Mammootty action films made us crazy fans of theirs. In those days they had a fair argument that I was too young to go watch films in theatres with my friends. But for how long could they give the same excuses? In the next two years they told me the actual truth of why they would not let me go to theatres. The church community that I was a part of in Cochin was not very appreciative of people going to theatres to watch films. The brethren church which falls under the protestant category of Christianity was widely popular in the state of Kerala since the 1900s. The are called 'Verpaad' church in Malayalam which means to separate from. Separation here refers to the sacrifices the community was willing to make as they separated from the traditional Catholic Christianity and worldly pleasures. With many of the things the community gave up, they also gave up privileges to watching films in theatres. This was also why it would lead to a bad reputation for my parents if someone would see me walk into a theatre.

There was this one time when I was falsely accused by one of my church members. Seventh grade was the first time my parents allowed me to go to a mall to hang out with my friends. It was just three of us best friends from school. We wanted to play some games

and have some good food from the then popular Oberon mall. Oberon mall was the heart and soul of Cochin for years before other malls took over and it began to lose its prominence. In a desperate attempt to find my friends I was searching at the second floor of the mall where Cinopolis, the theatre in the mall back then was located at. I mentioned this as a desperate attempt because I did not have a phone back then and this was where my friends said they would be. It was at this time a family from church ran into me. They didn't even ask me why I was near the theatre; we just had a normal conversation before they left and later I found my friends. The uncle immediately calls up my mom and tells her "Sam was standing in front of the theatre, I guess he is going to watch a movie." Within the next 20 minutes one of my friends who had a phone received a call from my mother who informed me about this and asked me to get back in an hour. I don't think I'll have to explain what happened after this.

The disappointment on my face for the next few years when I bought the annual report was as bad as you could imagine. I was left out of every plan by my friends because they would want to watch films. Every time I saw my friends sitting together planning for something without me, I knew what this was for. There was this one time I felt really left out that I confronted them and asked what they were planning. The only thing they told me was that this plan cannot involve you by any chance. As an adolescent I could not take it anymore. Nothing would hurt more than sitting idle on off days thinking what your friends might be doing for the whole duration, while they are out having fun. How could I forget the Instagram stories that I would be left out of and not tagged in? To complement all of these I was a huge Marvel

fan by the time I was in the ninth grade. I watched every Marvel movie that was released on TV. These films would get released on TV months later. I would have to come across spoilers from the internet and my friends and by the time I watched the film, I already knew the storyline.

After a few years, I could not handle it anymore. I was tired, in pain and this was almost the time when the first Black Panther film was released. I called up Robin, my friend since UKG and asked him to get tickets for just the two of us and be as discreet as possible when he does this. I wanted him to find a theatre that people wouldn't go to usually. There were only few theatres in Cochin, and out of them there were even fewer theatres that screened Marvel films. Local theatres in MG road like Saritha, Savitha, and Sangeetha didn't screen any of these films. There was another local theatre in Penta Menaka, the commercial heart of the town. Kavitha screened Marvel films once a day during their release. This was my first preference because I was so sure that no one from church would even be close to this theatre because it accommodated more local crowds. But Robin was not ready to go there because he was also not used to the local crowds and just as any other Rajagiri student used to a posh lifestyle, a theatre without caramel popcorn and cheese popcorn was unacceptable to him. The only options available to us now were Gold Souk, Oberon mall and PVR in Lulu. The risk was ten times higher but Robin was easily able to convince me because of my lack of awareness on theatres. "Eda let's get tickets in PVR, it's the best theatre in town, if this may be the last time you watch a film, let this be the best." Poor Robin was always trying to persuade me to watch a film with him. I had to agree to this wish of his. You



would've loved to see the shock on his face when I brought this up with him. "What about your parents?" He asked, to that I responded with my second request. "Da is there any way you can sneak me into the theatre?" He thought I was crazy and told me that what I was doing was not a crime, but I knew in the

I was in panic throughout the duration of the movie but I enjoyed the fear because it was worth the experience. The amazing speakers and the huge screen, I was in tears.

eyes of my parents it was a crime. I took no chances and wore a hoodie in a desperate attempt to watch the movie like a secret detective who was undercover because there was a higher probability of me running into someone when in Lulu mall, the self-proclaimed largest mall in India.

The film was also one of Chadwick Boseman's masterpiece films. Everything went well as expected, and I left no evidence to haunt me in the future. Just like you get used to trying forbidden things for the first time, I got used to this system of sneaking out with my friends to watch films and I never got caught. I was grown up enough such that my parents would not ask me anymore where or why I'm going to hang out with my friends. I mentioned above that I burned all the evidences when I went out the first time, I did not make this a practice for every time I went to watch a film. When I was out with my brother one day at a restaurant, he asked for me to search for a ten rupee note to leave as a tip. I was too busy eating so I handed over my wallet for him to search. Along with the ten rupee note that he took from my wal-

let he also found out a ticket to one of the films I watched with my friends in a PVR. I mentioned PVR because I could see the bright yellow logo flashing in front of my eyes when he took that out. My heart drowned in panic. I didn't know what to say to my brother. I was scared and speechless and was thinking deeply about the consequences of when my parents would find out about this. I relate this to the experience of a convict being caught after deep investigations for years.

My brother asked me why I did this, and he also asked whether dad and mom knew about this. I couldn't respond as I was in shock because of my carelessness. The tail end to this story was confusing. My brother started laughing in the car, I did not understand. He said "Been there, done that, welcome to the family." The kind of relief that I got at that moment was more refreshing than a glass of ice-cold lemonade during a hot summer's eve.

have the whole city of Bangalore to myself.

The final tail end to this story was just before the lockdown started. There was a film of a Christian missionary 'The Least of These' released in theatres. It was only playing in PVRs across cities. My mom wanted to watch that movie. She reached out to me and asked me to get tickets for myself, amma, my brother-in-law, and my sister for this film. I was shocked out of my brains. How did my mother, who has forbidden me this privilege all my life want to watch a film in a theatre? I guessed it was my brother-in-law who brought many changes to our family. Even though he was from a brethren family, he attended the church in Bangalore. I am assuming the Bangalore brethren were not as conservative as the ones in Kerala, or at least he wasn't. I bring this up because we had a discussion in our family where he openly stated that he goes to watch movies with his friends



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: AJITH RAJ

He could empathise with me and understand what exactly I went through. He started watching movies in theatre much later than when I first watched one. His first experience was when he moved out of home to Chennai for his UG. I cannot relate with his patience through all those years at home. He asked me to reduce the frequency and then increase it only once I move out from home because it wouldn't be as hard. But even today when I watch a film in a theatre, I still have the feeling inside of what appa and amma would be thinking if they got to know about this. Knowingly or unknowingly this reason reduced the frequency of me watching films in theatres even when I

and my family was speechless. However, I never asked him to take me to a theatre because I didn't want my parents to know that I watch films on big screens now. This shocking revelation happened within those few months, I didn't ask any questions before amma changed her mind, I just booked the tickets. When we were at the theatre at night I said to my mom "Enjoy your first film in a theatre." To shock me for the second time that day she said, "This is not my first time, I have watched a Prem Naseer film in a theatre in Kochi back in my school days."

Movie Watching in Agartala

RAJDEEP RAKSHIT



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: VISHNUPRIYA

Talking about watching films and having the opportunity of going to the theatre was a very different experience for me, coming from a very small city, Agartala, where there was not a single multiplex for the time being when I was there. It was in the very recent times that it got installed. Having the experience of going to theatres and enjoying movies on a big screen was not there in my state. Even though it was there before my birth during the 80s and 90s but with time it got shut down and replaced by a shopping complex.

For me growing up in this city and the experience of watching films is quite different. We must wait for a movie to get released on TV so that we can see it. It is quite different from the teenagers that are growing up now. I still remember those Sundays when these new films used to premier on TV for the first time either on Star Gold or on Zee Cinemas with the title of 'World Televi-

sion Premier'. Those Sunday evenings 8pm was the time slot for all these new films to premier on TV, and watching it on the very first day was fun. From the era of where internet was not that common, I remember a day in class eight when I bought a DVD of a movie from its pirated version.

We all were very excited when I bought that DVD and this was the first time I was going to watch a movie before it premiered on TV.

The movie was Bajrangi Bhaijaan starring Salman Khan. We all were very excited when I bought that DVD and this was the first time I was going to watch a movie before it premiered on TV. And as it was Sunday, not only my family members but also my neighbors were there to watch that movie. But it is also true that when it was released on TV after a month and a half the craze of watching it was not the same. Teens from these recent generations will not get the joys after they get exposed to many things like Telegram and unlimited internet apps. While writing about the culture of movies in Agartala I discussed a lot with people who have experienced the old theater that was there during the 80s and 90s. While going and discussing with them, I came across different varieties of stories. Starting with my mom itself, she shared a lot of memories of how she used to go for these films. And about the craze for the posters of Amitabh Bachchan, Rajesh Khan-

na and many more. Getting more into the details of her story I came to know how she used to save 25 paisa that she used to get for buying ice cream during the summers days while going to school and collect it to gather 5 rupees or 10 rupees so that she and her friend could buy the movie tickets.

Different people have different stories of watching movies in theatres. While getting more into it and continuing the conversation with my dad, he told me about how he used to bunk classes to visit the theatre and as the whole city had one theatre, he met with his elder brother and how much scoldings he would get for that.

Talking to different people have their different stories of their ex-

perience in the theatre but in every mouth, there was a common name of Rango Daroga. He was the guard of the theater and was very strict and almost everyone was afraid of him. He never allowed the school students or college couples to sit in the theatre during the college or school hours. While listening to all of these stories I was really missing that essence of watching a movie in a local theatre. Even though the time when I was growing up in this city there was not a single theatre in the city but now with time, it have changed a lot with the introduction of a new theater with four screens. This theatre, SSR Rupasi Cinemas came into function. This came just six months ago and is the only working theatre that we have in

the city. Though it was going to open in 2019, but due to COVID-19 and other reasons it kept on getting delayed. I do not have any experience of watching films over there but I heard from my friends that it was really fun and joyful for them when they watched Pathaan for the first time on such a big screen, having popcorn and cold drinks, and enjoying the film on that big screen. Even though we got a movie theatre in very recent times it will take a longer time for 3D movies theatres and to get big multiplexes like PVR and IMAX.

Memories of Suraj Talkies

DAUD AZIZ

The first time that I got exposed to the environment of the theatre was when I went to watch Race, starring Saif Ali Khan. As a notorious and the most loved kid, my tears forced my mother to pressurise my cousin brothers to take me with them. But they were more than excited to take me with them as they wanted me to explore what was beyond the boundary of our gully (street) because that is where I was allowed to go. There was only a single screen. So, near the main entrance there was a man checking tickets and letting people in. Smartly, my cousins pushed me under the man's big book and bag where I was nearly invisible and ran in. But I didn't know why they did this. But as soon as I went in they laughed at me and asked me "Hayy! Where's your ticket?" (In the same way the man was asking). That day, I got to know what scams the people double my age do.

We went and sat in the last row where no one was sitting. The chairs were all fine, they weren't like the old steel chairs. As the interval bell hit, we went out to buy something to eat, but there was nothing except for samosa, and a glass bottle of Pepsi worth 30 rupees which cost eight rupees near my house at the general store. Most of all, there was the famous Bikaneri bhujia,

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Suraj Talkies, which
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red sauce, and the
same chat masala.***

which the three of us were probably addicted to. We bought that and went back. The crowd was so energetic about the film, the songs, whenever there was a song, whistles came on, whenever there came a good scene people screamed.

The only thing that intrigued me was the big screen which I saw for

the first time in Bikaner. Back then, it was not very developed and I was also not exposed to these experiences which made me more attracted towards knowing all the actors and actresses. I wanted to know more about the cars, and the locations, because the tall buildings that they showed were not in my gully. As soon as the interval bell rang, my brothers and I rushed towards the bathroom. While passing by, I saw that there was an uncle who was selling bhujia, with onion toppings and a bit of red sauce on it. I asked my brothers to buy it, but they refused. With the innocence on my face and my tears that were about to drop, I managed to win their approval for buying me a small plate which costed 40 rupees. They finally bought it, the only thing that they had in the theatre was the bhujia masala stall and one tea-samosa stall. There was no popcorn, which I tried for the first time in a theatre at Jaipur.

The old televisions, which were so fat had to be hit when the cable was cut. I used to always wonder what was inside the talkies, that had the big posters of the films on their walls. Even while going to school in the bus, I showed off in front of many that I had gone to the theatre, just to fit in the crowd. And suddenly, one



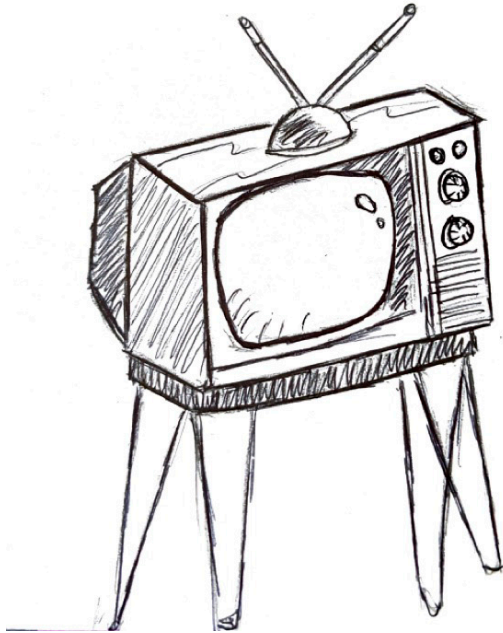


ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: OLIVE ELIAS

day I randomly went for a film at the Suraj Talkies with my brothers. I was so happy that very day that I thought, "Bhagwaan! Aaj to aapne bohot zyaada hi kardiya mere liye." From then on, I was more curious about the films, film stars, film directors, and everything related to films. I discover the Bhai, Bad-

shah, Shehenshah, Mard, Judwa, Rahul, and Prem of Bollywood. My maternal uncle is considered the Dabbang of our house. I remember an incident where we were going to watch Salman Khan's film 'Ready'. Dabbang uncle caught us leaving for the film at the doorstep, he asked "Kathe jao ho?" (Where

to?) In his natural Dabbang voice. We as kids showed him the Eidi that we received and said in a lowered tone, "Film dekhna java haa!" (We are going to watch a film.) He took the money from us and called his dear friend Bhatnagar ji, who owned Suraj Talkies, and informed him that the kids are coming so to take care of us. Nodding his head, he said, "Jao! Arrangement hogyo." (Go! I've arranged it.)

This was an amazing incident of my life which I will never forget. I remind my cousins every time we meet, about this and we laugh until our stomach and cheeks starts aching. Suraj Talkies has now gone through many renovations and a lot of new improvements, which now makes it attractive. But as far as I have been in Bengaluru, I have not felt the same vibe; because of watching films in Cinapolis, INOX, etc. But a void still exists in my heart about Suraj Talkies, which the modern theatres do not have, that is the bhujia masala plate from the same uncle, the same toppings and the same red sauce, and the same chat masala.

Right Movie, Left Time

GOWRI SANKAR M

Have you ever watched a movie and been like, damn this movie should have been released now? Yes, I have also been there. Some movies makes us feel like they were released well ahead of their time. You may not know the exact reason or the scale with which you access the movie like that, but there's something in it which makes you wonder, which makes you think of it and mostly which makes you watch it again and again. I am going to speak about those movies, the movies which got pierced into my heart, which I feel was released at the wrong time. I can talk about many, but there are two movies which I would love to talk about and both starred the same actor, Prithviraj. I am not a fan of any actor and I don't believe in this mad praising of actors. There are few who did their

job great, that's it. And for me, Prithviraj is one among them. As I mentioned earlier, I am not a huge fan of him, but I watch his movies a lot, even before he got all the stardom which he has now. People now say that he is a legendary actor and director who tries out new things, but for me I feel he has been doing that for a long time, but it's just that the viewers at that time weren't ready for it. In this article, I am going to talk about two of his movies which I feel or rather I felt after watching them are the movies which Bollywood crafted so well but the timing it got released wasn't just right. In any of such cases, if we closely see, tremendous amount of hard work and skills has been gone to it. In some of those movies, it was literally the dream of those movie makers which couldn't succeed because of var-

ious reasons.

The two movies which I'm going to discuss is Anandabhadram which was released in the year 2005, directed by Santosh Sivan, and the second movie is again directed by the same person, Urumi which was released in the year 2011. Yes, it amazed me when I came to know that both of them were directed by the same person. Santosh Sivan is a well know cinematographer and has been part of some of the most amazing movies ever made in Indian Cinema. As a movie lover, I have always loved his frames. I feel like it's so natural without much effects in it. In the movie Urumi, the colours were a bit dark and I feel like the exposure was also low to show us the hardships and difficulties of that time. Because, we always associate bright colours with happiness



and dark colours with sadness and problems. To satisfy that, he did a great job in the camera department? Coming back to both of the movies, they both were released a long long time ago but it's making and the way it was executed was too early for that time. The reason why I am saying it is that, the way in which movies are conceived and watched by the audience has changed drastically, especially after the pandemic and lockdown. I feel in my case, I have seen decent amount of series and movies in different languages during the time of pandemic and by doing so a large amount of people now see the content of the movie rather than the mass masala fight scenes the movies then had to offer, that's a blessing of the pandemic and OTT. So as I was saying, people then didn't care about the content and the quality which it offered, they rather went for mass fight scenes and item songs because of which movies like these were left behind. That is the same reason why movies like *Urumi* and *Ananthabhadram* couldn't do well in theatres as well as couldn't make a good response within the people. Those movies didn't had any kind of unwanted stuffs or scenes in it, instead the movie just had a good quality content. I still remember watching *Urumi* in theatres with merely 50 people in the theatre, that too in the first week of the release. But somehow I liked it then too, still I watch it in my phone whenever I can. *Ananthabhadram* was filled with black magic and rituals of a small village in Kerala. The background scores really lifted the movie to another level. Also while I was watching *Kanthara* it reminded me of *Ananthabhadram* because there are multiple scenes in *Kanthara* where Shiva makes loud noise more like howling, in *Ananthabhadram* too they have the similar loud screaming of *Digambaran*, the evil black magician. These both are just two examples out of many movies which didn't succeed in the theatres just because they had good quality content, but now I feel that this kind of situation never happens again because now people prefer content over anything. The style of watching a movie has tremendously changed after the pandemic and the evasion of various other OTT platforms. Now, even in theatres, if a movie is being run which is starred by the superheroes filled with mass action and fights are now getting flopped at the

same time small movies which tells the stories of people in the most creative and heart touching way are now in tact winning hearts.

Even though we have discussed two of the main movies which I felt like taking about, I feel it doesn't give justice if I don't talk about *Thanmatra* which was starred by Mohanlal. *Thanmatra* was a family drama which was directed by director Blessy. The plot is that a father who is that close to his children and his whole family, who was a role model to many people around his life gets Alzheimer's disease and goes through his worst stages at the end of which he dies. As far as I remember, that is the first movie where I have cried my head out. It's not because



the movie is that level depressing and all but, the bond the family had with each other which we have been shown is too realistic and natural that once the father gets the disease and slowly starts to forget everyone, we feel that the story takes place to someone we know or at our households itself. *Thanmatra* got released way before it actually should have been. The audience weren't that great in the theatre shows of *Thanmatra* but later when it still comes on Television channels, everyone appreciates it and still watches it with a weakened heart. Some performances are like that,

it is difficult to go away from our minds.

With all the movies which I have discussed so far, all these couldn't make a big impact on the theatres or it's so called theatre collections, but these

I believe that the power of cinema is much more than you can ever imagine.

movies can be taken as classical examples of well-crafted well written well-made cinemas. The ones where we forget reality and goes deep in to the story and dwell there. For me that experience which cinema offers is magical and that is what I cherish as a cinema lover as well as a normal audience. But it is also true that everyone shouldn't be the same. I know people personally who goes to the theatres to see the mass action fights and the masala songs because for them movies are entertainment and these are the factors which entertain them. Also we can't blame them too, because an entertainment for one might not be the entertainment for the other, everybody as their own way of film watching and it is only fair if we learn to accommodate both these sides. But where there should be a fine line is where you should begin respecting the opinions as well as the liking of others too. If you didn't like a movie, it is because of your choice. In that case, you don't have the authority to trash talk and degrade that movie intentionally, which is a very wrong thing to do. Next time when you see a movie, if you like it then support it, if you don't then at least appreciate their efforts of pulling it off.

Bring Out Your Inner Child

NATALIA JOSEPHINE

Animated movies are somehow enjoyed by most people. One of the first animated movies that I had watched when I was young was Lion King. I was so enamoured with the characters and my favourite was Timon. Something about the animation and the characters makes you feel like they have a personal connection with us and only us. I am a single child, so for me, friends were people from the movies. If I had a bond with them then they would feature in my scenarios and conversations I have in my room with myself. Barbie movies would not make it to this list as I was never ever a Barbie person. When girls my age used to play with dolls and change their dresses, I used to play with Transformers. I was a peculiar kid but somehow still wanted that warmth, love and value that is found in the animated movies. Watching movies with such deep values at a young age to me was a big thing. Back to Lion King, Timon was my favourite. He was my favourite because he is a free spirit, who loved his friends and would even risk his life in front of a group full of hyenas to help his best friend Simba. He is straightforward and does not hide anything. An example for that would be when he made Simba eat the worms, he taught Simba to adjust and love the little things. This was something that even my mom tried on me, to make me have vegetables. I hated them and I still do. Lots of movies also teach us the value of eating our greens for better health. Animated movies influenced me in a lot of ways, but till date, I still do not eat my veggies, and nothing can convince me to eat them.

Animated movies are somehow the safe bet for parents, because without another thought they can actually play the movie for kids and not worry about anything inappropriate being shown. On a personal note, I was not allowed to watch movies with my parents unless it was an animated mov-

ie. The story behind that was that they were a little too lazy to explain anything I had questions to. My parents just assumed that if I did not know something I would ask them bluntly and then they would be left baffled while trying to explain it to me. Honestly it is a task and now I understand. To back this point up, even on Netflix there is a separate kids option that is for children till the age of 10 and it is filled with all the animated movies that made up my childhood. Initially when Netflix first came out, my account had more suggestions for animated movies than live action movies. As one kept scrolling, you would find rows and rows of Kung fu Panda, Cars, The Incredibles, Hotel Transylvania, Boss Baby, Toy story, Lion King, Tarzan, Ice age, Lilo and Stitch, Dumbo, Bambi, Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, the

Movies nowadays do have a fanbase, good ideas and stories. But nothing would ever beat the original animated movies!

Jungle Book, 101 Dalmatians, Aladdin. Asking some of my friends of my ages, all agreed that they would watch these movies anytime. One of them told me that the reason they watched animated movies was to get a new glimpse into the various kinds of worlds they bring to us on the screen. I could relate to this reason so much as in my childhood there was not much that I could do, and I did not have any siblings to share my time with. So, my only escape was into the movies and to run away into the

screen and see the various worlds and stories and get away from my then current reality for a bit.

Different from this are the adults' views on why they watch animated movies. This to me was funny because there could be other reasons for it, but they chose this. The reason one of them gave me was that this was the only way they could keep their kids quiet and happy. If they had not watched the movie with them then the kids would throw all kinds of tantrums and make their lives even more miserable than they already were. Hearing this, I felt that maybe even my parents went through this, but then I thought back. In case I did throw a tantrum I would get a hit and I would stay quiet.

Anyway, the next kind of people are those who do not watch any animated movies. These I would like to call the 'fake ones'. These are the ones who say they do not watch animated movies but secretly watch movies like Kung fu Panda and Smurfs. These are also the kind of people that come off as very intimidating but have a soft and tender heart. Now there are some other people that I have asked about movies. Two of them said that they watch animated movies to spend time with their younger siblings or cousins, to satisfy their crankiness. The first said that she had to sit and watch Home with her younger brother but in the end, she ended up crying. It seems that even after that she always went and sat with her brother to see new movies. That way she watched around ten new animated movies and found herself crying for at least six of them out of the ten. Some of the movies that she cried for were Luca, Coco, Moana, Inside Out, Frozen, Encanto. Sometimes we might think that we would not enjoy certain kind of movies without watching them, but after trying them out, we end up loving every bit of them. The other friend was caught in quite a similar situation. He had to



watch a movie with his niece and listen to everything she made him do. He was in the mood to sit and watch Drishyam, but apparently at that was the time for her Peppa Pig show and she threw a tantrum. All he could do was comply and sit and watch it with her. At the end, he realised that he liked the show. He didn't like it so much that he was not able to go without watching it anymore,

to watch animated movies, but my father always found them boring. He somehow used to enjoy movies like Lion King and Finding Nemo, but once the new ones came out, he just never used to sit with me and watch. Maybe then it was so that I could have company watching the movies, he sat with me, and now that I am all grown up, I would not need company. Or maybe he

would always be an animated movie. It makes my inner child happy and satisfied. They are all so heart-warming and so full of love that after watching them it just fills us with all the love we just watched. I still cannot place what exactly about these movies make me this attracted to them, maybe it is the happy mood and vibe in the movie, or maybe the friendship in some, or maybe the bond with family in some. Each and every animated movie has something that it has to offer that fills each nook and corner of one's heart and mind. Not all would agree with me, but I strongly stand by my idea. One might even ask how these movies make such a huge impact on the kids and even adults, it is mainly because of the strong message they try to put forward and also its characters, sounds and its visual representation, due to which these pictures and ideas create a strong impression and stay imprinted in the minds of the young ones and even adults.

Finally, this shows that animated movies have a huge impact on the minds of people and sometimes these messages also make people change their habits and behaviours to become a better person. So, in the end, movies with good messages and a larger audience make a difference.



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: KRISHI SHAH

but he liked how the show had a good meaning attached to it.

Back to my personal opinion. My mom has always accompanied me

just does not have the patience to sit through a value-filled, emotion-filled sappy movie. But somehow no matter what happens, a comfort movie for me

Manjupoloru Pennkuttu Maevie Willey

MERIHA SHIREEN P

All of life's innate truth are succumbed in words that are unsaid, journeys that are not pursued, and lives that are un-lived. I am often very obsessed with films, literature, and any piece of art that speak about teenage or childhood. I believe how important these periods of life are to human beings in shaping their behaviors, habits, principles, and life, but it is not much documented through narratives in Indian cinema as it should be.

No matter, how much I loved watching the movies I never been into a theater from my hometown. "What people will think about you when a girl who wears hijab go theater to watch

movies?" "How can you think of asking for the permission to watch a movie



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: KRISHI SHAH

from theater?" These all the daily basis questions that I used to hear from my grandma whenever I wished to go theater to watch a movie. I always ask them that if my brother can go and watch movies from the theater then, why can't I? She said, how can you compare you with him? After that I understood that nothing will change even if I argue about it, I will only waste my energy. Coming to Bangalore was one of the best decisions that I ever did in my life for myself. I came out of the shell of restrictions and rules which bothered me. I broke the wall that blocked my path. I can feel that now no one is bothered about my hijab or something else.

Maeve Wiley is a teenage girl character from the series 'Sex education' who is struggling to come to terms with her identity and find her a place in this world. I personally think her character is relatable to many viewers who may be going through similar struggles. Maeve is a fiercely independent and intelligent character who is not afraid to speak her mind and stand up for herself. She is strong and confident young woman who is determined to make the most of her life despite the challenges she faces.

Nidhi is another teenage girl character from a Malayalam movie 'Manjupoloru Pennkutti'. In some way I can relate Nidhi with Maeve because Nidhi also struggled to face challenges in her life. She is trying to get out of her shell which feels like insecure and she was struggling with her own identity. The difference of Nidhi and Maeve was that, Nidhi she was unsure of who she is and what she wants in her life which put her into great deal of pain. She started comparing her with one another which made her feel like she herself fall short in some way.

'Manjupoloru Penkutti' was one of those kinds of films that really hooked my attention as a kid. It made me feel what 'Notebook' a mollywood movie did to me as a kid. There are mallu people like me who choose not to watch Blessy's (mollywood film director) films like 'kazhcha' because it is 'sad'. There are even actors who admitted the same. I have never understood this concept. I understand that it is a personal choice but I would want people to know what grief is, what abandonment is; through art and the mistakes that they make in life. How do you expect people to have a greater understanding of life if we deny the freedom to be vulnerable?

Manjupoloru Penkutti is also a kind of a film that people would change their channel if it gets premiered on TV, but I deeply want or expect the audience to know the same discomfort that Nidhi feels when she is getting touched by her step father in an inappropriate way. I wish more people could listen to her breaking the fourth wall and speaking to us as she is not comfortable sharing her mind voice with the people around her.

There is nothing more beautiful than John Green's quote which says, "I always liked quiet people: you

never know whether they are dancing in a daydream or carrying the weight of this world". I think Maeve and Nidhi are a few of that kind. I have always been fond of people who are odd in a beautiful way. One interesting thing that I understood about life is when I learned about the philosophy of "determinism". If you dig into the past of any terrible person who ever lived in this world, you can see how most of them are systemic in nature and we all are indirectly the reason for that thing to happen. Everybody carries a world within which they

"I always liked quiet people: you never know whether they are dancing in a daydream or carrying the weight of this world"- John Green

have not spilled to others.

Silence can often speak volumes, and the characters of Nidhi and Maeve are no exception. Their moments of silence are an essential part of their story telling, and can reveal complex emotions and inner conflicts that are difficult to put into words. I think Nidhi's silence is particularly powerful, as it often represents her struggle to balance her own desires and beliefs with the expectations of her family and community.

Her silence can be seen as a way of expressing the internal conflicts she faces, and the difficulty she has in finding a way to reconcile her own desires with the expectations placed upon her. At times, Nidhi's silence can be reflective of her deep spirituality, as she finds peace in moments of quiet reflection and contemplation. On the other hand, Maeve's life her silence often represents her struggle to come to terms with her own identity and the fear and uncertainty that can come with it. Her moments of silence can be reflective of the shame and stigma that can be asso-

ciated with issues related to sexuality, as well as her own internal conflicts and struggles to understand her feelings and desires.

The silence of characters like Nidhi and Maeve can be just as powerful as their spoken words. Both of their silence can reveal complex emotions and inner conflicts, also it can create a sense of tension and mystery that draws the viewer deeper into their world. In this way, silence can be an essential tool in storytelling, helping to convey the depth and complexity of human experience. Nidhi's silence is something that I felt it is very related to a teenage girl. I do not think that everyone would be bold like Maeve. I could see many Nidhi than Maeve. No matter what if something happens to us like this it will be a deep wound which only can be seen by ourself until we find a perfect strength to rely on. Why that so?

The same thoughts that bothered Nidhi would have the same role here. What are those? The thought of how the society will take this will be haunting that person for sure. Then ruining the relationship of that person with others. These thought effect the people like Nidhi. While compared to Nidhi, Maeve is bolder. No matter how was her role in the series but still she can speak loudly. But Nidhi, she always spoke in her inner voice. If someone ask, will they work I can tell them that it will work for ruining our mental state. The social message is the only same thing that the both characters Nidhi and Maeve has carried out.

I born and brought up in Malabar area of Kerala, where I could tell that there were a bunch of people who has very typical mind set. Yes, I do agree that people have different thoughts but it is sad that the thoughts of the people will badly affect others especially youngsters who loves to fly with their wings. Brought up in a typical orthodox family, I always feel like watching a movie is like committing a big sin. Especially if that movie has some kind of sexual contents. Majority among people they thinks that all these sexual contents will provoke the people instead of that they never had a thought that these kinds of things are happening around us. So, my question is why people are not taking all these matters as a quick reminder that we all should be aware of it instead of raising

the negative impression on it. It will be little awkward

that if I say I barely watched Hollywood movies from my house. But it was a truth. Its all about the thoughts of people who surrounds me. I do not want to blame anyone here also I never count it as their fault same time the ambience that they brought up might be the reason be the reason. But still a fault that I could find is they never tried to think different. If they does then there will be many changes in this society.

Even though the characters of Maeve and Nidhi are fictional, there

will be many things that a society should know are expressing through their acts. Audience would have different perceptive of thought whether they should accept or reject these kinds of characters. In my perceptive Maeve and Nidhi are part of our society. Who tries to tell the society that there is a parallel world which is not perfect and the worst part is most the other parallel world which is perfect. Through these characters they tries to give the social message that there were girls who face these kinds of problems in their life. The more we see we should try accept

it. Maeve and Nidhi always spoke loudest of the way they can with the things that they did and spoke. We all heard it but we hardly listened. We "hear" everything in the loudest of forms but how sad how we hardly "listen!" this happens to almost everyone, but later we regrets about it.

I think Nidhi and Maeve, their stories serve as a reminder that we need to create a more inclusive and just society where everyone can live with their own dignity and respect. Also, everyone should get what they deserve.

Bhubaneswar's Bhoot Ghar

ADARSH ANTONY RARY

Odisha is a very weird but wonderful place. I'd like to talk first about Bhubaneswar, the streets were clean, and so was the atmosphere, but not Rabi talkies or Kesari Talkies. Before Inox started its multiscreen complex in Bhubaneswar, I've been to these single screen beauties, tainted and painted with red paan and spit.

The single screen beauties were special, because if you knew enough people around, you could go watch one of the few not so recent movies for free. We knew everyone around because our friend Raj owned one of these theatres, called Ravi Cine complex. And every time there was some old movie that was being screened, if the house was not full, we were let in for free. There were a ton of posters outside the theatre, I don't remember seeing empty wall space in that gully we walked through. Everything was written in Odia, and it looked crammed but colorful.

The place also had free popcorn on the floor for everyone who visited the theatre. The coke was probably soaked up by the seats and carpets, so they were not visible. The theatre was not huge or anything, but it was peaceful. And my friends have very rarely encountered babies or any such nuisances. I remember Shankar saying "Chote bachhon ko rabi talkies bhootghar lagta hei", (kids think of Rabi talkies as a haunted house). He was right, it was a haunted house, the only thing

that haunted the place was uncultured people.

I remember going for the last 15 minutes of this one Odia movie, which I do not remember the name of, but it had an actor called Papu and he was a really famous comedian/actor and was loved by people back then. Papu was the funniest of the lot, and I remember only laughing in the scenes where he said something funny. After the 15 minutes of boredom, the theater was cleared out and we moved on to the next Hindi movie.

be doing their own thing away from the red lights that guided people towards their seat. There would be other teenager groups who would come to the theatre to laugh their asses off, just like us. But I feel like everyone in the theatre had more movie knowledge than I did. Which was true, because I only came there to have fun with my friends, not to seriously sit and watch movies.

After a few years, the first multiplex theatre in the area was built, it was an Inox, located in a mall called Bhawani mall. During the first few years of Bha-

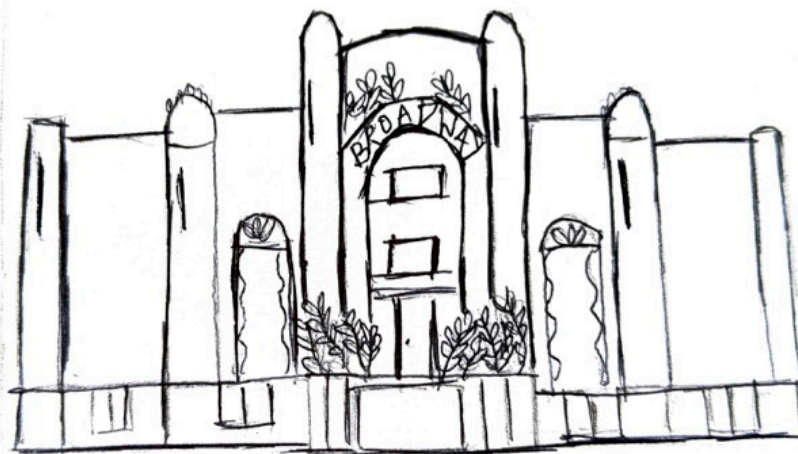


ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: OLIVE ELIAS

Throughout the time we were there, people were mostly silent, there would obviously be couples who would

wani, every screen was filled with people, people slowly got obsessed with coming to this theatre and watching



movies. It was almost like a fever dream for the movie enthusiasts. Big theatres, crystal clear projection, super neat seats and theatre, paid popcorn and coke. All these features gave the Odia people a very fancy theatre experience. The first movie I watched in this theatre was Chennai express. It had been two weeks since the movie came out, but the theatre was still full. They were out of tickets by the time I reached. But the place always saves these VIP seats at the back, which are priced higher than the normal ones. But since I had one of my family friends, who was like an elder sister with a good job, she was able to pay for the fancy recliners. The movie watching experience was like no other. I loved this new smell of seats and civilized people. But I also missed the single screen and the originality of the people who live here.

From fancy hotels, beautiful beaches to laughing at their pronunciation of “kallu shaapu”

After moving to Kochi, I missed out on the single screen theatre experiences, because Kochi is filled with malls which have multiscreen theatres. Lulu mall 5 km to the north and Gold Souk 3 km to the south and Oberon which is a km before Lulu from the apartment that my family stayed in, which is called Mangalam towers. The best was obviously the PVR in Lulu, there just wasn't a close second or third to the PVR, the other malls and theatres were just fodder compared to it. There wasn't anything really stood out about the theatre, it was all about the malls. Lulu was the most popular mall around, and hence the tickets in PVR Lulu got sold out. Theaters in Odisha showed me how people in Odisha were. They only kept the place clean if it looks fancy, otherwise they spilled food and drinks everywhere. Theaters in Kerala were clean, no matter where people came from, they left the theatres clean, or you could also say that the staff hired by

these theatres were very efficient and they kept the place tidy, and they also used that weird cleaning liquid that makes the place smell like new colored erasers.

I remember going to the theatre in gold souk more, because it was cheaper and much less crowded. And the first and the last movie that I went to watch with just my family was also in gold souk, the movie was called Udaharanam Sujatha, a Manju Warriar movie. It was not a co-incidence that the movie was about studies and 10th boards, and I was also about to write my 10th boards at the same time. I remember getting up during the intermission to go pee, and Appa also got up with me, and as we walked out of the theatre, I remember him saying it was such a waste of time, and I heartily agreed not because I disliked the theatre experience but because the last thing that I wanted to watch was a movie in which a kid was being forced to study for her 10th board exams, as if that wasn't real life for me. To top that off, more than half the people in the audience, looked like kids who came with their parents, and the looks on their faces were as priceless as mine.

Multiscreen theatres around the country have a similar ki to them. But the single screen ones, have something different. Especially when the place has only one single screen theatre, you can see the theatre being shared by all types of people in that area. You can also say that people from very different backgrounds come together to enjoy a movie. That is very special.

Thodupuzha is by far one of the most peaceful places in Kerala. It has Munnar-esque climate, and it doesn't have any tourist attractions. The place used to only have one good theatre which is called Aashirvad cineplex. After the lockdown, Aashirvad sadly opened, with a Mohan Lal Movie and some other average Malayalam movies.

Me and Kailas wanted to meet up in Thodupuzha, because Kochi was flooded. So, we decided to go for a movie. The movie was called “Oru Pazhaya Bomb Katha”. It was a serious movie about a physically disabled guy and a drunkard who had beef with a police officer. The only reason we went for that movie was because the tickets to the Lalettan movie was sold out and the only movie we could watch was this

one. So, we decided to enter the theatre with no expectations. We could see uncles smoking outside the theatre, talking about how bad movies these days are, and how they'd rather spend money on buying food and watching the movie at home while eating good food. I agreed with them.

It was amusing how the guy limped during the most serious scenes, and how both of us kept going back to the same joke where they portrayed glucose as a drug. It must have been pretty annoying for the people there to see two city boys laughing during every serious scene because we were never interested in the plot of the film, we just wanted to get a kick out of the whole experience.

The only other memorable theatre experience that I remember was when we went on a trip with appa's colleagues and their families throughout Kerala. From fancy hotels, beautiful beaches to laughing at their pronunciation of “kallu shaapu”. After 4 days of the trip, we were supposed to leave for Kanyakumari from the home stay. I was only 10 and all his colleagues loved me because I was the most entertaining out of all these old men and their boring kids. So, they insisted on bringing me to Kanyakumari with them. I was strictly against the idea as it would interrupt my nap and fish watching time. But the idea of Kanyakumari beach was bait enough to trap the 10-year-old into the 11-hour tourist van ride.

Upon reaching the beach, after finding out it was closed, angry version of the 10-year-old me was furious after the 11-hour long ride. So, I started beating up everyone with my eyes closed. Without mum, appa was a little lost on how to handle this understandable violent behavior. The old men decided to take me into the nearest single screen theatre, and there was some Tamil movie playing there. I was excited for the first 10 minutes like every small kid, but then I ran out of energy and then passed out in appa's arms. The tourist van ride sucked the life out of me. That's when they decided to exit the theatre, exactly 20 minutes after the movie started, to head back to the homestay after experiencing nothing. This is how small Adarsh learnt one of the most important lessons in his life, do not trust uncles, they're stupid.



Indrans, not Hindrance

NITIA CATHERINE

When I watch a film like ‘Malappuram Haji Mahanaya Joji’, what am I looking at? Is it Mukesh’s desperation as he searches for a job? Is it Siddique’s confidence that emanates in the way he speaks, in the way he walks, and how he’s dressed? Or is it Jagathy Sreekumar’s meesha that twitches as he takes sight of a teacher that he dislikes, his profession as the baandu mashu being disrespected? Or is it, the tiny man who receives the first slap, his small face turned to the side as his narrow shoulders convulse? There’s a red piece of cloth tied around his head and dashes of kunkumam and chandanam on his forehead. He’s innocent but his name is Indrans.

I asked Amal, an MA English student at St. Joseph’s University (SJU), why there was an extra ‘s’ in Indrans’ name. “Maybe it’s because he’s able to play multiple roles,” he said, smiling in his salmon pink shirt. He didn’t think that ‘Indran’ sounded as nice as ‘Indrans’ either.

K. Surendran came up with the name Indrans while naming his third tailor shop in honour of his younger brothers and director Sukumaran Nair, in honour of other people and not just himself. The previous two shops hadn’t worked out well but this one was a success, for it led him to design costumes for director Padmarajan’s films. In an interview with The New Indian Express, Indrans describes this moment when Padmarajan needed to film a scene for Mammooty soon but didn’t have time to source the costume from Bombay. He asked Indrans if he could do the job for him and Indrans tailored Mammooty’s shirt, gently sewing pearls onto its collar. It was a moment of pride for him.

A scene that Amal remembers vividly is one where Indrans runs a chaayakada and speaks with a lisp. Jagathy Sreekumar comes to visit, clad in an outrageous get up of sunglasses, a colourful shirt, dark

pants, and a suitcase. It was a disguise because he was the biggest fraud on the planet and was trying to hide from people he’d cheated. Indrans stands with his hands on his hips, his lean body leaning against the pole. There’s a minor dispute between Jagathy and Siddiq, who is a police officer, which results in Jagathy walking away at

Sometimes, Indrans would deliver the costumes while looking at the script of the film and ask earnestly, “Who’s this character for sir?” in the hopes that Padmarajan would notice that he wanted to act as well. One day, his dream came true.

breakneck speed. One of his cheat-ee’s discovers him and demands his money back. Jagathy takes off for his life and his suitcase falls open, revealing a bra and other commodities he has tried selling people.

“Which film is this?”

“Type Indrans comedy scenes on YouTube and it’ll come.” It was ‘Kavadiyattam.’

I first noticed Indrans for whom he is while watching the 2021 Malayalam film ‘Home’. It starts with him putting the tip of a ball pen into the top hole of a socket, before removing it,

and connecting his charger to his button phone. The name Antomon pops up on his screen, highlighted in dark blue. A ringing sound is heard but no one picks up. There is sunlight filtering inside, casting shadows on the Areca that stands against the wall, its leaves almost hand-painted dark grey. Indrans heads up to the terrace and waters the plants, his polo t-shirt in a shade of worn-out grey. He is balding and his glasses, rimless.

I’m struck by his humility, when he picks up a mop and moves it up and down against the floor where his father had just peed. He is complaining as he does it but apologises later. “It’s not because I’m mad at you, I’m just really tired.”

It is this same humility that Antony, another MA English student at SJU, speaks about when he hears the word Indrans. “Nammaku oru aale kanumbol, aavaru simpleum humble aanengil, oru connection thonum. It’s that same connection that I feel when I see Indrans.”

In the park, when he hears that Antomon has come home, Indrans jumps up from the bench in excitement and speed-walks home. He sees his son in the hallway and smiles a small smile of happiness. “Eppo vannu?” he asks in sign language. Antomon signs back “Hold up, I’m on the phone.” Indrans places his hands behind his back, shyly, like a schoolboy in front of the principal. It is strange that he must wait, that he feels the need to seek permission before speaking to his own son.

There’s this moment, where Indrans is lying down next to Manju Pillai and she asks him, “When did he stop giving us goodnight kisses?” while referring to his son Antony, a sad expression on her face. Her expression is mirrored by him as he says, “He must be really stressed out.” There is a sense of resignation in his answer, and a quiet sense of hurt. It’s hurt that arises out of love.

Another scene. Indrans goes outside with a flashlight after he is hurt by something that Antomon said.



Manju Pillai asks him what's wrong in a loud voice and his throat chokes up as he says softly, "Patti aa, there's a dog outside." She asks again because she couldn't hear him and he gestures that it's nothing, moving his hands in a way as if he were catching hold of something and letting it go. She goes back and he flashes on his torchlight outside, his eyes deep with hurt and a look of sadness, glasses resting on the V-neck of his shirt.

At night, he is unable to sleep and sits at the foot of the bed replaying Antomon's definition of what his memoir would be in his head. "Njan Oliver Twist. I used to run a shop that couldn't keep up with the times and had to close it. Now, I grow plants on my terrace and sit idle." He takes his flashlight to the



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: NITIA CATHERINE

living room and points at a cupboard of videocassettes and players. Once, his means of sustenance. Now, of no significance to his son.

In the 2000 film 'Darling Darling,' Janardanan, who is the father of the bride, is a bit stupefied when he sees Indrans yelling at the people setting up the shamiyanas and lights. He asks him, "Penninte thanda neeyo njano?" Indrans gasps in shock, bringing his hand near his mouth as he says, "Athentha mothalalikyette pettannu oru samshiyam? Saramilla, njan chechayode poyi choyikyam." The slap that comes mirrors the one he receives from Narendra Prasad in 'Malappuram Haji Mahanaya Joji.'

A year later, Indrans played the role of a police officer in 'Uthaman'. He was someone who drank so much that he would stand on his desk and start singing songs. Not in an irritating way but in one that was comical. In 'Korappan the Great', he was clad in his knickers with sunglasses over his eyes, jogging beside a girl, as he asked her "Entha, nammaloode good naming?"

instead of "What's your good name?"

In 'Home,' we see Indrans moving his body with child-like curiosity. The idea that you can look at a person and speak to them through a 6-inch screen, even though they are miles away, is something that makes his eyes go wide with wonder. His fascination begins when he glances at an advertisement for smartphones in the newspaper as he lays it on the table to let it dry; an object that has been thrown into muddy puddles multiple times despite him asking the newspaper boy to stop doing so.

It grows when he stands in front of the mobile shop, clad in a faded white shirt that makes his body seem bigger than it is, hands behind his back yet again as he shyly glances around.

He steps in, placing one hand gently on the door frame and another on his right leg, as he lifts it up and puts it on the floor. He surveys the shop with a look of delight, a smile on his face, and small hint of nostalgia. The shopkeeper asks him if he'd like to look around and he innocently says, "Aethu mobile aanu ipozhathe fashion njan onnu nokkate" before his son, Charles, reminds him to come to pick a new fish tank for their home.

At the dining table, Indrans sits next to Charles at the dining table and asks him, "Eda ennikyu Facebook onnu sheryiyaki theravo" while gesturing to a list he had made in his diary. It reads 'Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Troll, WhatsApp, Chat, like, share, subscribe, blog, vlog etc.' "Oru kollathekyu syllabus aayit erangikollum, Papa onnu poye ividinu," says Charles getting up. Indrans grabs onto his hand and says "Enna pinne current bill adikyana olla ithu onnu kanichutha." Charles sighs like a teacher who's tired of explaining and says despairingly, "Adhyam bill adikyanne app thorakuga," and Indrans

takes down notes as if it's the most important thing in the world.

There's something very genuine about his vulnerability when he says, "I am too old to learn how to use this device and there's no one to teach me either." His psychologist replies, "Who said there's no one to teach you?" and the Ammachi who cleans whips out a chalk board and teaches him about the different tick marks on WhatsApp. "A single tick means the message has not been sent, a double tick means that the message has been delivered, a blue tick means that the person has read your message." He jumps up in excitement and says, "You'll know if they've read your message too?!" I think it's the most adorable reaction on the planet. I think her teaching him is something that's rather, special.

Indrans sends "Hai mone" as a WhatsApp message to Antomon, who replies with "Hai Pappa" and a kissing emoji. "What's this unda doing here?" he asks the Ammachi sitting next to him, and she says, "Athu unda alla, athu umma aanu. It's used to express what we feel when we're texting." Indrans' face lights up like the sun and he imagines Antomon, no longer broody but smiling as he rushes to give him a kiss. Appa and I giggle as we watch this scene during breakfast and he says, "When you're anxious, just think about me." And I laugh as I ask him, "Entha, njan odi vannu ingane 'Hai Appa' paranju umma thannittu pokanno." And he nods smiling and I laugh again.

Indrans uses his newly formed skills to Google Pay the meenkarana 80 rupees when he doesn't have change for 100. Manju Pillai stares at him in shock, as if the fish she had just bought had slapped her in the face.

It is strange that even after all this, Antomon doesn't seem to respect him as much as other people do. As much as the shopkeeper at the mobile shop does for telling him how to stop the leak. As much as Vishal, an actor that Antomon himself greatly respects, does for telling him a story in the way it's supposed to be told.

It is only at the end, when Antomon learns the truth, about the extraordinary event that took place in his Papa's life, that he changes his mind. And I think that most of us, or at least me myself, could draw the same conclusion about Indrans' own life. A man who has acted in more than four hundred and thirty films and yet, is

constantly overlooked. It becomes especially important that a person who started off in a theatre troop, as a costume designer for films, and soon comedic sidekick roles in them, now has the opportunity to be the main character. That he is recognised and respected enough to do so.

On top of being a humble and graceful actor, Indrans is an avid reader. He started off with cartoons that would come in the newspaper before graduating to 'Bobanum Moliyum.' Something that he genuinely enjoyed. The first book that he'd bought with his own money was 'Khasakkinte Itihasam' by O.V. Vijayan, one that has been trans-

lated into French as 'Les Légendes de Khasak' and in English as 'The Legends of Khasak.' Sometimes, when scriptwriters came to him with scripts that didn't really have a plot, didn't really have a story; he'd ask them to sit down with a good book and make them portray the feelings they receive from it in their own stories.

Indrans describes the feeling of reading as, "When you finish one book, you long to start another with a kind of restlessness that fills your body. People used to say that the act of buying and reading physical copies of books would go out of date with the modern world, but I don't think that's true."

Perhaps it was his own love for reading that led him to write a memoir of his own called 'Sujiyoom Noolum.' Needle and the thread, the place where it all started.

Continuing the thread, I can't help but recall a moment in 'Home'; when Indrans goes to the mobile shop again, this time with his friend Suryan, who is afraid of dying by having a fishbone stuck in this throat or by choking on puttu. Indrans' innocence increases as he asks the shopkeeper if he'll get Facebook and WhatsApp in instalments on the phone he was about to purchase. And Suryan says, "Instalment allada Instagram."

Can Kantara? Cant-ara

TENZIN YEGA

'Kantara' is a 2023 south Indian film directed by Rishab Shetty. Rishab Shetty was born on July 7, 1983 in Karnataka. The story of a local deity is depicted in the movie, and one particular youngster named Shiva is given special attention by the people. Shiva resides in the little settlement of Kaadubettu Village.

The film is about the struggle to maintain tradition in the face of modernisation and outside influences. The village in which the film takes place is steeped in tradition, with its inhabitants living off the land and maintaining a close connection to their cultural heritage. However, the threat of the smugglers and the arrival of a new bridge

When the smugglers threaten the village, the residents come together to protect their homes and way of life. This sense of community is contrasted with the selfish motives of the smugglers, who seek to exploit the village for their own gain.

The tension between tradition and modernity is another topic covered in the movie. Shiva, on the other hand, lacks entire faith in his deity due to the pain of his father's abduction, in contrast to the villagers who have complete faith in their god. Shiva's father vanished when he was still in his mother's womb while doing bhoota kola. While always disobedient, Shiva has always been attached to his mother. Shiva eventually develops feelings for Leela, and by using his connections with the landlord (who later hired the smugglers), he was able to secure her a job as a forest guard at the police station. The police and forest guards, including Leela, ruthlessly suppressed the villagers' attempts to stop the fencing, causing a gap between Leela and Shiva despite the fact that she was only following orders and was powerless to stop the situation. This puts their relationship in grave danger.

The film's cinematography is also notable, with the beautiful parts of the village and the festival. The camera

work is often intimate, capturing the emotions of the characters in close-up shots that convey the sense of tension and uncertainty that pervades the village.

Why does one like a film? Despite all the small details fabulously shown, the fantastic acting and the background story, I personally did not enjoy that movie as much as I should. One reason why I did not like 'Kantara' is that the film is lowkey too slow-paced. The film is more of a slow-burn drama than an action-packed thriller, and I somewhere found it tedious or lacking in excitement.

The fact that the movie extensively addresses concepts about tradition, modernism, and community of something I am utterly ignorant about is another reason I would not watch it again (unless it were a necessary curriculum). Watching something unfamiliar or new can be entertaining, but in the case of this movie, I didn't connect with its concepts or message.

Like other Indian films from Bollywood, Tollywood, or any other genre, this one also addresses political concerns like corruption and exploitation. I was able to guess the finale more easily because the same subject was repeated. such as how the landlord was acting like a good person and how he

The film shows the importance of community and solidarity in the face of adversity.

that will connect the village to the outside world put this way of life and their belief in jeopardy.



would undoubtedly die.

There are several things I didn't enjoy about the movie, despite the fact that its ideas and messages are significant and meaningful. If you paid attention to the ladies in that movie, you would have observed that the mother was the only one who had few dialogue lines and a suitable role. The tone of the film was strongly male. The parts where the husband flung the meal his wife had bought for him made me quite angry. He wants his wife to fully back him, but when she made one decision on her own, he became up

The final reason for why I did



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: SAI LAKSHMI

not enjoy 'Kantara' was its ending. At the beginning of the movie, the father vanished into the air while the Shiva's mother was pregnant with Shiva. The

same thing also took place at the end. Shiva also disappeared into thin air while performing the sacred ritual. and how Leela, his wife, was carrying a baby in her womb at the time. Even though the others were fortunate to see this miracle, I was incredibly sad for his mother and his wife.

I wouldn't know what to feel if I were the mother. Whether to feel joyful and fortunate that my kid and my husband are the selected ones or sad and lonely since the man I loved left and the child I gave birth to and passionately loved likewise followed his father's path.

A Journey of Faith, Survival, and Self-Discovery

TENZIN CHOZEN

'Life of Pi' is a visually stunning and emotionally compelling film that tells the story of a young Indian boy named Pi Patel and his journey of faith, survival, and self-discovery. Directed by Ang Lee and based on the best-selling novel of the same name by Yann Martel, the film explores the themes of spirituality, human nature, and the power of storytelling through a mesmerizing visual narrative that captures the imagination of audiences around the world.

The film opens with an introduction to the adult Pi Patel, played by Irrfan Khan, who tells his life story to a writer seeking inspiration for his next book. The story begins in Pondicherry, India, where Pi grows up in a family that owns a zoo. His curiosity and fascination with animals lead him to explore the world of faith and spirituality, seeking to understand the mysteries of the universe and the meaning of life. He becomes interested in three religions - Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam - and decides to follow all three, much to the dismay of his pragmatic father.

However, his life takes a dramatic turn when his family decides to move to Canada, and they embark on a journey across the Pacific Ocean with

their animals on a Japanese freighter. During the journey a catastrophic storm sinks the ship, leaving Pi as the sole human survivor stranded on a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. The rest of the film shows how Pi struggles to survive and his extraordinary relationship with Richard Parker, as they drift across the vast expanse of the ocean, facing hunger, thirst, and the threat of predatory sharks.

The film explores the theme of the co-existence of the opposites - faith and reason, man and animal, life and death.

The film is an example of visual storytelling, as Lee and his team of artists, animators, and cinematographers

create a breath-taking world of sea and sky that evokes the wonder and terror of the natural world. The scenes of the storm and the sinking ship are particularly powerful, as the chaos and destruction are vividly rendered with a combination of practical and digital effects that make the audience feel as if they are in the middle of a storm. The lifeboat sequences are also masterfully staged, with the immersive experience and creating a sense of depth and perspective that enhances the tension and drama of the narrative.

The film is not just a visual spectacle but also a journey on the nature of faith and the human spirit. Pi's religious beliefs become a source of strength and comfort for him, as he prays and performs rituals to appease the gods and find inner peace. His relationship with Richard Parker also evolves from fear and hostility to mutual dependence and trust, as they share the same struggle for survival and the same primal instincts that drive them to stay alive. It emphasises the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity and find meaning in a chaotic world.

The film also raises profound questions about the nature of reality

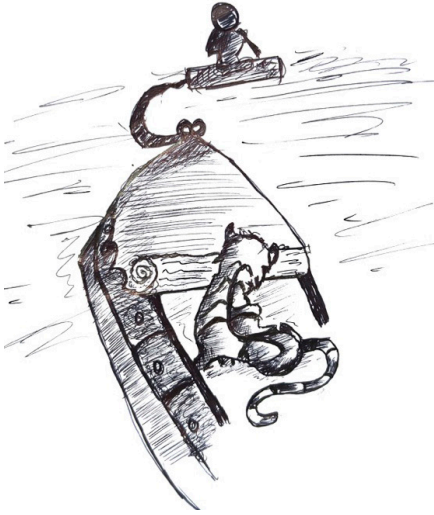


ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: PRAJWAL ROUNAK MAHTO

and the power of storytelling. Pi's story is framed as a narrative within a narrative, as the adult Pi tells his story to the writer and presents two alternative versions of his survival - one involving a human cook and the other a brutal fight with Richard Parker. The film leaves it up to the audience to decide

which version is true or whether both are mere fictions created by Pi to cope with the trauma of his experience. This ambiguity in a way shows the film's larger theme of the role of storytelling in shaping our perception of reality and the power of imagination.

The performance by Suraj Sharma in the film, who plays the teenage Pi, is nothing short of remarkable. I think he carries the film on his shoulders, portraying a range of emotions from fear and despair to hope and bliss. His interactions with Richard Parker are particularly impressive, as he conveys the fear, respect, and affection that develop between them through subtle gestures and expressions. Sharma's performance is all the more impressive given that he had no prior acting experience and had to act against a digital creation in the form of Richard Parker.

In addition to Sharma, the film features strong supporting performances by Irrfan Khan, who brings gravity and depth to the role of the adult Pi, and Rafe Spall, who plays the

writer and provides a counterpoint to Pi's story with his scepticisms. The film's musical score by Mychael Danna is also noteworthy, as it combines Indian classical music with orchestral arrangements and creates a haunting and immersive style that enhances the film's emotional impact.

In conclusion, 'Life of Pi' is a cinematic masterpiece that combines stunning visuals, powerful performances, and thought-provoking themes to create a film that transcends genres and borders. It is a film that speaks to the human experience of faith, survival, and self-discovery and force us to understand the mysteries of the universe and the power of storytelling. Ang Lee's direction, Suraj Sharma's performance, and Yann Martel's source material all come together to create a film that is both epic and intimate, both inspiring and contemplative. It is a film that reminds us of the beauty and fragility of life and the resilience and courage of the human spirit.

Tavarekere's Own Lucky Lakshmi

KEVIN CHRISS

Lakshmi Theatre Tavarekere is a cinema hall located in the bustling Tavarekere neighbour of Bangalore, India. This theatre is well-known for its comfortable seating, state-of-the-art technology, and fantastic movie-watching experience.

The theatre's interior is well-designed and provides a relaxing environment for movie-goers. The seating is comfortable and spacious, providing plenty of legroom for a comfortable viewing experience. The sound system is top-notch and ensures that the audience can enjoy the movie's soundtrack to the fullest.

The ticket prices are reasonable, making it accessible for people from all walks of life to enjoy a night out at the movies. This makes it a great option for families and groups of friends who want to spend quality time together

without breaking the bank.

Moreover, Lakshmi Theatre Tavarekere screens some of the latest and most popular movies from India and around the world. The theatre management takes pride in providing its patrons with the latest and best films, ensuring that the audience gets to enjoy the latest cinematic offerings.

This makes it a great destination for movie lovers who want to keep up with the latest releases.

In addition to the high-quality movie-watching experience, the theatre is also located in a convenient location. It is easily accessible by public transportation and has ample parking space for those who prefer to drive. This makes it an ideal location for friends and families looking for a fun night out.

My experience going there is

always great we have all sorts of fun and get to watch films in my mother tongue we get a lot of popcorn cause its very cheap there and even the drinks we get the back in home vibe we thrill for. I have watched a lot of Malayalam films in which the whole crowd was malu we scream make noise and support our favourite characters in the film.

Watching films with my dad has been a way for us to bond and spend quality time together. With our busy schedules, it can be hard to find time to connect, but watching a movie together provides us with an opportunity to sit down and share an experience. We get to discuss the movie, our thoughts and feelings about it, and just spend time with each other. Furthermore, Lakshmi Theatre Tavarekere is a great place to unwind and relax after a busy day.



The theatre's ambiance and comfortable seating make it an excellent place to escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. It provides an opportunity to disconnect and immerse oneself in the story and characters of the movie. Additionally, watching films with my dad has helped me to develop my own taste in movies.

As a child, my dad would introduce me to films that he loved, and we would watch them together. As I got older, I began to develop my own interests in movies, but I still value my dad's opinion and recommendations. He has introduced me to films that I would never have watched on my own, and I've discovered some real gems because of it. Furthermore, watching films with my dad has been a way for me to learn about different cultures and perspectives. My dad has a wide range of interests and has introduced me to films from all over the world.

We've watched Tamil films, Japanese anime, and American classics, even the languages we don't even understand we watched them. Watching these films with my dad has broadened my horizons and helped me to become a more empathetic and open-minded person.

Through these movies, I've learned about different ways of life, different worldviews.

Once I went with my dad to watch the film *Drishyam 2* in Lakshmi theatre the whole experience was mind blowing we had watched the 1st film *Drishyam* at home we didn't have time to watch it in the theatre so we watched it at home we made dinner and we had food while watching the experience in a theatre is quite different. There was a long line to take tickets for the film most of them were malus and we waited quite a bit to get in. After getting in it was fun we watched the movie and went back home arguing what were the best scenes and such.

Finally, watching films with my dad has been a source of comfort and stability in my life. No matter what's going on in the world, we can always sit down and watch a movie together. It's a constant in my life that I can rely on. I know that no matter what's going on, my dad and I will always have our movie nights.

One time with my family we went to watch a movie where I think it was the 1st show and the movie just released we were excited to go watch it even bought the tickets online. When we reached Lakshmi theatre I never imagined the place to be so crowded that we couldn't get out go our car or even park it. We went a little far to park the car we had a lot of time to catch the movie so thought of waiting around the car so the crowd dies down and we can go in take the tickets from the online ticket counter. We waited we can still see the crowd not diving down and my mom panicked saying what if we can't go in and miss the first half of the film. We planed to move ahead my dad told me to go take the tickets and come I had a hard time going around the crowd there was a lot of pushing and I was small. It was a long line of the tickets I waited to get ours when I got to front of the line and asked for the tickets showing my phone the guy in the counter said this is to buy tickets the online tickets are 4 rows from here.

Hearing this made my heart sink I had waited here for nothing and I had to wait in a lie again. I thought my dad would kill me if I told him this. So I rushed back to the other line which was much shorter than the one I was in before I should have known but I was a kid. When I waited for 20 minutes someone came catching my shoulder it was my dad asking u haven't still gotten the tickets and the film just started 5 mins ago I came searching for you. I made up a lie so fast it didn't even make sense. I told him that a fight broke out here and they didn't give out tickets until people subsided. So I waited and watched the fight. My dad stared at me and said you didn't get hurt right. I was surprised he believed me without even asking a follow up question. My dad then got the tickets and we went in. We were lucky and unlucky the lucky part was the film didn't quite start it was those cringe advertisements which are

so loud for no reason why can't they reduce the sound when they show them. Unlucky part was it was raining when we came and we got a little bit wet on the way cause we parked away from the theatre so the theatre was so cold we couldn't watch the film even if we wanted to we went out every 15 to 20



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: ANOUKSHA SARKAR

minutes just to get some heat. I don't know what my dad is made with he was not cold but he rather enjoyed it. I get that he is always working in an air conditioning room and he never gets out from his car so he never sweats. My mom and I was freezing so we went out. He was bragging how much fun he had watching the film and it was quite good. He told us about how people enjoyed how people he sat with gave the same vibe as he did. People were expressing their emotions of how they felt about the film there was people clapping and getting up from their seats in that extend they enjoyed the movie. Everyone has their own opinions about each film and you can see how much people get involved with film.

In conclusion, Lakshmi Theatre Tavarekere is a great place to watch movies in Bangalore. It provides a fantastic movie-watching experience with its comfortable seating, state-of-the-art technology, and a great selection of movies. Its convenient location and relaxing ambiance make it a perfect destination for a night out with friends and family.

The Ghost in Your Camera

ADITHI A

During the fine summer of 2018, Varsha suggested that we watch a horror movie together and that was the first time I came across the Kannada film 6-5=2, the first Kannada found footage film. This film was later remade in Hindi, and unlike the Kannada version, but I found the Hindi version less frightening. This probably is because I cannot understand Kannada and not being able to understand the language, provided some level of anonymity in the film premises. To maintain secrecy and terror of found footage elements of the film, the actors stayed anonymous and their real names were unrevealed by the crew until the actors were found lurking around and had to reveal themselves to the public.

The website Filmibeat reposted audience comments from Facebook Page 'I Love Bangalore', and the comments give us mixed opinions on the reality of the film. While few believe the events in the film to be real and some express that ghosts do not exist and neither does god. From the comments, I can conclude that this film was under fire, for promoting the false statement that the film was filmed by the Late Ramesh (protagonist of 6-5=2).

Found footage films are the most popular subgenre of horror films – they incorporate sequential clips of events that were presumably taken at one point and have been discovered later by a third person. From Ruggero Deodato's Cannibal Holocaust to the Gongjiam Haunted Asylum and Unfriended, found footage films have evolved with technological improvement over the years using the internet and Zoom calls for horror.

It is not uncommon to observe that found footage films enjoy their extreme popularity due to their less budget and ability to produce a credible and believable atmosphere for a horror film and would not be invalidated as fake or farfetched. After watching 6-5=2, I remember obsessively googling about the forest in the film because I believed that the events

in the film were real. Similarly, all found footage film creates an illusion of reality, like the 2020 film Host which explores a Zoom video call gone wrong with an uninvited guest who simultaneously haunts the protagonists, or the Paranormal Activity franchise where the comforts of your home have been haunted over by evil entities, and the Blair Witch Project.

The Blair Witch Project, 1999 created a huge sensation and controversy among the audience, with flooding obituary messages for the family of three missing students who were on a journey to Maryland. The film raised the question of what is real and unreal through its marketing campaign, where missing person posters and faux interviews with police were released for publicity. Since then, the Blair Witch Project has become the universal standard blueprint for film in the found footage subgenres of horror such as films like Host of 2020 and 6-5=2 (2013).

Despite found footage being a popular horror subgenre, not many films have succeeded at recapturing terror and fear like The Blair Witch Project. Even in the 2016 film, the Blair Witch was unable to recapture the elements of horror like its predecessor The Blair Witch Project. Aja Romano of Vox calls Blair Witch 2016, the most disappointing film of that year, because of the ignorant characterization of the protagonist and "Cheap and unearned" techniques used in the film that tries itself to replicate its predecessor.

After my encounter with 6-5=2, my next encounter with found footage films was The Host on Amazon Prime. This film chilled my spine because of the idea of a ghost haunting a casual Zoom meeting, and it was the pandemic and I was having classes and meeting over Zoom and MS teams. The Host was terrifying because this film makes the audience that they are also a part of this haunting Zoom call. This was also aided by the fact that as this film was released in 2020 and most of us would be watching this film from

our laptops or phone, the same device we use for our classes and meetings over Zoom or Google Meet.

Upon reading the comments on Reddit about The Host, I came across The Blair Witch Project. The comments appraised this film while The Host as The Blair Witch Project rip-off. I was intrigued but the film The Blair Witch Project, but against watching it because I was worried that it would be gory and bloody. After watching the film, 3 years later, it is safe to say that there was any blood or gore as I worried, only unrevealed terror that existed behind the camera of the film.

In The Blair Witch Project, Heather, Josh, and Mike are students hiking in the wilderness of North Burkittsville in search of the remains or indications of the Blair Witch. They travel to Burkittsville, Maryland to make a documentary about the horror legend Blair Witch of Maryland. They interview the locals learning about the stories and the tales of encounters with the Blair Witch. We hear tales of Ruskin Parr who kidnapped seven children who were later murdered by him, and about a girl who saw an "old woman whose feet never touched the ground." The film progressed as the three students hike to the woods in north Burkittsville to collect audio-visual evidence of the Blair Witch.

During the 81 minutes of running time, the three protagonists slowly descend into madness in the vast

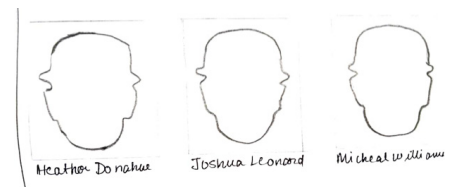


ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: VISHNUPRIYA

wilderness, feeling helpless and lost. With the feeling of increasing isolation



and abandonment in the deep forest, away from civilization, one by one their emotions are clouded by the need to find a way out of the forest maze. They become unreliable to trust as each of their memory and sense of direction depletes each day.

The Blair Witch Project became the blueprint for all found footage films today as it succeeded at mimicking a claustrophobic feeling that forces us to identify with the fear of the three characters. The film effectively taps into our fear and phobias of being trapped in the forest and the fear of something unknown that could potentially kill us. I found praying for the three of them and the film further imprisoned within the confines of the forest with no exits alongside the documentary crew.

Redditor KoaKekoa says otherwise unlike the comments under this thread that disagrees with him. He calls it boring and the characters were annoying, specifically Heather. I have to agree with Heather being annoying, but I would also argue that aren't we all annoying, especially when pushed to our limits and stuck in a forest with no help?

The film maintains an ambiguity throughout the film that served to maintain the suspense and secrecy of the Burkittsville legend. It creates an unsettling atmosphere where one would find themselves waiting there, expecting the moment when the three hikers are going to be lost in woods forest and possibly haunted by the Blair Witch.

The Blair Witch Project offers us a genuine view of things through their amateur vlog with shaky camer-

awork and breathy dialogues. Or ass Redditor The8flux says "Bunch of kids running around the woods of Maryland with a crappy camera." Their cameras give us the shaky visual and breathy audio (inducing motion sickness) of what the three protagonists see and hear. We often wonder left to wonder

The camera is our eyes; we perceive what the camera offers us; we hear what it wants us to hear and nothing more.

what is happening beyond the edge of the frame, and we are not offered a look at it. During one of the nights, while camping in the woods, Heather, Josh, and Mike run outside their campsite after hearing sounds and seeing something, but we are not offered a look at what they see, we see complete darkness that echoes their cries who are running away from something.

In the film, we hear cackling and noises of cracking sticks presumably by the supposed Blair Witch, cairns rocks, and voodoo stick man figures

hung on trees. But, nothing in the film proves the existence of a Blair Witch other than the tales recited by locals. The viewers are reliant on the protagonists for clarity and become forced to believe the details of everything the characters say and whatever the camera captures, be it the darkness or trees.

The Blair Witch Project does not rely on jump scares or any movement but solely builds on the plot to the climax and the feeling of being hopelessly lost. The three students, entrust themselves to the tales of the Blair Witch recited by locals and convince themselves of the existence of the Blair Witch based on their experience inside the woods. They fight over a map kicked to the creek and makeup to escape the deep forest and the Blair Witch. The audience is forced to trust the words of the protagonists that they are being engraved in us becomes more frightening than the actual fear of a witch or horror legend haunting you. stalked by an unknown entity. This fear of the uncertain entity that lived in tales becomes engraved in us becomes more frightening than the actual fear of a witch or horror legend haunting you was deranged after watching this film. There was no way I could sleep without knowing I what happened to Heather, Josh, and Mike. I wanted closure, something this movie keeps away from us. I needed answers, but all I got were possible theories by Youtubers, redditors, and Quora about the ending. All because, the filmmakers took the painstaking choice of leaving an ending, which is open to the imagination of the audience to figure out what this creature or entity looks like or is capable of.

Bakwaas Bokaro aur Rangeela Ranchi

ANJALI LIZA TETE

A huge, shadowy space with rows of crimson or black seats positioned in front of a big screen. I always get this mental picture of a film theatre in front of me whenever I think about one. Regardless of whether the theatre is in Ranchi or Bangalore.

I believe that going to see films in theatres is a luxury. Since there was only one theatre in Bokaro, where I lived before moving to Ranchi, I did not go to watch films. That was not only the reason I did not go; it was also because of the people.

Jitendra Cinema Hall was one of the first film theatres in Bokaro. And during that time when I was there, it felt like a village. Because the place was extremely small, it was as big as Koramangala.

I was pretty young when I was



in Bokaro. I don't have many memories of watching films in theatres. But I do have some good memories of watching films with my chote mamu for the first time. I only remember that about him before he left us. One of Hrithik Roshan's hits, "Krrish," was released in 2006.

Before this, I had no connection to the film because mummy would watch Hindi serials or reality TV shows



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: MURALI KARTHICK

most of the time. And when I got home from school, I usually spent my time playing outside or going to tuitions. And mummy set out a particular time for me to watch television, during which I only watched cartoons. I can still see "Power Rangers and Oswald" clearly in my mind. Papa only came over on the weekends or during special holidays, so he never had the chance to take me to the theatre.

I was always afraid of the setting of the theatre in Bokaro. It is a large structure that is beige and brown in colour. Also, it was somewhat far from the main shopping area. The majority of the time, I only observed men coming to see films or certain couples where the girl always hid her face under a scarf, typically one in a bold colour. And when I visited there for the first time, the crowd was the same as explained by papa. There were mostly male college students. It was a dirty theatre. Both the ground and the seats were mostly covered in food. The crowd cheered and screamed as Hrithik Roshan jumped from one building to another. And they also made comments about Priyanka Chopra.

"Kya lag rahi hai!"

"Kamar toh dekho."

Because the theatres weren't made for families, according to Papa, the large audiences in every Bokaro theatre were to be despised. Many people from the villages in Jharkhand, Bihar, and the adjacent states moved to Bokaro in quest of industrial jobs, which caused the crowd to become rowdy and boisterous. Papa adds that

a lot of families at the time had televisions, so they didn't choose to see films in theatres. Only the workers, particularly the men who came to Bokaro to work, went to the theatre to see films.

"Agar bas hum tumlog ko le kar jate papa ke bina toh, ladke chidhaane lag jate."

This is another justification for mummy not taking us to the films. She didn't feel secure, and the chance that bhaiya and I would get lost in the crowd was high. Due to the wallet snatchers, not even Bhaiya went to see films.

"Main reason humlog nahin jate the kyuki koi family wale aate hi nahin the."

But when I moved to Ranchi, everything changed. In comparison to Bokaro, Ranchi is a large city. There, our house was being constructed. When I used to travel to Ranchi on those days, I always felt fascinated.

Large buildings could be seen everywhere. Every time I used the overbridge, the clouds drew closer to me.

I started to fall in love with Ranchi since it didn't feel anything like Bokaro.

In Ranchi, there were numerous theatres and a very modern population. I initially noticed a theatre in a shopping centre, which amused me. There were a few separate buildings like the ones I remember seeing in Bokaro, and most of the time college students went to see films there because the prices of the tickets were lower there than at the malls. However, I never went to those theatres because Bhaiya warned me that they were unsafe for girls and that I wouldn't feel safe there. One thing, though, was constant: I continued to see girls inside the theatre with scarves covering their faces.

I began going to the films with my parents frequently after moving to Ranchi. It was the first time I had ever been in a theatre with air conditioning. The audience applauded and clapped for the actor when the situation was suitable. The seats were tidy and cosy. I noticed that not only men but also

ladies came to see films. Mummy has since joined me while I watch films.

"Salman khan ka naya film release hue hai, chalo chalte hai."

Mummy adored Salman Khan and would go see his films every time they were out. I also saw that the film timing was at night as well, and the majority of the family preferred to watch films at night. At night, the theatre was nearly entirely full. At that time, papa was transferred to Uttar Pradesh. However, he used to visit Ranchi almost every weekend. We used to go see films together. However, I also wanted to go along with bhaiya. He is never interested in going out with us, and we still don't know the reason. But in 2019, we all went to see "The Least of These" before the lockdown.

Eventually, we also began watching films at home. There were no longer any serials or cartoons. Nothing else, just news and films, were what we watched. Everything changed when lockdowns occurred. We used to watch films all day instead of watching the news about COVID.

Papa retired from his position as senior bank manager. He was at home all day with nothing to do. He spent his time watching stuff on his phone or sleeping. Mummy was overjoyed since Papa was able to retire before COVID began to rise.

"Acha hua papa retire ho gaye."

However, he started binge watching films in the latter stages of the lockdown. Initially, it was Bollywood films, but after the suicide of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, papa stopped watching Bollywood films. His first South Indian movie was 'Jeene nahi Doonga', and after that, he never stopped. His enthusiasm for South Indian films began to grow. He used Sony Max or Star Gold to watch films. I began to notice that South Indian films were shown more frequently than Bollywood ones.

We eventually began to watch South Indian films as well. Every day, new movies would be broadcast on Sony Max. We used to all gather in front of the television at precisely nine o'clock. However, they showed the repeated films gradually. Papa then took all of the movie subscriptions for OTT platforms. In the present, we only watch South Indian films at home.



Dosaputtidi for Thursday?

ZOË LIZ PHILIP

Two young men are woken up on a boat, one robust and moustached and fair, the other slightly duskier and smaller in stature. The man who points them to the shore is none other than Gafoorka, played by who is responsible for their boat ride to the middle of the ocean and tells them that they must complete the journey by themselves. There at the shore, lies the future they have been anticipating will change their luck. They thank him profusely and call him God before plunging into the water shirtless but for their banians, shorts and in hand, between the two of them, a single suitcase.

Washed up on the shore of what they believe is the Gulf country, there is no time to be lost. They decide immediately to change into the clothes of the "ArabiNaadu" which they have been in waiting just to be a part of. Thus begins the adventure of Dasan (Mohanlal) and Vijayan (Sreenivasan), tricked into being sent off to Chennai after paying a hefty sum to a dubious agent who promises to give them the life they want. Within seconds, dressed in impeccable white, they get mixed up in some bad apples when it assumed by two henchmen that they are the men waiting on the other end of a mafia business deal.

This scene, cast in stone by the iconic still of Dasetta peering over Vijayan's shoulder, both in their thawbs was the set-up to what would soon become in cult status and sentimental value, one of Malayalam cinema's greatest comedies of all time.

Nadodi Kattu was released in 1987, landing somewhere in the middle but also at the end for the 80s in Kerala. It was the year when the eighth Kerala state assembly election brought back to power the Left Democratic Front that had been playing this back and forth duet with the UDF for a while. As politically charged as the climate was, there were still other problems.

The idea of Nadodi Kattu (trans. Gypsy wind) was to draw upon the stark unemployment of the 1980s

that had washed the backdrop of Kerala with longing for "greener pastures" and an exodus to find employment abroad. The rate of economic growth during the decade had been met at the time by a demographic transition it was unable to augment. Price levels and foreign trade were at an all time low "It was a time when the Malayali could still laugh at himself and be no less serious about change in the bargain". This is what drew Malayalis extremely close to the characters of Dasan, a "B.Comm First Class" graduate, his more grounded, less educated and generally annoyed companion.

Dasan's attachment to his qualification is not different from that of most of the Malayalis at the time, who, in looking for purpose and identity in the midst of the 80s fell back on their qualifications from college as a way of trying to survive in the competition that was being saturated even abroad and hoping that it would set them apart.

The trend of rewatching Nadodi Kattu grew even after its 152-day run in theatres to DVD sales that spiked up during the 90s. The movie then leapt onto reruns on Kairali TV for the better half of the early 2000s. The dawn of Youtube saw many versions of Nadodi Kattu uploaded and removed across time, until Saina Movies monopolized the release of all old Malayalam cinema in 1080p onto its channel.

"Some of these have subtitles and some don't", my father said to me a few years ago, on checking each video result on the TV with great care to ensure he didn't miss it. Up until then, I had glimpses of the film from my father's own watching and no real understanding of the movie itself. This shocked him. With no other option that night, and his spirit undeterred, we decided that we would watch the film anyway. That night I watched my father transform into a human subtitling machine, he hit pause after every scene for him to translate every sentence and the even a little cultural context to some of the jokes that went over my head. We

moved through the film slowly at first, picking up the speed as we went along. By the time Dasetta looked at Mohanlal with absolute shock and betrayal and asked, "Et tu Brutus?", I was already in splits. We started at 11 pm and by the time, Dasetta whisked Radha away in his jeep, and we found that both Das and Vijayan had their luck change for them through sheer madness (and more luck), it clock had struck long past 3 am.

At home, Nadodi Kattu was the perennial cure to my father's black moods. If there had been a fight at home, or something unsavourable that happened at work, the



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: OLIVE ELIAS

silence of the argument would always be cut by the sound of the TV upstairs and the rolling of my mother's eyes.

The conversations that surrounded Nadodi Kattu at home very often found its way to surround friends from during the Pune days, and most particularly, Robbie. Robbie, who brought pepsi and a loaf of milk bread from a supermarket when asked to bring the elements for Holy Communion during their days in the church youth group and had a religious siesta through most church services, was the friend to introduce him to The Shining, The Silence of the Lambs and The Exorcist. Robbie was the one with the VHS tapes from the video rental and the VHS player too. All youth meetings inevitably ended up at his place. Even though the horror category was still a hot topic of debate in the church, these films qualified in a sub category of films

that were 'clean-horror' and assuaged them of any guilt. Although like many of the Gen X youth, very much inside of the Hollywood scene, none of them forgot the roots of their love for cinema which emerged out of the films in their mother tongue. In the few years that my father knew Robbie through college, Robbie had gone through Nadodi Kattu at least a hundred times. There would be chill evenings once they had exhausted his collection of horror films, when Robbie would ritualistically take out Nadodi kattu on the VHS.

The decades of rewatching are responsible not only for its cult status (that it eventually reached not too long after its release) but for dialogues that most millennial/Gen X malayalees can recite word for word. Lines like, "Hello Mr. Perera", were those delightful like moments that would be repeated around a table of malayalees sitting around for a meal and result in tears of raucous laughter.

This was the way in which those that loved the film showed their affection for the on-screen friendship of Dasetta and Vijayan, which in itself was born out of the actors Mohanlal and Sreenivasan.

When you read the comments section of channels like Saina Movies that uploaded a 1080p version (without subtitles) on youtube, there are com-

ments about the love for the film that range from its rewatchability to markers for scenes that malayalees keep coming back to over and over again. But one comment, at the top of the charts, that has a fresh number of like every-time I go back to it says, "jeevithathile kashtappadinte munbil pakachu nil-kumbol..." ennengilum allam shariyaavum " ennu pratheeksha tharunna oru sinima.. ethra kandaalum mathi varilla." "A film that gives hope that "everything will be alright someday" when you are faced in front of the hardships in life. No matter how many times one watches, it'll never be enough. There's a reason a sentimental comment about a film like this, receives so much appeal. It encapsulates truly, how the Malayalee felt about Nadodi Kattu. It gave a certain comic relief to life itself and a certain kindness and respect to the struggle for survival that would ultimately lead to some economic and financial stability in the future, without being too fantastic about it.

To me, NadodiKattu is a window into the generation that it was released in. It was an unlikely bond, a 1987 satire finding a room in the hearts of every kind of Malayalee and not pertaining to any single crowd. And what to do with all this love, except to go back to it and cherish it, over and over again?

NadodiKattu is also perhaps

the only way in which my father and I found a place to seal a cultural gap that was the result of my mother tongue, that was tied at the time and our inability therefore to enjoy any of the same films together. I didn't think I would relate to a character like Dasan, but I did. The idea that a better future always requires some kind of relocation, moving to another place and starting afresh, I wasn't unfamiliar to it. I don't think any of my Malayalee friends are. I don't know if it is a generational thing-something that is passed down to us inherently and without our knowledge. NadodiKattu gave a certain voice to that fantasy without taking itself so seriously. Perhaps, there is a combination of all of these things that made Nadodi kattu what it is today; a Siddique Lal's vision and wit to tell the story of the Malayalee of the 80s struggling to find his identity, the love that the producer and script-writers had for the film even while they were shooting it or the masterclass in comedic timing that was the acting duo of Mohanlal and Sreenivasan. What it gave Malayalees was something in which to find their own acceptance and something to which they would always say,

***"ethra kandaalum
mathi varilla".***

Lights, Camera, Impromptu

PRAJWAL RAUNAK

Hindi cinema, also known as Bollywood, is famous for its captivating storylines, colorful costumes, soulful music, and, of course, its iconic scenes. While many scenes in Hindi films are carefully scripted and planned, there have been instances where unplanned scenes have turned into iconic moments that are etched in the memories of audiences for years to come. These unexpected moments, often resulting from improvisation or unforeseen circumstances during the film's production, have added a unique charm and authenticity to the films. In this essay, we will explore some notable examples of unplanned scenes that have become iconic in Hindi films.



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: ANOUKSHA SARKAR

One such iconic unplanned scene is from the film "Sholay" (1975), one of the most successful and revered films in Indian cinema. In the film, during a confrontation between the characters played by Amitabh Bachchan (Jai) and Dharmendra (Veeru), Dharmendra accidentally breaks a glass in anger. Instead of retaking the shot, the director Ramesh Sippy decided to keep the scene as it was, considering it added to the intensity of the moment. This unplanned scene of Dharmendra breaking the glass with his bare hands and continuing the scene without missing a beat became an iconic moment that is still remembered and admired by audiences today.



Another example is from the film “Deewar” (1975), where Amitabh Bachchan’s character, Vijay, delivers the famous dialogue “Mere paas maa hai” (I have mother). According to the film’s director, Yash Chopra, this dialogue was not a part of the original script, and Amitabh Bachchan came up with it spontaneously during the filming of the scene. The line became instantly popular and is considered one of the most memorable dialogues in Hindi cinema, representing the unconditional love and value of a mother.

In the film “Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge” (1995), there is a scene where Shah Rukh Khan (Raj) tries to put a garland around Kajol’s (Simran) neck, but she resists. In an unplanned moment, Shah Rukh Khan ad-libbed a line saying, “Agar yeh tujhe pyaar karti hai, toh yeh palat ke dekhegi” (If she loves you, she will look back). Kajol’s natural reaction of smiling and looking back became an iconic scene that epitomizes the romance and charm of the film. This unplanned moment became so popular that it is often referred to as the “palat” scene, and it has been recreated and referenced in numerous other films and TV shows.

The movie “Gangs of Wasseypur” is a masterpiece directed by Anurag Kashyap. The film is known for its raw, gritty portrayal of gang wars in Wasseypur, a small town in Bihar, India. One of the most iconic and unplanned scenes of the movie is the ‘Definite

Climax Scene.’ This scene is a turning point in the film’s narrative and serves as a perfect example of the director’s mastery in creating a powerful and impactful scene.

The scene takes place in a crowded marketplace where the two rival gangs are preparing for a final showdown. The audience knows that something big is going to happen, but the characters are oblivious to it. The tension builds up as the camera pans over the faces of the characters, and the audience can see the fear and anticipation in their eyes.

Suddenly, a gunshot is heard, and chaos ensues. The camera becomes

The scene’s realism and rawness made it a memorable moment in cinema history, and it will be remembered for years to come.

shaky, and the scene becomes chaotic. The scene was not planned, and the director wanted to capture the spontaneity of the moment. He instructed the

actors to improvise, and the result was a raw, intense, and realistic scene.

The ‘Definite Climax Scene’ is a masterclass in filmmaking. The director’s decision to leave the scene unplanned added to its authenticity and realism. The use of the handheld camera technique added to the chaos and intensity of the scene. The actors’ improvisation added to the rawness of the scene, and the audience could feel the fear and panic of the characters.

The ‘Definite Climax Scene’ of the movie “Gangs of Wasseypur” is a prime example of how an unplanned scene can turn out to be one of the most iconic scenes in the film. The scene’s realism and rawness made it a memorable moment in cinema history, and it will be remembered for years to come.

In the film “Anand” (1971), a critically acclaimed Bollywood classic, there is a scene where Rajesh Khanna (Anand) and Amitabh Bachchan (Babu Moshai) are sitting on a bench, and Rajesh Khanna suddenly starts laughing uncontrollably. This scene was not part of the original script, and Rajesh Khanna improvised it on the spot. The director, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, decided to keep the scene as it was, and it became an iconic moment that perfectly captured the spirit of Anand, a character known for his zest for life despite his terminal illness. Rajesh Khanna’s laughter in that scene became an enduring symbol of Anand’s positivity and joie de vivre.

DDLJ, Defensive Papas, and Bootleg VCDs

SRIJA PRASAD

I was riding my bicycle with support wheels from one door of our old apartment’s kitchen to another, passing through the living room where our old cable TV was playing Emraan Hashmi songs on 9XM. I was pretending to be a biker from ‘Road Rash’, kicking imaginary competitors, when dadi maa changed the channel when he started getting too close to the heroine. I giggled and peddled my way back to the kitchen awkwardly, where mumma was cooking dinner.

I heard a woman singing

about a guy who teases her in dreams on the TV, and mumma started singing along with her. I giggled at her tiny dance steps that followed her singing and went to make sure that dadi maa wasn’t changing the channels anymore. I saw a unibrow girl who had just come out of the shower singing and dancing with her towel, jumping from one bed to another like I was when I fell and got four stitches on my forehead. I sat on the sofa, wondering if she’d fall too. That’s when Shahrukh Khan took off his helmet after gokarting and started

racing an aircraft. I screamed, “Mumma dekho Shahrukh Khan,” and went running to ask her what film it was. “DDLJ,” she replied. I could see her excitement heighten as she took out plates to serve food, and so I asked her if she had seen it. “Eleven times in the theatre,” she replied, biting her tongue. “That’s why you learned how to say ‘Shahrukh Khan’ even before you knew how to say your own name, Siju,” bua joked.

Mumma grew up in Kolkata in a fairly traditional joint family. She studied in an all-girls school where nana



ji would pick her up and drop her off every day on his Bullet, along with her younger sisters. When she joined Presidency University for college, nanaji was apprehensive because it was co-ed. She defended him by praising her own beauty, saying, "I was very pretty na, with brown hair and brown eyes. Baba was just a little protective." I laughed, spitting water out of my mouth, and she frowned.

When I visited nani's place after my 10th grade board exams, mumma took me to College Street. "The stalls are still there!" she said as we got off the bus, "I'd take the same route every day, get off at the bus stop, and cross the tramline to reach the college gate. We'd enter the college hearing these vendors trying to attract customers with a 20% discount.

On the left side of the road, there was a public phone booth. "I used to call my friends from here when they were absent or if I wanted to call them to the theatre. Every time a class got cancelled or if they had a break hour in college, instead of fiddling about in the cafeteria, they would go to a nearby theatre to watch a movie. "It was my first time in a co-ed setting, and, in the beginning, I'd feel really awkward around boys, and the cafeteria was filled with romance. My friends and I were more comfortable with romance on the screen." That's how she ended up watching 'Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge' eleven times in the theatre. "The first two-three times, we were only engrossed in the storyline and the ro-

mance. Then we started looking at the different locations of the movie and finally moved on to counting the different colour kurtas that Satish Shah wore in the film. By the sixth or seventh time, I had Kajol's poem by heart, and we would enact scenes along with them," she started reciting the poem as she recalled those days.

Back in the 80s and 90s, when trailers or teasers weren't a thing, and there were no social media platforms to flood with reviews after every release, stardom was a major pulling factor for films. These stars and their characters were also significant fashion icons. Kajol influenced my mom to middle-part her hair, and she asked mama ji to bring tunics with tight body-hugging tops and long wooden necklaces like the ones she wore in DDLJ when he visited Bombay.

Mumma and maasi would visit New Market to find fabrics of the exact same shade and design, and when they found them, they would go to the tailor and guide him with the fittings. When my maasi watched 'Dil toh pagal hai' she got a dozen tailored clothes matching the ones Madhuri wore in the film. Mumma used to give tuition to earn extra pocket money, which she later used to get these clothes made.

I saw a pair of heels online that were priced at three thousand bucks. Mumma denied paying so much for one pair of footwear and told me she'd take me to a shop that will have better options for much cheaper. It was a shop in Dharmatala that she often shopped at

when she was younger. When we went there, the shopkeeper recognised him even after more than sixteen-seventeen years. She laughed and told me about an instance where she watched Rangiela and got obsessed with boots and bought more than seven or eight pairs of them in different leather textures and shades. If my mother had been my older sister, I would've easily stolen most of her wardrobe. I don't have half the fashion sense she had back then.

I believe hairdressers are soulmates; when you find the right one, they just understand all your hair-related preferences like no other.

Geeta didi is my soulmate. I found her when I was betrayed by my old salon guy's scissors, which cut my fringes so short that I had to wear a cloth hairband for weeks. She is timid inside a very unconventional female body. Her hair is pale brown, and doesn't say a lot about her skills.

Last winter, when I went back home, I visited her for my biannual haircare session. The sounds of water flowing from the tap and scissors running through my hair are the only ones that mostly occupy her salon for those two hours. Every time I'd think of teasing a conversation out of her, she'd reply with a dead-end smile.

"Don't you feel bad about working on a Sunday?" I asked, and she just grinned. "I am doing a SRK movie marathon today, I just finished watching 'Darr' and came to you because my eyes got tired," I said, trying harder to make a conversation. Her hand paused from messaging my head. "SRK?" she almost screamed. "You like him?" I asked. "Like? I love him," she replied with the widest grin I had ever seen on her face. She recalled watching 'Darr' in her early teens. "I had bought a third-class ticket for five bucks to watch it with my elder sister. At the time, it felt more like a hero-villain story to me. I had seen Sharukh Khan in 'Raju ban gaya giente-



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: SRIJA PRASAD

man' before, and I was already in love with him. For the first time, I found myself rooting for a madman who stalks women. He had me sitting on the edge of my seat, anticipating his next move. But more than that, I wanted to be Juhi so badly. If I were her, I would have obviously left Sunny Deol for Shahrukh." "I used to imagine him saying I love you G-G-G-G-Geeta instead of Kiran," she giggled.

My 11th grade math tutor suggested me to watch 'The Game of Thrones'. During monsoon, when his Vespa couldn't protect him from getting wet in the rain after class, he'd wait it out at my home. I would ask Santosh to make one more cup of tea for him, and instead of utilising that time to do math, we'd sit and gossip. Besides talking about his other job in affiliate marketing, he'd also make really good bingeing suggestions.

One day, while discussing what's new on Netflix, I curiously asked him if he was always such a cinephile. He smiled and looked outside to check if the rain was going to continue long enough for his anecdote to finish.

He recalled his dicey film-watching experiences from his childhood and told me about a local movie theatre a lane away from his house back in his village. "It mostly screened Bhojpuri films that were almost considered pornographic, so we were banned from even loitering around its circumference. But every time we heard that a Bollywood film was going to be screened, my friends and I would find excuses, cover our tracks, and watch the film wearing our monkey caps so that no one recognised us," he said. "Why monkey caps!" I interrupted. "The gravity of these situations was the fact that if we got caught, we would be burdened with the blame of bringing shame to our family. But these were risks worth taking to watch Shahrukh Khan woo beautiful actresses and Kajol," he laughed.

Films weren't easily accessible two decades back, especially in small towns and villages, and yet they were the only source of entertainment back then. When they weren't able to watch an anticipated film, he remembers his uncle buying pirated versions of those films that were sold in newspaper and magazine stands, grocery stores, or even cassette stores.

Back in the day, these 90s films came in sets of two to four CDs each, most of which were recordings from

theatre screens. They had to switch the CDs every forty-five minutes to an hour in order to finish a three-hour-long movie. "These recordings were terrible quality. We'd be interrupted by shadows of uncles and aunties walking across the hall and babies crying," he sighed.

In the early 2000s, when the concept of cybercafes became prominent, he would get bootleg copies of films from there. "These copies came in cheap as compared to the original DVDs, and even though I had more access to cinema halls by that time, I had gotten used to those shadows and audience applause."

Papa's paternal side of the family own a cinema hall named 'Ajanta Cinema' back in his hometown in Bihar Sharif. He showed it to me while we were crossing by a few years back. "We had a lot of fun here," he said and went on to tell me all about their VIP treatment, "We would enter the hall at random intervals; sometimes, we'd enter towards the end, watch the last hour of the movie, and complete the rest of it the next day. Owning a theatre came in handy when we wanted to rewind a song we liked or any movie scene that we wanted to watch again."

Even though I have visited the town a lot of times, I have never been to their cinema hall. As a matter of fact, I have never been to any local hall. I might have gotten accustomed to the unreasonably expensive tickets and popcorn. "Can we go in there?" I asked him. "The crowd is not for you," he replied and I didn't question his judgement. He parked the car and asked me if I'd like to go for a walk. I nodded yes.

He showed me the stall for snacks near the hall. "Did you get popcorn here? I asked. "Masala papad and samosa. Vendors used to walk around the hall and sell these," he replied, telling me how selling of popcorns in theatres started much later. I got curious to know what else was different back then. "I think the audience was a lot different. They were more engrossed than they are today. People often had to buy tickets in black, and their excitement for the cinema experience was so profound that they didn't even miss the advertisements," he said, recalling how they would feel sad after every movie ended, despite the fact that all of those movies used to be three hours long. He reminisced how his brothers used to try to memorise the dance moves every time a dance number came on screen,

"When Madhuri performed 'Dhak Dhak karne laga', people started throwing real money at the screen."

One of his friends was a big Mithun fan and bought a bunch of leather jackets and sleeveless denim jackets. "People would take movie posters to the tailor and ask them to sew exact replicas of Amitabh Bacchan's outfits." On our way back home, he told me about an incident where people in the movie theatre would sit with their legs up on the chair because they were afraid of snakes sneaking in during the screening of the film 'Nagin'. It was hilarious.

There was a sort of innocence and simplicity in the way that technology couldn't define the storylines back then, as cell phones and the internet had little to no existence. A film like Madhuri and Salman's 'Hum aapke hai kaun', for instance, would have been destroyed if they had cellphones. Nisha's elder sister would have been alive instead of running down the stairs and tripping to answer a telephone call. A text to her husband saying "Nisha and Prem are in love" would have been much more viable than depending on a family pet to deliver a letter moments away from him getting married to Nisha.

There were fewer stars and fewer movies were produced, which kept them keen to visit the theatre. Now with films releasing day after another, the hype for watching films in cinema halls has diminished. Film posters were the whole deal for the promotion. Painted posters were put up in peak advertising parts of the city to attract more audience. Mumma once told me how she would check new film releases in the newspaper every Friday, and every Saturday, they would publish their ratings measured in five stars. Those newspaper ratings and reviews from acquaintances were the only sources for knowing if a movie was worth watching.

I feel the 1990s and early 2000s were the final few decades where films could afford to be so irrational and dreamy. Sridevi wearing a yellow chiffon saree with a sleeveless blouse in Chandni in extreme weather conditions, while Rishi Kapoor wore a sweater spawned my mom's silliest wish to re-enact it. Yash Chopra did indeed make chiffon sarees a symbol of romance through Bollywood, the kind of romance that is still evergreen with those films.



Nilgiris, Nudging, and Never-Ending Shores

SIDDHARTH CHANDRAN

Having stayed in a very strict hostel environment almost all my school life, one of the main privileges that I was cut out from was the opportunity to watch the newly released films of my favourite actors. As I had spent the majority of my life living in the 'Queen of Hills', in the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu, during my initial childhood, I was actually a very huge fan of the actor Vijay. Despite the silly plots and themes existing in the majority of his films, I still used to enjoy them as a kid. Living in the 'Queen of Hills' had its own perks in terms of its wonderful climate and experience, but when looking at the place from a film lovers' point of view, Ooty was not really a great place for a film enthusiast and the main reason being the absence of theatres in the locality, as the majority of them in and around the area kept either shutting down or running out of business for some reason until late 2015.

The first Tamil film, that I had watched in a theatre back in Ooty was a Vijay's 2012 hit film, 'Thuppaki'. Despite the fact that they made actor Vidyut Jammwal, play the role of the villain in the film, I loved every other aspect of the film. This was also one of the very few films, that I had watched with my own brother V. Being two big Vijay fans ourselves, we decided to go out of all bounds, while we were watching the film. Pretending the torn A4 sheet papers as decorated and colourful confetti, we had filled the entire theatre with paper bits, until a fellow person made us both calm down and settle down for a bit. The theatre that we had gone to then, was Sree Ganesh theatre and although the theatre was not really of those fancy fancy types, we still enjoyed every bit of our experience. Having the cone ice cream during the interval and buying a small packet of not - so - great popcorn, were the little things that still makes me nostalgic, every time I think about it. Sadly, the theatre had closed down back in 2014, due to some irrelevant reason and following

that, the number of films that I had

I always made sure to seize the opportunity of being able to watch as many films as possible every time I visited my native

watched in Ooty reduced significantly.

So, because of this reason, I have watched very less film in theatres in Tamilnadu as compared to my native town in Kerala, where people themselves, were lunatics when it came to watching cinemas in theatres. Although there was a theatre just 2 kms from my grandma's place, my experience of watching films in Palakkad too was limited and I only used to travel to the place during my summer and winter vacations. But despite the terrible heat and the limited time I got to spend in Palakkad, I always made sure to seize the opportunity of being able to watch as many films as possible every time I visited my native. Having being closer towards my mom's side of the family than my dad's side, the majority of the films that I have watched in theatres is with my cousin brother audit was with him as well, with whom I vaguely recall experiencing my first ever theatre watching experience.

The very first movie that I remember watching in a theatre was when I just a 9 - year - old, back in 2011. It was a Kunchacko Boban and Asif Ali hit movie, called Traffic. Although I was really unaware of the

names of Malayalam movie heroes other than Mamooty, Mohanlal and Dileep, during those times, having really enjoyed my first ever theatre watching experience, these two gradually became my favourites from the Malayalam movie industry. I also still remember rushing my cousin to watch the Malayalam movie 'Bicycle thieves' back in 2013, where Asif Ali was the main hero of the film, which did turn into a major disappointment of my admiration towards the actor. Having gradually removing the actor's name from my favourite Malayalam movie stars list, I only hoped and prayed for a better cinema watching from then on, but the dabba film watching experiences still always continued to exist in my life.

What terms a film watching experience if it is a good one or a dabba one in my opinion is not only solely dependent on the plot of the movie, but there are also other factors which determine on how our experience goes. I actually have in fact had multiple dabba film watching experience, where I really loved the story and the plot of the movie, but the people that I had watched the movie with ruin my enjoyment. My experience on watching the Malayalam movie, 'Take Off,' is one of these experiences too, where even though the plot of the movie along with Kunchacko Boban's and Parvathy's exceptional acting made the story line and the film itself a huge hit, I still hate my experience of watching that film. Of all the things that could be adjusted to and bared with in a cinema hall, the worst of the things that could happen is having to sit near someone who you hate watching films with.

As usual I had watched this film too, along with my first cousin N, but except this time, he brought one of his friends along with him too. Though I had met this friend quite a number of times earlier, when I visit my cousin, I have always only found myself hating him more and more every time I speak with him. So, by fate due to the less



availability of the tickets, and by my poor decision - making skills, my seat was right next to this annoying friend's seat, while N's seat was two rows in front of us. Things just started getting worse the moment I sat in the seat, with the annoying friend 'accidentally' dropping some of my popcorn on the floor and on my lap just as he was about to reach out to take some. After a few glances and a very fake smile, I kept my popcorn at a distance where his hand would not reach, and started enjoying my film, only to hear somebody snoring.

in my favour when I tried waking this annoying guy either. Despite the constant 'accidental' nudges I gave his hand in order to wake him up, he decided to next rest his head on my shoulder and snored right into my ears. The only time that I was free from the never - ending snores and his surprisingly heavy head was during the interval of the movie, where I forcefully stood up to use the restroom. Having returned back from the restroom, I found the friend looking into his phone and with evident disgust on my face, I went back

screened during the interval break. On further fake smiles and a small conversation with him, I got to know that it was in fact his third time watching the movie which just annoyed me even more. Wondering on why he was even there in the theatre if he had already watched the film twice before, I just got back to my left - over popcorns. Hoping that 'the annoying friend' had nothing else to say and by praying to God that that he would just continue looking into his phone, I got back to the film, which was just about to resume. Just 20 minutes into the second half of the film, when the part where the terrorists were shifting the nurses into their main camp came up, I heard his annoying voice again. He kept telling me on what scene was about to happen next and ruined all the expectation and my anticipation I had for the film.

EWWWxtremely annoyed, I just refused to watch the remaining part of the film and kept staring at the movie screen with my fists tightly shut. After my dreadful experience had ended, we said good bye to my cousin's friend and slowly started walking back to the bus stop. On our return back, I kept constantly complaining to N on how annoying and irritating my entire experience was, for which N just kept laughing at and asked me to let the incident go. That was also in fact the last day, when I learnt to stop blindly accepting any sorts of theatre offers from my cousin and also, to learn take better decisions myself so in the future I could avoid such chaotic and irritating dabba experiences.



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: TRIPTI SINGH

And by snoring I do not just mean the small normal snores an average man has, but rather never - ending and loud ones, like a man's life depended on it and to my terrible luck, nothing worked

to sitting in my seat. Soon, I noticed him nudging me trying to make conversations with me regarding the advertisements on the newly opened jewellery shop near the locality that was being

Memories of Popcorn

NEELAMBARI D

There are things which are always related to another one. These are the things which you cannot do or have without the other one. Things like wearing shoes without socks, eating a burger without french fries, and watching movies without having something, these all sound the same. It always feels incomplete without one another. Yes, we can do all the above things without the other one but it will not be per-

fect without the other. The main thing which I am trying to say here is about the food we eat while watching a movie. Whenever we talk about the food for watching movies, everyone thinks of popcorn. But it will not be the same taste which matches everyone's interest. I do not remember the first time when I went to the theatre to watch a movie, but there are things which I remember about watching movies during

my childhood. It was in my hometown, where I usually go with my family. There were two movie theatres in my hometown when I was a kid. They were Raja Theatre and Sundaram Theatre. Usually, my dad prefers Raja Theatre over Sundaram Theatre which I do not know the reason of. With time, these theatres also changed and now we have only the Sundaram Theatre now modified into a supermarket. The first

film which I remember watching in the theatre was Avatar during which, my brother got scared of those weird blue beings on the screen. He was probably three years old at that time and I still remember when he started crying after seeing those creatures on the big screen.

That feeling of emptiness one gets while watching a film without eating snacks is hard to understand

Most of our memories are based on the things which we enjoyed or which we lacked in those times. Now-a-days I am used to going to movies with my class friends and with my roommates. Whenever we go for a movie, the most important thing which we will not forget is the popcorn.

We went to the theatre with popcorn and some lays packets. It is always hard for us to watch movies without snacks. Sometimes it is hard to imagine without popcorn. There are things which are hard to explain, just like that feeling we get while watching movies with popcorn. Sometimes it feels lonely without them even when you go with your friends. And sometimes it feels so energetic when you have food with you to watch something, especially when no one is with you.

Now it is like we cannot imagine watching something without popcorn; it can be either movies or series or even TV shows. But there are times when I hate popcorn as much in my whole life. They are times which I cannot forget and I do not want to forget in my life. When I was a kid, I used to go to movie theatres with my parents and my cousins. I never went to any multiplex in my childhood, so it was a normal theatre which we go to once a month or once every two months. Whenever we go for a movie, I always dream of eating an ice-cream. Yeah, I love ice cream a lot which I was not able to eat in my childhood. Usually, we buy some packets of lays and potato chips while entering the theatre and most of the time I went to the theatre only for the snacks I get

there. Because when you are watching a film, my parents will buy me anything to eat except the cold drink and the ice cream. I do not know what kind of conflict they had with both, but they never let me eat the ice-cream in the theatre. Sometimes it is very hard to control our mind when we are seeing someone who is eating our favourite food. The same thing happens to me every time I go to watch a film. My dad usually buy popcorn for him, my mom and for me and my brother. But literally me and my brother hate that popcorn and fight with our dad for the ice cream. Yeah, now I can understand that I will get a cold after eating ice cream but when I was kid, I just could not do anything other than fight with my dad and look at children eating ice cream and crying for them. But this gradually changed when we grow up to understand the scenes and their meaning.

We forget what we were crying for in the very first comedy scene after the interval and will start to eat the popcorn which we disliked while buying. We never notice how much we are eating but the film and it is feeling of eating something and crunching something in the mouth.

Whenever we go to the theatre, we always skip our dinner. Haa, here we mean me and my brother. We both will always skip our dinner after watching the movie from the theatre and we always go to the theatre only at the 6 pm show as this is the time when my dad gets free and we will also get some time to relax. Mostly it will be on the weekend days like Saturday or in the Friday. But now it has almost reversed. Now I love popcorn more than ice cream. Haa the thing which I forgot to mention in the above is watching films with the popcorn in the laptops too. Haa I cannot neglect this, as I am becoming a very kind of introvert who likes to watch movies on the laptops and on the tv, instead of socializing myself out there in theatres. This is what happened in Bangalore as I became lazier to go and watch a film in the theatre. I am going to theatres but once in a blue moon, not frequently like I used to go with my parents.

Even if I watch a film on the laptop, you also feel bored without any snacks to eat. Most of the time we eat snacks whenever we get bored and while watching films, it automatically gets bored when we have no snacks. That feeling of emptiness one gets

while watching a film without eating snacks is hard to understand. Sometimes these snacks make a great impact on the movies we are watching. There is a Tamil film called Beast which I survived only because of the snacks I was eating. Haa, I watched that film till my last bite of lays and Kurkure got over and I stopped watching that film after finishing my snacks. Sometimes both the film and the snacks are bound together for some reason. It can be like I



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: VYOMA VARSHA

mentioned before like eating burgers without French fries. But the thing is whenever we are thinking about the snacks while watching the film, burgers and French fries will not come at the first point. The first thing which comes to mind is popcorn and some potato chips. Yeah, sometimes we think of watching films with pizza and cold drinks but it will not suit the college students, especially the ones who are staying in the hostel or other PGs. Yeah, we like to have pizza every time while watching a film but we come under the desi culture where eating pizza or burgers are allowed only once or twice in a month. And lays and cold drinks became our best partner which we afford anytime anywhere. And this is not only mine, but also the story of most of the college students on snacks and movies

Gangs That Watch Shots But Don't Shoot

ATHIN B PAUL

Watching films in cinemas provides us with aesthetic experiences that are framed by our worlds. It can be impacted by a variety of things, including who we are viewing it with, what happens around us while we are watching the film, language challenges, discussions about topics, and many more. I'll be talking about my theatre experiences with different people, how they interact with cinema in different ways, and how the environment influences our viewing experience. I'll also talk about my experience going to a movie with a group that doesn't speak the language of the film.

We all know that seeing a movie in our neighbourhood vs outside of our neighbourhood provides a unique experience. In my experience, seeing films in my hometown and in Bangalore is not the same. While viewing a movie in my hometown, everyone used to laugh and whisper to one another, clap, and whistle during the bright parts. But I haven't experienced any similar experiences when viewing films here. In Bangalore, the area is separated into three sections: Mallu, Tamil, and Hindi. Koramangala and Jalahalli are regarded as Mallu areas since they are home to the majority of Malayalis. As a result, there would be one theatre in these areas that regularly shows Malayalam films. My buddies and I used to go to the Srinivasa theatre at S.G. Palya in Koramangala. So, viewing a movie with a Mallu gang in a Malayali-dominated area may foster a sense of kinship and familiarity. I met these friends while I was staying in the hostel. Most of my gangs were formed in the hostel, as it had a diverse culture and was the best place to form groups. Even if people are coming for studies or are newcomers to this city, I will always suggest having a one-year hostel experience where you will find a variety of cultures and knowledge about anything. These common cultural roots shape how the group members interact with one another and react to the film. This occurs

in other groups as well.

On the other hand, there are those who are members of the dominant cultural group. The individual who does not understand the language of the film will feel lonely and alienated. This makes comprehending and connecting with the film difficult. We will be sorry to interact with the gang members who are viewing it. They will be confused by the narrative and characters and will feel alienated from the dialogue going on around them. I recall going to see the film 'Chup' with some Hindi-speaking pals. First, after purchasing the tickets, they informed me that there would be no subtitles, which dampened my hopes of understanding and enjoying the film. I couldn't understand the movie and was mostly blank while watching it, while my buddies were laughing and debating the scenes. Except for me, everyone in the theatre was laughing at the comic sections. Even though no one was looking at me, I was feeling embarrassed in such circumstances.

A Telugu gang, for example, may favour action and masala flicks, while a Mallu gang may prefer real life and feel-good stories.

When viewing a movie, expressions and sentiments are important. Different gangs' attitudes towards certain genres or subjects might impact their participation in films. A Telugu gang, for example, may favour action and masala flicks, while a Mallu gang may prefer real life and feel-good stories. Every time my Telugu friends

go for a film, before the beginning of the movie, they will start saying "Jai Balaya." I was wondering why they did this and so I asked them. They said it's their emotion towards Nandamuri Balakrishna. Most of the Tamil people praise him, and whoever is in the movie, they will start praising "Jai Balaya" before the beginning. Like this, we can see many emotions and sentiments, and we can see different groups. This is only my analysis, which I have done throughout my life, but not everyone will be like this. This might result in a varied variety of movie-going experiences and generate discussions about various cultural and socioeconomic viewpoints. Above all, when we get a bit technical, watching with your gang is a lot of fun. I'll explain everything step by step. In terms of aesthetics, we may observe our friends immersing themselves in the scene or character, making facial expressions that reveal their feelings. Their eyes protrude at moments, giving the impression that they are a part of the film. They will showcase their abilities in a dark chamber where no one can see them. Looking at their expressions at that time will make us giggle.

Next, some adrenaline-fueled conversation will give you shivers, and members will begin to whistle and applaud. We occasionally hear counter-dialogue regarding that scene from our acquaintances. Some lines will hit you hard in the head and either make you sad or energised. The films are made to inspire or help people comprehend their inner thoughts. Aside from the amusement, there will be a few seconds of a scenario that will have an influence on one or more people.

On the contrary, some of them will question why they stated or depicted it in that way. Most individuals talk for a few minutes about positive things, but when it comes to negative things, they will talk for hours and say the same thing more than five times. That occurs both in cinema and in real life.



Diverse perspectives can help provide a more nuanced view of the films themselves. Different gangs may take a film differently based on their cultural backgrounds and social experiences. Including these many points of view can lead to a more complicated and nuanced discussion regarding the meaning and relevance of films.

Films have the ability to influence societal change and question established narratives and ideologies. We may gain a more nuanced and critical awareness of the difficulties and struggles that diverse groups face by viewing films featuring different gangs and engaging in discussions about their cultural and social importance. This can motivate people to take action and work towards a more just and equal society. As I previously stated, they will be an addition to these dialogues in terms of discourse and setting. Viewing films with various gangs may also give insight into how media shape cultural identities. A Tamil gang, for example, may connect with the protagonist's problems in a film and find their own experiences reflected in the plot, but a Hindi-speaking gang may identify with the larger-than-life characters and themes of love and sacrifice in a Bollywood film. Understanding how films form cultural identities can give insight into how various gangs interact with one another and with society as a whole. Viewing films featuring various gangs may also give insight into the politics of representation in film. Based on their own experiences and cultural origins, various gangs may have different expectations and perceptions of how particular groups are depicted in films. Understanding these various points of view can help us understand how films reinforce or challenge preconceptions and prejudices.

With the development of streaming services and on-demand viewing, seeing films in cinemas has become increasingly unusual. However, seeing films in theatres with diverse gangs may create a unique and immersive experience that cannot be repro-

duced at home. The social experience of seeing films in a large-screen theatre with surround sound may produce a sense of excitement and anticipation that enriches the entire experience. While seeing films with various gangs can be a highly personal and subjective experience, participating in cinema criticism and analysis can give a more objective and analytical perspective on the films themselves. Different groups may expand their awareness of films and the ways in which movies reflect and influence our worlds by debating their technical and creative qualities as well as their cultural and social value. Films have the ability to elicit nostalgia and transport us to various eras and locations. We may investigate how

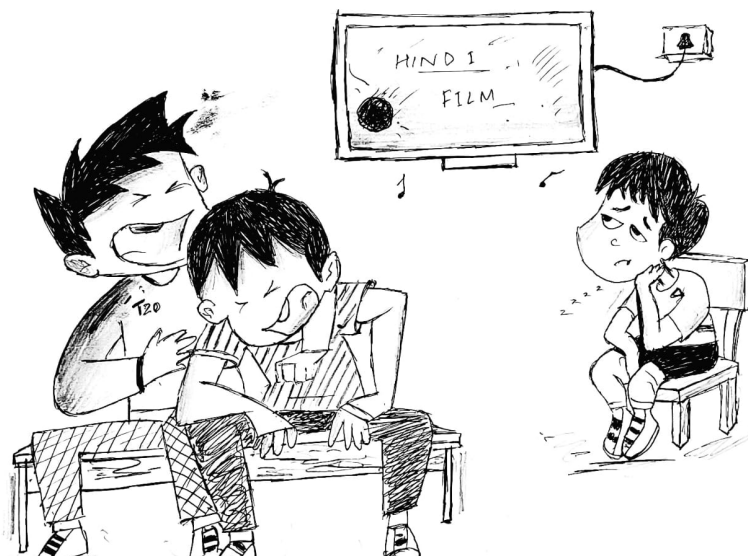


ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: VYOMA VARSHA

brains will store and recall. The situation will be discussed with our group members. Seeing films in cinemas with various gangs can give unique insights on how varied cultural origins and social experiences impact how we engage with films. The sense of place, different groups' emotions and sentiments, the experiences of people who do not speak the film's language, graphics and art, and featuring varied voices are all important factors that add to the entire movie-going experience. We can establish a more inclusive and nuanced knowledge of films and how they reflect and affect our environments by embracing varied viewpoints and engaging in meaningful dialogue.

anything. As far as I can remember, the family outing I have memories about was when we all went to watch Taare Zameen Par together as an entire family. I am sure that most of the people who have two or more siblings can relate to what I am about to say now. It is extremely rare where the entire family

Kunnil Theatre Par

MUHAMMED KHALEEL

A family whose members love watching movies individually have only gone for one movie together. Maybe that was one of the last times we have ever done anything together. We like to call ourselves the Kunnil fam, ironically the family WhatsApp group that we have is called 'not your average Kunnil

fam' as there are many families with Kunnil as their second name in Kerala. My family consists of seven people including myself. The age gap between my eldest brother and I is 18 years so basically we were never in the same household and even if we were, I was very small to do anything or remember

anything. As far as I can remember, the family outing I have memories about was when we all went to watch Taare Zameen Par together as an entire family. I am sure that most of the people who have two or more siblings can relate to what I am about to say now. It is extremely rare where the entire family



get to go out together but when we do it is definitely one of the most fun times we ever have.

Now when I look back at it, our family is as chaotic as a family can get, but I miss that. My brother who had just come back for his holidays as he was doing his college in India, my eldest sister who had just joined college in Dubai, and my other two sisters were studying in the same school as I was. I was approximately 7 years old at the time. Basically, my entire family was in Dubai, in that house where I was born and brought up. As I had mentioned earlier, it is in the rarest of times we all are together in one place. There is always one person missing from the picture. Eitherways, on that specific day when my two sisters and I headed back home from school, we saw Uppa, Umma, Icha and Dhidi getting ready. At first we thought they were leaving us and going somewhere but when we asked "Why are you all getting ready and how come Uppa is back so early from work?" Uppa replied saying, "I booked tickets for Taare Zameen Par for all of us at 7pm. So all of you have half an hour to get ready." I can't describe how happy I was. At that time, we rarely went to see movies in the first place and on top of that with all the family members was very exciting for me.

Umma, annoyed like always when it comes to us going out as family was extremely angry because everyone was running around the house to get ready. As there was less time, Umma had to iron all our clothes, pack the necessary things and do the remaining chores that she had in a very short period of time. At that time, when Umma used to shout at us for the smallest things we used to get mad but now we realize the pain she goes through and I wish I had helped her more where and when I could have. One more thing about our family is that my Uppa and Umma are the opposites when it comes to leaving the house. Uppa always likes to be early, not even on time as he hates making other people wait or when it comes to a movie, he does not want to miss anything. My Umma is a last minute person and I definitely got my traits from Umma as I am either just on time or I'm late. Umma being Umma tested Uppa's patience that day. All of us got ready just in time but my Umma had just gotten into the shower at around 6:30pm and that is the time we were supposed to leave. It is honest-

ly not Umma's fault as she was packing everything and helping us get ready. After all the problems at home, we finally left at 6:50pm. My Uppa was not at all happy but we tried to make his mood better by talking about the popcorn and the other meals that we could be eating after the film gets over, etc.

for movies as we all decided to spend the money that we would spend on Umma's ticket on buying popcorn and Pepsi. Whenever Umma sits for a film in the movie theater, she sleeps off. It's not her mistake, most of the times we go, she is usually tired but for this film she actually stayed awake and she also



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: AJITH RAJ

My dad being my dad did not even book tickets in a good theatre. He ended up booking in Lamcy Plaza which was a theatre close to our house. Even though it's called a plaza, it was technically a mall. It had two segregations where one building which was small was the theatre and the other building was the mall itself. I used to go there a lot because it had a good collection of clothes for kids. A few years back, a news broke out saying Lamcy Plaza caught fire. No one knows what's the real story behind it, maybe it could be an insurance scam or maybe it actually happened. Eitherways, Lamcy Plaza is no longer there and neither are our family outings as well. This mall was barely 10 minutes away but we reached the mall late that day because of the traffic as well as our family being our family.

We finally reached the theatre at 7:15pm. We missed maybe 5-10 minutes of the movie because in Dubai before the film there are many ads and other trailers they display before the actual film starts. The film as we know it was one of the most heart touching films released at that time. From Aamir Khan's acting to the kids' acting, it was splendid. That film was one of the first films and one among the few films that I cried for. We usually never take Umma

claims Taare Zameen Par to be a fantastic film even though she has watched or more precisely, stayed awake for 10 entire films. The film involves a dyslexic kid named Ishaan who was sent away to boarding school early because of his poor academic performance but a teacher whose role was played by Aamir Khan discovers his true potential. Something similar happened to my sister where she was sent at an early age to boarding school, not as early as Ishaan was sent but she was sent to India when she was in 8th standard. My sister taunted Umma and Uppa the entire time. Even though she was sent because she was not book smart, the only difference is that my sister is not dyslexic. She kept telling my parents that sending her to India before 12th finished was a really bad idea and experience for her.

Watching a film with family is very different from watching a film with friends in the theatre. I'm purely talking in terms of how the rest of the audience feels annoyed when I go with my friends because of the nuisance we create and when we go with family it's all quiet. Sometimes when I go for films with the family, I'm on the opposite end of the spectrum where we are disturbed by some other college students and I always think to myself, how do



the audience tolerate us? How do we not get kicked out? On that day, even though we were late, one of the best things we do before entering any film is buying popcorn. That is one specific habit we all share in common. So, before getting down from the car, my dad gave me money to buy popcorn. Most of the time I sit next to my eldest sister who's like a second mom to me. I enjoy her company very much when I watch films, the way she analyses films is second to none. Along with that she also tells very interesting facts related to the film that we are watching. Even for Taare Zameen Par, I sat next to her. Before leaving for the film, I kept on telling myself that I would not cry while watching the film but after the film got over, my family was pulling my leg about the same. I still remember this one part of the day that I wish I could turn back time and relive that moment. I don't remember exactly which scene

it was but during one of the scenes in the film, we all started tearing up together including Uppa which was fascinating.

When I looked left to see my family's reaction from where I was sitting, I could see all of them weeping. It's sad for me to say that I want to relive that moment specifically but it was one of those times where you think that your family bond is stronger than anything else and wish to be together forever. The day ended with all of us going for dinner in an Arabic restaurant which is all of our favorite cuisine. I was sitting with Umma recently and telling her about that day and she mentioned that it was definitely one of the last times that we all went out together as a family for a film. We did get together as a family on many occasions after that as well but after that, every time we decided to go out, there would be other people joining us. As three of my

siblings are married now, it is very rare for us to go out where it's just us. Hopefully one day in the future, we could all go out and watch a movie together again, memories will definitely come flooding back to me.

“It won't be the same but at the end of the day, if the right people are there it really doesn't matter and the right people as my mom always is family.”

The Man in Crimson Heels

GAURI SRIKANTH

I was curious about the man who left countless K-Drama female leads in tears. In 'Another Oh Hae Young', a boy writes about Leslie Cheung in a childhood love letter to Hae Young. He hates that his first love cried because of Cheung and ripped all his posters down in anger. The male lead is jealous about Hae Young affection for Cheung and the next day he gives her flowers, teasingly saying, "I am better than Leslie Cheung, no?" The drama 'You Are My Spring' extensively quotes Leslie Cheung's hurting Yuddy from 'Days of Being Wild' and they even have a teary outdoor dancing scene that pays homage to the iconic original. Perhaps it is silly to be dancing in a quite park to imaginary music but I am touched by the way Cheung manages to unite people and heal their broken souls even after his death. 'Melting Me Softly' is a romance K-Drama where the leads are subjects of a failed cryogenic experiment where they are only able to wake up decades later. One of the first things the female lead Go Mi Ran does is discover that Leslie Cheung died while she was away. In uncontrollable tears, she

bitterly moans the death of her beloved idol. There are more references to Leslie Cheung that I am not able to quote from memory but these allusions have only increased my hunger to know who this enigmatic individual was. My first Leslie Cheung movie was 'Farewell My Concubine' and my contrarian habits were determined to be overly-critical about this widely-acclaimed person. I would see for myself what all the fuss was about.

I am often drawn towards Leslie Cheung's hands. Cheung used these very hands to tear down all the walls of resistance I had built around my heart. It was impossible to not like him and I was beginning to understand why these female leads used up entire boxes of tissues to quell their tears. In every scene, his hands elevate his character by knowing exactly what to do. While his eyes express the emotional turmoil of the characters, there are times when he has to restrain himself to play emotionally constipated roles like Sam Koo ('He's the Woman, She's the Man' & 'Who's the Woman, Who's the Man?'). Even with such constrained performances, his hands do not lie. Sam

tries his best to hide his feelings for Wing but his hands always endearingly linger over him. They naturally brush past him when they play piano together. When Wing lies to Rose that he is gay, Sam's hand covering his eyes show how frustrated he was to hear this information. Sam is calm while explaining to Wing that the people are not kind to public figures who are openly queer but his fidgety hands tell a different story of anxiety and denial. This is not the only performance Cheung's hands compliment. 'In Farewell My Concubine' I fell in love with him all over again as his dainty hands wrap around his friend, straining to not let him leave the embrace of the bubble they created for each other.

Leslie Cheung managed to establish a place in my heart before I even realised it. I appreciated how he picked a range of roles disregarding any genre-restrains and preconceived notions that go with any character. Only an actor of high calibre can adopt a genderless form towards their craft. Like water that easily changes its shape depending on the container, a good actor can mould themselves to complete-



ly fit into the character leaving behind even the residue of traditionally gendered characteristics. Leslie Cheung is one such androgynous actor who can seem alternatively 'feminine' and 'masculine' at different moments of requirement even while playing the same character. By the 90s Leslie Cheung had established himself well enough in the Hong Kong cinema landscape to be able to have some form of autonomy while picking his roles. Perhaps this is why he was able to portray complex queer characters that have become milestones in the history of LGBTQ+ cinema in Hong Kong. Leslie Cheung's most famous queer portrayals are in the films 'Farewell My Concubine' (1993) and 'Happy Together' (1997).

Farewell My Concubine by Chen Kaige, features a complex relationship between two male Peking opera performers in which Leslie Cheung played a Peking opera star named Cheng Dieyi. The film tells the story of Cheng's complicated relationship with his fellow opera star, Duan Xiaolou (played by Zhang Fengyi), as they navigate political upheaval and personal struggles in 20th century China. From a young age Cheng was forced to practice female roles in the opera and repeated that he was a girl. This pushed Cheng to develop complicated feelings for his close friend and co-star even though coming out of the closet pushed his character into the mercy of other people. Ironically he was both disregarded and abused in life because of his sexuality but was also praised and loved for his feminine roles and open sexuality on stage. This was a strange case where Cheng could only truly be himself while masked to play character. By casting Leslie Cheung, an openly bisexual star in such a film, the creators aimed at the capturing the resonance that would strike between Cheng's layered character and Cheung's real life persona. The film is notable for its exploration of gender and sexuality, and for the way it challenges traditional notions of masculinity. Cheung extended sympathy towards his role and made it more believable while the audience doubly enjoyed Cheng's character because they believed that they could see reflections of Cheung's actual struggles in the character. Self-absorbed but tremblingly vulnerable, never wanting the stage to end.

Happy Together by Wong Kar-wai is a film that follows a turbulent relationship between two men from Hong Kong who travel to Buenos Aires, Argentina. It was revolutionary in its portrayal of a same-sex relationship in a mainstream Hong Kong film and the film would mark Leslie Cheung's final major portrayal of a queer character before his untimely death. Cheung plays a gay man named Ho Po-wing who loves Lai Yiu-fai (played by Tony Leung Chiu-wai) but is capricious and has severe commitment issues. Yiu-fai just cannot help but simply be in love and it is Po-wing who tends to drive the major decisions in the relationship. While he brings immense joy to his partner, Po-wing is incredibly selfish at times too (in the scene where he bothers his sick partner to make food for him). He is another layered character who depends on Cheung's charisma to be endearing to the audience in spite of the several head-palm moments he spurs in the film. It is Po-wing's non-committal wishy-washy attitude that proved fatal to the relationship and yet there is no sense of relief and righteous anger when he bitterly mourns the loss of his love and all his future what-ifs. This toxic on- and-off relationship explores themes of love, loss, and identity; and features thoughtful cinematography and a haunting soundtrack that add to the 'doomed lovers' atmosphere of the film. However, the best part of the film is its bold move to be portrayed like any other romantic melodrama that just happens to be gay. Unlike the usually queer narratives that hyperfocus on their 'queerness' and make it the central issue.

Happy Together is a love story of two not-so-normal people where their gender is the most normal thing about them.

However, not every queer portrayal of Cheung's is a progressive pitch-perfect representation that the

LGBTQ+ community was looking for. Of course, it would be an unfair burden to expect him to always pick politically conscious roles especially when there were such limited opportunities for such portrayals in the industry. In fact, Cheung's first queer role, 'All's Well, End's Well' (1992) does not hold up well when scrutinised by today's standards. At the time the film was a major commercial success and spawned seven sequels over the years. And yet, the major humour of the film is derived from Cheung's highly effeminate character who 'delusionally' believes that he is a woman. The film ends 'comically' with him being electrocuted to successfully switch personalities with his highly masculine female lead and they live happily ever after as he becomes the abusive alpha male everyone dreamed of. It is even more surprising when one considers the fact that this film came out right before Farewell My Concubine. There is the theory that writing for queer characters improved drastically because of the demand Cheung created for such nuanced portrayals and that as the 90s progressed, scripts became more open-minded. And yet, there were certain queer characters portrayed by Cheung even in the later years that sometimes cling onto the paragons of the past. Even with these slightly outdated portrayals that are actually a problem of old-fashioned writing, Cheung manages to make them memorable.

From the aforementioned examples it is also noticeable that Leslie Cheung has a penchant for taking characters that seem obnoxious on paper and turning them into loveable idiots the audience want to simultaneously smack and envelope in a warm embrace. Somehow even the most egotistical, tone-deaf characters played by Cheung manage to display some sort of vulnerability that makes several viewers irrationally protective of them. These ideas were observed in Cheung's portrayal of 'Sam' Koo Ka-ming, one of the protagonists the smash-hit 'He's a Woman, She's a Man' (1994) and its less popular sequel, 'Who's the Woman, Who's the Man?' (1996). While this film duology was a commercial success and displays the zany mainstream romantic comedies of Hong Kong that would make even a film like 'Bringing Up Baby' seem sober in comparison,

these are some of Leslie Cheung's lesser known films. As an actor, Cheung had an enviable emotional range which coupled with his androgynous image allowed him to portray a myriad of characters across various genres like melodrama, action, romance and comedy. Cheung always pushed himself to adapt to the role but it is observed that his darker, more world-weary roles seem to eclipse his lighter ones. There isn't nearly enough discourse about Cheung's brilliant comedic timing or his cheesy romantic gestures that bewitched men and women alike. Just because romantic comedies deal with lighter subjects, it does not negate the need for serious discourse about them or justify excluding such roles from mainstream discussion.

'He's a Woman, She's a Man' and 'Who's the Woman, Who's the Man?' by Peter Chan are both films with plot structures and sequences that were written like fever dreams. These are overdramatically toned films where the acting is comically exaggerated. The characters all flirt with the edge of being just obviously obnoxious but manage to play off each other's chemistry in way that is appealing to the audience. Leslie Cheung's comedic 'straight man' reactions of his relatively sober character not only accentuate the strange humour but also makes his weird actions seem funnier. With the utmost sincerity he appears to wear the embarrassingly sexualise party costumes, dramatically swings his during a scene of intense intercourse and even his exaggerated sips of wine that spill more than half the appears like he's mocking the dejected lover-turned-alcoholic cliché. With completely straight and serious faces, Leslie Cheung and Anita Yuen, the female lead, are able to satirise the classic 'moment of sexual tension that leads to kiss' by making the puppets in their hands play out a long make out montage. The humour works (at least for the first film) because in spite of the faux-sincerity of the performances, the film encourages us not to take anything too seriously. He's a Woman, She's a Man is the tamer of the two movies and focuses on the classic gender bender trope. The gender bender trope involves cross-dressing of one of the protagonists who deceives the other protagonist about their gender and sends the other into a spiral of panic about their sexuality. This trope has strong historical roots

right from the time of stage plays such as the Shakespearean dramas where men often cross-dressed to play the female characters. The moralistic perspective of this trope could be to prove that love is genderless and it has been used as statements in films like the 'Rocky Horror Picture Show' (1975) but it is also a gateway of indirect and sometimes internalised homophobia and transphobia.

Even in Hollywood there are films like *She's the Man* (2006) that are much more recent and yet carry vestiges of this prejudice. Duke (Channing Tatum) just had to find out that Sebastian was actually Viola (Amanda Bynes) before he could be comfortable about his feelings for her. There is not even a partial acceptance from his side that he could just be in love with a guy and there are uncomfortable 'jokes' about 'gay tendencies' littered in the film. *He's a Woman, She's a Man* is more than a decade behind *She's a Man* and comes from a different culture. With these considerations, it could be said that they handled the issue in a similar but better manner. Wing (Anita Yuen) was actually obsessed with the relationship between her idol Rose and her producer boyfriend Sam. She walks into their life as Sam's new 'male' protegee because she wanted to be a guardian to their relationship. Wing is devastated when she finds out that Rose and Sam share a more superficial relationship and that Sam is inevitably falling for Wing. There is the whole bisexual panic and denial scene but at least at the end, Sam admits that he would have loved Wing regardless of his gender. The film is offensive and has many stereotypical gay portrayals but somehow it is charming enough to get away with it.

The second film 'Who's the Woman, Who's the Man?' however, fails to retain this precarious balance. It follows the stereotypical romantic comedy sequel narrative where a new character is introduced to cause temporary havoc and doubts in the main couple's stable relationship but the film adds its own twist to this idea. Wing's character becomes a whiny exaggeration and Sam is constantly anxious about both being perceived as gay and about losing Wing to the downstairs superstar Fong (Anita Mui). Apparently the second film decided that it was time Wing went through her own bisexuality crisis as all the three primary charac-

ters end up sleeping with another and Wing becomes a temporary 'lesbian' until she remembers Sam. Cheung's character in the first film was indecisive and struggled with his sexuality but his vulnerability made him more palpable and he ended things with Rose in a mature manner. In the second film, it is as though as progress made to the character was all wiped away and he goes back to his narrow-minded self for most of the film and his character seemed inconsistent. Besides, with Wing's character being majorly downgraded to a single annoying dimension, it was obvious that Cheung and Mui's superior real life chemistry had trickled in even during the few fleeting moments they had together. The second film irrevocably broke the magic of the main couple and took out the strange charm that kept the first film afloat.

In spite of the certain questionable queer characters that Cheung played, his contribution to the Hong Kong new wave of films and the LGBTQ+ Asian cinema is unparalleled. Without his presence, Hong Kong queer films would not have catapulted into the advance narrative of realistic representation that it finds itself in today. *He's a Woman, She's a Man* walked so that films like *Twilight Kiss* (2019) could run. He was openly a bisexual androgynous icon during times when the queer community was hushed and pushed under the rug as though they did not exist. His flamboyant music stages and bold fashion sense also aided in redefining masculinity for Asian men. In a culture with strict patriarchal norms of what men should be like, Leslie Cheung was unafraid of his mascara running when he cried. His career might have been short but it burned bright and is immortalised in everyone's minds just like the forever youthful image of Leslie Cheung strutting across the stage in a pair of bright red stilettos.



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: VISHNUPRIYA



Bank Heist and Other Games

VIJETA KUMAR

The first time I watched a film with students in the classroom, I felt an excruciating responsibility, like I was leading a bank heist for the first time. I wasn't at ease and even though no one said anything, I couldn't shake off the feeling that even if something untoward did not happen, I'd still have to be answerable to a jury. Apart from the mundane yet annoying assembling of cables, speaker, venue, and projector—the bigger responsibility I seemed to

I waited with wide open eyes and ears to catch their sighs, giggles, their small private griefs and their joys.

carry was ensuring that the students enjoyed the film.

It was December 2012 and we were watching 500 days of summer. It was a film that had left me curious, unsettled, and intrigued. It was the first time I was watching a film with a female lead who seemed to not want things that every other heroine I knew until then had not only wanted but also chased with fervour - love, intimacy, commitment. I now wanted to see if my students would be just as smitten with the film as I had been, and just as in love with the 'strong female lead' as I was.

I waited with wide open eyes and ears to catch their sighs, giggles, their small private griefs and their joys. I knew what I wanted to do with those. What I didn't know what to do with were their eye-rolls and groans and this collective question of why we are wasting time doing this when we could literally be doing anything? It didn't occur to me then that they had never felt the need to look for a strong female lead

in a film because they were their own strong female leads. I was 24-years-old, a 90s child, and perpetually looking for strong female leads but, in that hour and a half—I had aged and was ready to retire.

They didn't like the film and I felt my ego crumbling under the weight of their unimpressed eyebrows. It took me years after that to think of this too as learning. I had assumed that watching a film with students would open up newer ways to understand the film but after several such screenings it became clear to me that films were just an excuse to get to know the students better.

It's a gift to be able to discover students in as many ways and as many times as possible. Film-watching, film-writing, film-talking all continue to be viewed suspiciously even outside of academia. Why joy is suspicious or unacademic I'll never know but I come a little closer to the life I had imagined

I sneak a glance and catch someone smirking, someone else swallowing a tear, someone else stifling a yawn, and someone else who couldn't be bothered to stifle either.

Sometimes even the boy who always looks like he's up to mischief will catch something in a film no one else has, and will look around to see if anyone else caught what he did. Sometimes the girl who has to have all her questions answered no matter how busy you are will burst into a bout of giggles at something so small that the entire class is willed into laughlets, breaking the tension. At a time when work is sometimes just showing up, sometimes a struggle, it becomes difficult to remember that the person sitting in front of you is just as human and deserving of conversation, kindness, and smile as you are. Watching a film together confirms that. Inside this moment, some kindness is returned, some



ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: OLIVE ELIAS

for myself when in the darkness of a familiar classroom, I watch students and their faces become unfamiliar as

generosity restored and we all become humans again.





CPE BATCH OF 2023

If you sit quietly and observe CPE, something that I've caught Vijeta ma'am doing quite often, you'll end up smiling. I think it's because there are some of us that are rambunctious in nature, some quiet, and others in the middle. A strange mix of polar opposites and the in-between, which works out in a way that you end up somewhat amused, and dare I say it, fond.

CPE has given me memories and taught me lessons that I'll carry with me forever. I learnt to become more shameful, in all the good ways. From exploring the streets of Bengaluru to hugging trees on campus to crying over deadlines, it was a fun journey that I wouldn't trade for anything!

From all the academic choices in the past and future, CPE is my epic love.

Dear reader, as you flip through these pages of Engster, I hope you do not look for fantastic words or writing that impresses a great scholarly sentiment. Far from it, these are our stories and they come just as we did to CPE; strange, dotty, and mostly uncertain of what we were doing here. The three years we spent as a class became about finding out that last part. Whatever conclusion we came to, on our own, we put together in this wonderful asymmetry of work, one where each of us could point to a part of and call our own.

If there's one thing I've learnt over the course of the last three years, it is to be involved in the things I believe in as thoroughly and passionately as I can. CPE fostered my desire to learn and helped me establish a stronger sense of discipline that will guide my future self; it taught me the importance of respecting others' experiences and being more mindful of the world around us. As we leave this chapter behind, I take away not only academic knowledge, but also memories and friendships formed both inside and outside the classroom as a souvenir of my time

CPE is an ecstatic ride with a tinge of hilarious stories through it, with the power to make you tear up. I will treasure every memory and when you open each one of them up, they will all tell you a different story. I didn't realise they are a part of me until my last day.



