

Hard Soft by Manohar Khushalani

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Filmakers are trying to understand the real intentions of America in its "war on terror" in the post-September 11 world

Manohar Khushalani writes

There has been a perceptible shift lately in the subjects chosen by politically inclined filmmakers around the world. Cinema of the kind not created for pure escapism, often reflects the prevalent political and social climate. In the 1970s and 1980s, many filmmakers focused on the issues that followed the problems of newly independent post-colonial (non-western) nations, the Cold War, among other things. In the 1990s and 2000s filmmakers commented on matters like the Vietnam war and the various proxy wars being fought by Soviet and U.S. allies. In the 1990s, focusing on Asia, South America, the Iran Gulf war and the conflict in Yugoslavia provided fodder for politically and socially aware cinema.

Now, in the post-September 11 world, filmmakers are trying to understand what the true goals of the U.S. really are in its "war on terror." Does the U.S. want unconditional surrender when it is not on its side? Or is it genuinely seeking the world of those who really give a damn to humanity? And is there's even a point?

The 10th International Film Festival of India showcased several films on these subjects.

Sayam Mukherjee's *Five-6-App*, an Iranian film set in post-1979 Afghanistan, depicts (through) a young refugee woman, dreams of becoming the President of Afghanistan. She witnesses a girl and a father village, put-up campaign posters for her in an abandoned palace where the only resident is an owl. The film explores the experience of women

yearning democracy in a war-torn land where power is still a dream. The film also depicts the plight of refugees who have to fight for small corners to make up a few square feet of covered space and a few drops of water. In an amazing first screening scene, Ajghel and her father cross an old man in the desert who says he is going to Kandahar to meet Mullah Omar. "You too?" he's asked, "The Americans have already overthrown you."

The Olive Harvest is Palestinian director Haneh Elwan's first feature film. She has made several short movies about Palestinian women. In the feature, The Olive Harvest is a romantic triangle involving two brothers and a woman. Always has her arm around in his village from an Israeli prison and his brother Talya has arranged a love's wedding for him. Now, Haneh falls in love with Talya, his brother's lover. Haneh's political father pushes Haneh, the brother fights as a guerrilla for his daughter. Haneh/Maria was a prisoner of Palestine. The film is a verbal commentary on the lack of unity amongst the Palestinians.

The most talked about film in the festival was French film-maker Lucie Van Trier's highly stylized *Dogville*, she has screened at Cannes, where a nation of cinema thought it was totally anti-American. The movie film is shot in a set representing a small town called Dogville. The central character is suffering, non-verbal, times played with remarkable intensity by Nicole Kidman, who is the most brave gangster who have just a price on her head. The location was Dogville where a young writer gives her shelter. Some critics believe the film's commentary on race, morality, kidnapping and the fear of "the other" is actually an endorsement of the U.S., which post-September 11 is ignoring the "Great Christian war" who committed to its "war on terror".