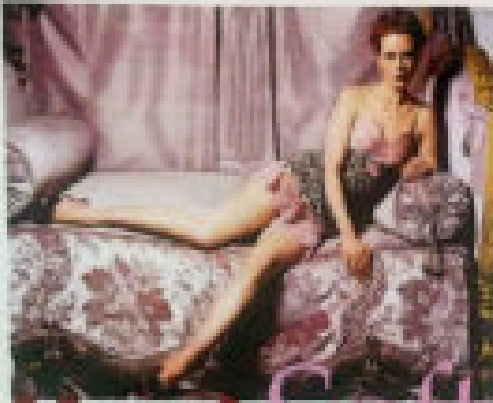


Hard Soft by Manohar Khushalani

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Hard Soft

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 who is not on its side? Or is it genuinely seeking the world of those who really pose a threat to humanity? And is Israel's war a just war?

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 Iran, depicts Ahmad, a young refugee Iranian, dreams of becoming the President of Afghanistan. He 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 immi-

grants' identity in a changed land where power is still a dream. The film also depicts the plight of refugees who have to fight for small corners to make on a few square feet of cement space and a few drops of water. In an amazing first screening scene, Ahmad and his father cross an old man in the desert who says he is going to Kandahar to meet Mullah Omar. "The late" has returned, "the Americans have already withdrawn here."

The Olive Harvest is Palestinian director Haneq 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. Ahmad has just returned to his village from an Israeli prison and his brother Taha has arranged a bride's wedding for him. Now, Ahmad falls in love with Randa, his brother's fiancée. Randa's political father pushes Ahmad, the freedom fighter as a groom for his daughter. Haneq Elwan 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 Luc Van Tieghem's highly stylized *Diary of a Soldier*. The film is set in a small town called Diyala. The central character is a soldier, who is played by Mads Mikkelsen, who is the son of those gangsters who have just a price on their head. The soldier in *Diary of a Soldier* is a young soldier given his duties. Some critics believe the film's commentary on the morality of war is compelling and the fear of "the other" is actually an endorsement of the U.S., which post-September 11 is ignoring the "Green Christmas war" who committed the "war on terror".