

# Habitat Film Club Discusses Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder*

**Habitat Film Club Discusses Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder***

A Report by

**Tarini Sridharan**



Cummings, Kelly, and Milland

At a packed screening of Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 classic *Dial M for Murder*, introduced and facilitated by Divya Raina, it was an eye-opener to how there is avid interest in the compelling cinema of the Master of Suspense. There was rapt attention throughout the viewing of the movie, as well as a very involved and intense discussion afterwards.

As Divya said in the introduction, "despite Hitchcock's populist success, his work has always quite easily juxtaposed itself with that of Bergman, Renoir or Fellini." She went on to add that Hitchcock had rightly been called "not only the creator of images", but the "auteur of dreams; or the incubus of our deepest fears."

This, she explained, was one of the key elements of *Dial M for Murder*, for what was not always recognized under its murder mystery format, was how "it explored the realization of the worst subconscious fears that can surface *within marriage*."

The film proves consistent to this with Hitchcock's black humour of a husband intent on murdering his wife and a wife having an affair with another man.

She particularly alerted one to the underlying symbolism used in the film, such as the Freudian metaphors of the *key-hole*, the *purse*, the *placement of the letter* and the *door*. Also highlighted was the intricately worked out colour scheme (Grace Kelly wears white in the first scene with her husband, red with her lover, and further on in the film when her life is in danger; somber grey).

The discussion that followed had several people bringing in the relevance of the 'murder' theme in the context of the current Aarushi – Hemraj case and there were comparisons to the superiority of Hitchcock's cinematic endings to various Hindi films. There was also a very engaged dialogue on the recurring preoccupations and themes in most of Hitchcock's films, as well as the voyeurism motif and Hitchcock's history with the heroines in his films.

There was, however, a sense of wanting more at the end of the event, a there was a clamouring for a Hitchcock festival in the same manner as conducted by Divya Raina, with many requests for various other Hitchcock movies, including his British period, and his relatively unexplored *Marnie*.

## DIAL M FOR MURDER

<b>Directed by</b>	Alfred Hitchcock
<b>Produced by</b>	<b>Associate producer:</b> William Hill <b>Uncredited:</b> Alfred Hitchcock
<b>Written by</b>	<b>Stage play &amp; screenplay:</b> Frederick Knott

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# Sarkar Raj – a product of our times where Business controls Politics

***Sarkar Raj – a product of our times where Business controls Politics***

**A Review by Joya John**



The movie *Sarkar Raj* belongs to a genre of Bollywood films that have repeatedly shown the nexus between the mafia and governments. The audience is reminded time and time again that politics and governments are not in the hands of visionaries and incorruptible leaders. This is essentially a politics of

the crooks with ideals and the crooks with no ideals. The central question that needs to be asked of the film *Sarkar Raj* is why should the audience/spectator identify with the father-son duo of the film played by Amitabh Bacchan(*Sarkar*) and Abhishek Bacchan(*Shankar*)?

The film works through certain tropes that are typical of the genre of mafia movies. An old guard, epitomized in Amitabh Bacchan or *Sarkar*, makes way for a new leadership—Abhishek Bacchan or *Shankar*. *Shankar* becomes involved in a multi-crore-power project-, which we are told, repeatedly, will benefit the people of Maharashtra. The words, “*badlav*”, “development”, and “public good” achieve an incantatory quality when reiterated by the tough talking glib *Shankar*. Not surprisingly this project encounters a contradiction that we are now only too familiar with, post *nandigram*- people versus development. The construction of the power project will displace 40,000 villagers. *Shankar* travels extensively to convince villagers of the necessity of this project. We never hear these arguments because of a deafening background score that reinforces the aura of the leader *Shankar*. All we are given are a series of homilies on “welfare”, exchanged between Amitabh Bacchan and Aishwarya Rai.

However, opposition builds up to the proposed project and is spearheaded by *Som*, a peasant leader who convinces villagers that the project will benefit only the metropolis of Mumbai. The nature of this opposition is however suspect from the start and we learn later that *Som*'s resistance is only part of a larger Machiavellian politics to overthrow the *Sarkar* backed government in Maharashtra. *Shankar*, the visionary, is killed and Amitabh Bacchan or *Sarkar* discovers that the project was never meant to take off and “power to the people” was never the purpose of the project. Through a series of vendetta killings *Sarkar*, reestablishes the power of the “*raj*”.

The film *Sarkar Raj* ends with painting a rather grim picture of the world of politics. Interestingly its visionary-*Shankar*

has strong links to the underworld and is not comparable to the student leader of *Yuva*, played by Ajay Devgan or a socially motivated protagonist like Sharukh Khan in *Swades*. Characteristically these would be the agents of social change for middle class audiences. So why does Ram Gopal Verma, decide to deify a hero who is after all from the mafia? *Sarkar Raj* is very much a product of its times when clearly the world of business controls politics. This has also meant that the self-proclaimed agent of social welfare is no longer the state, but big corporations. *Sarkar Raj* also depicts an old style mafia now diversifying into 'clean'/aboveboard business. Ironically the film makes us believe that we are not watching a business venture take off but are in fact witnessing a welfare project to develop resources. The film is however a product of its own dilemmas. Can there be private profit with welfare? The film portrays power hungry politicians and money-grubbing businessmen who are not remotely concerned with welfare. In the grim world of *Sarkar Raj*, the public can only be pawns in the machinations of the powerful. Even when we see protest, the scenes of violence are strategic. Dissident peasants go on a rampage, destroying public property and attacking civilians and it becomes easy for an audience to distance itself from these concerns and see this protest as "incitement" of a misguided public. At the end of the day it's the goonda with a conscience or the visionary businessman and their idea of public good that controls Ram Gopal's plot. It is no small irony that Abhishek Bacchan has played the role of both the visionary entrepreneur in *Guru* as well as the visionary gangster in *Sarkar Raj*. Despite its rather patronizing subtext of public good being thwarted by corrupt politicians and unscrupulous businessmen and mafia the film *Sarkar Raj* deifies power not the people.

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# **Bioscope – Ram Rahman's photo exhibition (Divya Raina)**

## **Bioscope – Ram Rahman's photo exhibition**

**a REVIEW by**

**Divya Raina**



**In Mahatma Gandhi's lap – Bhupek Khakkar as seen by Ram Rehman**

When does one become a tourist of reality? Can photography explain man to man? It was a famous photographer who once said; "A photograph is a secret about a secret...the more it tells you the less you know". These thoughts came to mind while visiting Ram Rahman's recent photo exhibition called Bioscope, held at the Rabindra Bhawan Gallery in New Delhi recently. From the wonderfully intimate collage mounted at the beginning of the exhibition; featuring Ram's famous parents, dancer Indrani Rahman and architect father Habib Rahman, it felt like an instantaneous view of the entire trajectory of Ram's life from infancy onwards.

The exhibition consists mostly of black and white

photographs, with compelling images and portraits of both the well-known and not-so-well-known, taken at various periods in this extraordinarily gifted and socially committed designer and photographer. Ram's forte is in the capturing of the moment and freezing it in time. The overhead view of Safdar Hashmis funeral, for instance expresses the horror and sense of solidarity at this most ghastly slaughter of an amazing life.

Also, Ram revels in the relationship between foreground and subject and there is generally an extraordinarily fraught tension between the two as can be seen in the accompanying picture of painter Bhupen Khaker in the lap of Gandhi.

Whether Ram has taken pictures of left-liberal friends and SAHMAT colleagues, or pictures of Rajeev Sethi and other "culture-czars" and "czarinas" or of wrestlers or of inanimate figures, dummies, posters and graffiti, everything is touched with a faintly self-mocking irony. Finally, these pictures at the exhibition, tell us more about the photographer himself, his concerns and ultimately his "ethics of seeing".

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## **INDIAN IDOL FINALIST TAKES A MUSICAL VOW (B.B. Nagpal)**

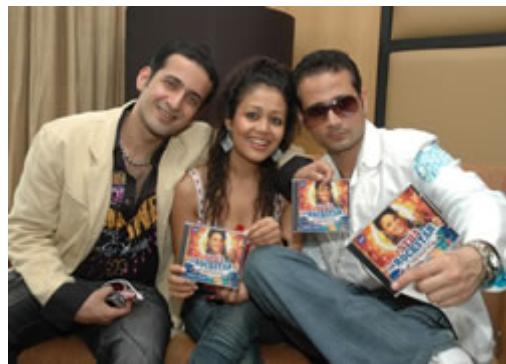
**INDIAN IDOL FINALIST TAKES A MUSICAL VOW**

**"Dowry? My Left Foot! Grooms Dad Foot's the Bill"**

by

**B B Nagpal**

## Senior Film Critic



This is a new way to fight the menace of dowry – through rock entertainment that appeals to the gennext generation and takes the message home.

In her very first music album, this finalist from the second edition of Indian Idol has in a song categorically sent out the message that all the festivities will take place as usual for her marriage, but the expenses will have to be borne by the groom's father.

And though stated lightly, Neha Kakkar told this critic that the message was not to be taken lightly. She said the song, written by her brother Tony, had conveyed a view that both the siblings held. Why is it that the bride's parents have to bear the cost of marriage, and also pay dowry, she asked.

But 'Tere Baap ka' is only one of the eight tracks in the album, *Neha the Rockstar*, which has been brought out by a music company owned by a duo who are themselves well known in the world of Hindi and Punjabi pop – the Meet Brothers, Harmeet and Manmeet. In fact, this is the first album brought out by their new music company 'Meet Bros Music'.

Neha, who marked her 19<sup>th</sup> birthday last week, said she felt that messages can be conveyed more powerfully through music since all the young people loved to listen to new numbers.

Asked why the Meet Brothers selected her, she said 'I am happy they saw something different in me and selected me'.

She said she had been singing since the age of four when she would sing in bhajan sandhya (prayer meetings). She had not received any training.

However, she admitted she had been inspired by her sister Sonu Kakkar who has become popular with the number 'Babuji zaraa dheere chalo, bijli kharhi yahaan bijli kharhi'.

When asked about the genuineness of reality shows, she admitted that there was a lot of written scripting in the 'fights' between judges, but said the shows were by and large genuine.

Harmeet said that the duo always believed in making songs on real situations. For example, when Rakhi Sawanthalad planted her now famous kiss on Mika's cheek, they had sung the song 'Behen tune pappi kyun lee'.

Asked why they had gone to Mumbai to make a career in Punjabi singing, both Harmeet and Manmeet said that they felt that the metropolis was the right city for music. They also had a passion for acting and got a break in serials like 'Kyun ki saas bhi kabhi bahu thi' for which one of them one an award, 'Kumkum', 'Kalash' and some others.

Music was something they had done from childhood, but it was only ZEE TV which first recognized their singing talent.

When asked why they had decided to launch their own music company, they said the existing companies appeared to have lost interest in genuine rock stars.

They felt that Neha was a natural as she was not just a good singer, but also a gifted dancer. Furthermore, they felt that singers who took part in reality shows were often forgotten later.

Asked about the concept of the father-in-law paying dowry, they said that the launch of the album in Mumbai had been

unusual when the girl came on a 'ghorri' (horse) and the 'groom' went in a 'doli'.

On a serious note, they said several women's organizations had approached them to perform this song in the presence of audiences.

They were now planning a Sufi album of their own and had signed three other artistes as well.

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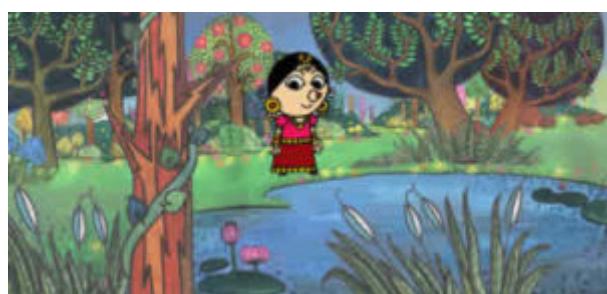
# 'Instant Culture – pushing children too far?

***'Instant Culture – pushing children too far?***

**An Examination of the competitive pressures of our educational system**

**by**

**Divya Raina**



**The Innocent World of Children's transgressed ?**

**—“Conspicuous Achievement.”**

This phrase implies that a child must transform himself into some sort of prodigy and excel. The most likely areas are sports, 'conspicuous' social causes, being super-fluent in a foreign language, or being the musical equivalent of Beethoven. 'Leaving no stone unturned' has become a middle-

class parent's motto. Landing a seat in some elite college is no longer enough apparently.

In India, are we aware of what are we doing to our own children? Yes, our own middle-class children, our so-called privileged youth? Now that summer is here, are not Delhi's children being packed off to summer workshops? Are they not spending the scorching summer learning "something useful"? Why is 'getting bored' no longer an option? Spending time alone is unheard of. It's like leaving the tap water running. Such an obscene waste. Activities such as introspection, thinking, doodling, drawing, just exploring one's universe are certainly not even considered activities, and kids who do this are condemned, reprimanded, considered lazy, moody, shy, unsocial and impractical. Spontaneous creative activity done at home, is 'too messy', too time consuming, vague and without any direction or goal.

And who dares to spend waking hours day- dreaming? Being sensitive is ghastly; one has to have a thick skin to survive. After all; it's a parent's job to see that his kid is street-smart, assertive, if not downright aggressive. Morals, values, and ethics take a backseat to cut-throat competition. After all, it is a "dog-eat-dog" world out there, and for this purpose one must be thoroughly trained and prepared. Who remembers the lines "...What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?"

We are told repeatedly that our children need constant diversion. Yet watching TV is like selling one's soul to the devil. For most parents, simply surfing the net unsupervised makes them anxious about their kids getting to unsuitable sites. If sending them to the hills or even some exotic locale is not possible, and we don't want them hanging out in air-conditioned malls or movie-multiplexes all the time; and when buying the latest gadgetry, branded cell phones and designer clothing is inadequate; we simply have to ensure that they must not remain idle, hence, the old adage about an idle mind

being the devil's workshop is trotted out as justification.

For those in school, holiday homework is something that will be finished off in the last week or so of the hols. Vacation time must be spent acquiring something else, an extra-curricular skill that is fun and keeps the child gainfully employed for some, if not all the time. Dance classes, from kathak to salsa, yoga camps, squash or chess, swimming, theatre, piano playing and what -have-you, all are considered vital. If one can actually swing some membership to clubs and special centers, then this potpourri of skill-learning will get even better.

Reading, though highly valued, seems the most challenging for parents. The very word 'classic' seems anathema to kids, and a 'good' book translates to 'boring'. To explain, or to justify this, is the convenient cliché doing the rounds; "the dwindling attention-span of today's kids and their inability to focus for long". If a child still shows some inclination to read then let him/her attend a reading workshop where he /she will be able to plough through specially selected titles for a fee and which will be conducted by some specialist aunty or uncle, whose manner appears more magnanimous than the average school teacher.

Far from de-schooling society, it is as though we want school all the time. Everything has to be structured, pre-digested, pre-packaged and sold to the anxious consumer/ parent. And the parent is totally consumed with anxiety and often guilt about providing the very best he can afford, or obtain.

When did we stop becoming parents and become instructors instead? All the time, that we are with our children we are hell-bent on instructing them, on teaching them something or the other: at the dining table it is all about saying robotic "please" and "thank you" , traveling anywhere becomes a lesson in geography, opening a newspaper is all about current affairs and improving general knowledge. The examples can be

multiplied, even visits to a park is all about botany or keeping fit. We are in a position of authority; the child must simply go along with what we have planned for him/her

Often, elderly relatives are now being valued as culture givers, heritage communicators, with their smattering of folklore, wise, pithy sayings, and interpretations of the epics, and dusty tomes or antiquated relics of the past are being venerated in many homes in a manner never seen before. Parents who dump children with elderly relatives feel that by some strange process of cultural osmosis "good Indian values" will seep through to their video-game-ridden minds, and they will be purged. Regional languages will be spoken and not forgotten, there will be the nurturance of the glorious value of Respect for Elders. Time spent with kids is always 'quality time' and caregivers, home-makers, and nurturers are becoming adept in the multiple roles of chauffeurs and registration experts who alertly scout for the very best workshops and sessions that the city has to offer. Time is at a premium; time-slots and schedules are vital.

What underlies this frantic activity that parents seem to face? Is it seen as an inability to provide the very best cultural inputs? Does it stem from the fear that the homogenizing influences of our televised, globalized world is reducing each child to looking and dressing alike, speaking and even thinking in a similar fashion? Is it a fear that unless a child has some exceptional talent that is recognized by all, the 'portfolio' of their accomplishments will be inadequate?

This entire rigmarole, which we know has begun when four year old children are packed off to 'confidence building workshops', comes to a head at the time of college admissions, bringing out tremendous inherent inner fears of rejection. This is the time when the most claustrophobic competition gets underway. Isn't this getting a seat in a prized college or brand-name institution, the ultimate nirvana? Isn't this what

those who committed suicide over their non-performance in the dreaded exam time were made to feel totally inadequate about?

Has it anything to do with a vicarious realizing of our own unfinished dreams? Is it an "I never had the ability/opportunity/finances to do what I wanted to, so I must seize this chance and ensure my son/daughter is able to." Is it less about molding our children, and more about our own unfinished business?

And what does the child think and feel about this? Does the young adult have a say in this process? Or does he/she mindlessly go along with whatever has been planned? Look around you and you will get your answers.

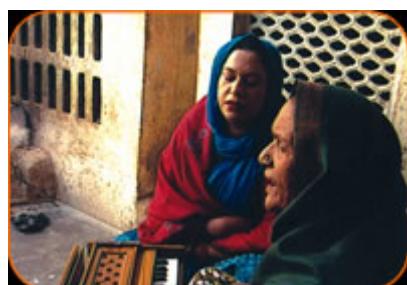
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# **Desire and Repetition: The miniaturisation of the Hindi film song (Shikha Jhingan)**

**Desire and Repetition: The miniaturisation of the Hindi film song**

Fourth Asian Women's Film Festival 2008 "Insights and Aspirations"

**By Shikha Jhingan**



### Scene from Shikha Jhingan's '*Born to Sing*'

Let us examine the contemporary popular Hindi film songs and their circulation through the convergence of new media technologies. How has the emergence of global television and digital music changed the aesthetics, the cultural codes and the formal structure of the Hindi film song by mobilizing new circuits for the consumption of popular music? In fact, the use of repetition and heightened codes of visuality have perhaps given new forms of identity to a large number of young girls on 'reality shows' based on popular film music.

In recent times, one big change in the structure of the song has been the use of a 'hook line' as a repetitive structure. This clever use of the hook line allows the song as a musical category to evoke a discernible response from the body. Popular songs like *Nach Baliye* (*Bunty Aur Babli*), *Dhoom Machale Dhoom* (*Dhoom*), *Mauja hi Mauja* (*Jab We Met*) rely on the repetition of words or cluster of words and rhythmic patterns that is described as the hook line of the song. This metonymical formulation completely undermines the conventional structure of the film song thus opening up the song for an 'afterlife' for its circulation in the global circuits of value and exchange. The repetitive use of the hook line through television promos and trailers, reality shows, award nights, ring tones and advertisements of mobile phones and telecom service providers, leads to obfuscation of the original song and its emotional appeal. In this new formulation the film song not only gets unhinged from the narrative of the film but is primarily meant to evoke a response from a dancing body.

In analysing Reality Television and talent shows based on music, one would like to draw attention to the democratisation where it is possible to have greater access to these technologies not just as consumers but in recreation of the musical mode. What is interesting here is that the accent here is not just on being a good singer but a great performer. The

mobilization of a unique voice along with a great performance, an energetic dancing body, go into this new form of dispersal. The creation of a certain persona, with the help of props, dress, hats, belts, gestures and other visual signs create the uniqueness of each singer. So music is providing a basis for the creation of an identity. The emphasis is on showcasing 'your own voice' in sharp contrast to the earlier phase of remixes and cover versions which relied entirely on imitation or the recreation of an 'affect'. What is even more interesting is that there is a blurring of boundaries between music and dance, between the singer and the listener, between rehearsal and performance between sound and music and between voice and sound.

**Shikha Jhingan**, an IAWRT member, is a Professor in Media at Lady Sri Ram College , New Delhi

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# **Project Half Widows, in partnership with IAWRT and APDP**

**Project *Half Widows*,**

in partnership with IAWRT and APDP

**info by**

**Iffat Fatima, Filmmaker**



The project "**Half Widows**" is a three year media project, which began in 2006. The project is a partnership between International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT), a forum for personal contact and professional development among women broadcasters worldwide and the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) Kashmir. APDP is an association of the relatives of the victims of **Enforced Disappearances**, campaigning collectively to seek justice and to get information on the whereabouts of the missing members of their families. The project conceived and executed by Iffat Fatima is supported by FOKUS, a Norwegian based organisation which by supporting project based cooperation between Norwegian and their partner organisations in the south, aims to contribute to the improvement of economic, social and political status of women world wide.

The project is about the struggle of the family members of the disappeared persons in Kashmir, who have spent vast sums of money, time, resources and energy in a legal system that has systematically failed to provide justice to the victims. Enforced disappearance is not recognized as a crime under Indian law. Specifically the project is about women whose husbands have disappeared and are missing in the more than decade old violence in Kashmir. These women known as **half widows** in Kashmir, are living in a state of limbo, suspended in a space where they lead a life of uncertainty and anxiety. There is no closure for them to pick up the threads of their lives and move on. Being young and vulnerable they are under the pressure of their family and society to stay within the

framework of marriage and conform to a marital status, while as the reality is that they are without husbands. Their lives are torn apart and their status undefined, subject to Islamic legal procedures which are ambiguous and determined by local interpretations.

APDP was founded in 1994 by Parveena Ahangar whose 17-year-old son was abducted and never heard of again In 1994. Parveena filed a habeas corpus petition in the Srinagar High Court. With the help of human rights activists and lawyers more and more petitions continued to be filed. More and more family members got together, went to court together, held demonstrations together. Thus began a movement, a collective struggle formalized as APDP. The testimonies of the members of APDP and the documentation of cases of disappeared persons in Kashmir indicate that the practice of enforced disappearance is widespread and systematic. Almost 8000 people are thought to have disappeared, some as young as 13 or 14 years old. A large number of disappearance cases remain undocumented for various reasons, including fear of reprisal allegedly by the security forces.

### **Media Documentation**

The media project seeks to document the personal experiences of these women and the stories which emerge from these experiences through the production of a documentary film. The documentary film will explore issues of memory , violence and healing and be a space for women whose voice is buried in the larger political and militaristic discourse to narrate their experiences with violence from their own perspectives. Besides a video documentary the project also includes 3 to 4 short video magazines which highlight immediate concerns and problems confronted by women as theystruggle to get legal assistance and information about their family members who are missing.

However the larger objective of the project is to assist and

support the APDP effort to launch a long term self sustaining information and advocacy campaign against “Disappearances” and to build awareness about its impact on women. Community level participation and networking is an important component of the campaign. The process of documentation, dissemination and distribution is being undertaken through a consultative process with APDP members, a network of organisations, activists, academics and practitioners. Through workshops, and conferences APDP members are trained to acquire long term organisational and media skills to be able to carry on the advocacy campaign independently. The project raises important issues of human rights, peace and justice confronting other countries as well. It will generate material that has international resonance as well as relevance and will urge policy makers and those who wield power to address the concerns of human rights , democracy and justice.

**Source: IAWRT, Iffat Fatima**

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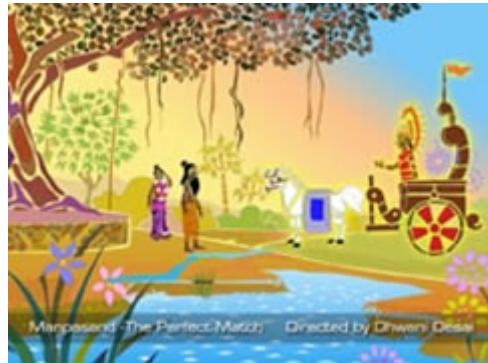
# **Interpreting Myth and Recreating New Myths**

*‘Interpreting Myth and Recreating New Myths’*

**4<sup>th</sup> IAWRT Asian Women’s Film Festival 2008**

**a Documentary film Review by**

**Divya Raina**



### The Perfect Match' by Dhwani Desai

The wonderful world of tales from the Panchatantra is open to numerous tellings and retellings. The extraordinary elasticity of these tales mean that one can enjoy seeing in them current, contemporary concerns embedded in their structure.

The animation documentary 'Man Pasand – The Perfect Match' by Dhwani Desai about the "journey of a father in search of a suitable groom for his daughter, which was screened at the 4<sup>th</sup> IAWRT Asian Women's Film Festival at the India International Centre, provoked some heated discussion.

Some of the questions raised were whether the selection of the Panchatantra tale itself as a subject of the film was a bit regressive. Did it imply that the 'she-mouse' could never have 'lofty ambitions' and ideals; unable to aspire to marrying a 'god' instead of the implications of marrying only a 'mouse' – as this would restrict her to her lowly status.

Some in the audience wondered if the film maker had thought this through and whether its repercussions had occurred to her. Moreover the answers provided by the defensive film-maker present on the occasion were not considered very satisfactory either. Later, in an informal session, outside the screening venue, someone in the audience asserted that the woman/mouse had been allowed to freely choose her future husband by the father, and wasn't this a progressive step?

Some others wondered why the Children's Film Society had

decided to use this particular fable and sponsor it. Was there any ominous connection, or ulterior motive in doing so?

However, a closer reading of the film would suggest that the agency the 'she-mouse' enjoys in willfully rejecting suitor after suitor and finally settling to her own choice – the 'he-mouse' is in fact, radically subversive and extremely liberating in a different level.

This reading is in fact consistent with the moral allegory of the film's structure – the false bravado of the fiery sun, the coldness of the 'puffed up' god of 'wind', the blackness of the god of thunder, the hard rigidity of the so-called 'solid' mountain god – all in contrast to the deceptively insignificant mouse that can actually terrify the mountain god by merely boring a hole in its side.

The entire parable actually serves to function as a tremendously subversive way of looking power, and what we perceive as strength and where true strength *actually* lies.

The entire parable makes us re-examine our own notions of strength as well as gender roles (such as the typically 'masculine' desirable qualities in a suitor of 'strength', 'solid' character, etc).

Why is it that we aren't able to effectively read and analyse allegory and animation, and are unable to see parables from a multiplicity of viewpoints and instead get weighed down by our attitudes and readings?

The exposure to many diverse films and the analysis that follows the screenings is vital if we are to progress not only in our cine-literacy but also in the new reworking of myth and fable in our lives.

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# ROMANTIC FILMS CAN ALSO CARRY SOCIAL MESSAGES: YASH CHOPRA

**ROMANTIC FILMS CAN ALSO CARRY SOCIAL MESSAGES: YASH CHOPRA**

by

**B B Nagpal**

Senior Film Critic



1. Yash Chopra

2. Raj

Tilak, Yash Chopra and Music maestro Ravi

NEW DELHI, APRIL: Filmmaker Yash Chopra has strongly defended his brand of cinema saying that he does not show mere commercial romanticism but infuses a lot of meaningful content into it.

Speaking on the sidelines of a festival of films by his elder brother B R Chopra, he said that it was erroneous to say that his films did not have the kind of social commitment that one saw in the films of his brother.

While noting that he had got his first break as a director in his brother's 'Dhol ka Phool', he said he was entitled to make his own kind of cinema.

Paying a tribute to his brother, he said Baldev Raj Chopra was probably the only filmmaker in India who had never made any compromises and gone ahead and made the kinds of films he wanted irrespective of their commercial outcome.

The cinematic tribute from 18 to 20 April with nine masterpieces from the BR stable were part of 'Guild Greats', an initiative of the Film and Television Producers Guild of India . Co-organised by ASSOCHAM, was sponsored by Time Broadband Services Group's 'My Time' to kick-start the announcement of qualitative IPTV service launch in India through empowering technology and compelling content.

Yash Chopra recalled how his brother had proved wrong filmmakers at the time who felt films on themes like widow re-marriage, rehabilitation of prostitutes, or a court room drama sans songs would never be able to woo audiences.

Speaking at the inauguration and a discussion on the second day, BR's son Ravi said his father has always been a man of principles who has continued to make films that he felt committed about, irrespective of the financial returns. BR is a 'karmayogi' who firmly believes in the motto of BR Films from the Mahabharata which says one must do one's duty without worrying about the consequences. Ravi said he would not dare re-make any of his father's films because he could never bring out the finesse they contained, and stressed that the message in his father's films came out in a subtle manner without the film turning into a documentary.

The filmmaker's son-in-law and Guild Vice President Raj Tilak, who is an eminent filmmaker in his own right, said showing films of BR Chopra meant celebrating excellence.

Amit Dev who is Chairman of the ASSOCHAM Committee on Convergence said though India had the largest entertainment industry in the world, its global share was not very high. He said the Guild and ASSOCHAM had come together on a single platform and the offshoot was creation of a Content Licensing Centre. He announced another festival of Dr Chopra's films would be held later in the year.

Ms Sujata Dev, Managing Director of Time Broadband, said the

launch of IPTV (Internet Protocol Television) on TV sets, computers and mobiles would make TV more interactive, and help to fight piracy and empower content protection. TIME is preparing to shortly launch IPTV over both Mobile and Broadband in India , through collaboration with recently licensed progressive telecom operators; under the brand of "MY TIME" content package.

Music maestro Ravi recalled several incidents to show how Dr Chopra had given him complete freedom in the way he composed his music. He also spoke of the rapport he had always shared with Dr Chopra and recalled an incident where several people in the fraternity had asked the filmmaker to get the music of 'Nikaah' done by some other music director saying Ravi would not be able to do justice, but Dr Chopra had not paid heed.

Basu Chatterjee echoed this when he said Dr Chopra had never interfered with the way he made his films for the BR banner. He said he had not many producers who gave so much freedom to their directors.

Senior Film Critic Pradeep Sardana said the issues raised by the BR banner were today being debated and were as fresh as ever. For example, the film 'Nikaah' had raised issues that were being discussed in courts of law today.

Eminent film scribe B B Nagpal recalled social themes dealt with by Dr Chopra in several films made almost fifty years earlier. He said issues like widow re-marriage (dealt both in 'Ek hi Raasta' and the more recent 'Babul', rehabilitation of a prostitute ('Sadhna') and questioning the laws of rape and divorce ('Insaaf ka Taraazu' and 'Nikaah' respectively) were still relevant and some filmmakers were now attempting to make films on these themes, though not with as much success.

Filmmaker Ms Savita Oberoi said she had learnt a lot from interacting with Dr Chopra. She referred to the freedom he and his son Ravi had given to her when she made her hour-long film

on B R Chopra as part of her six-film series on Dadasaheb Phalke Awardees. Excerpts from the film were screened after the discussion on the second day, while an in-house film on Dr Chopra was shown at the inauguration.

Members of the Chopra family included Ravi Chopra's wife, Ravi 's two sisters and their husbands, Ravi 's son Abhay, and his daughter and son-in-law.

The festival opened with 'Insaaf Ka Tarazu' (1980), and other films screened were: Hamraaz (1967), Waqt (1965), Ittefaq (1969), Baghban (2003), Gumraah (1963), Nikaah (1982), Naya Daur (1957), and Chhoti Si Baat (1976).

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## **Hecklers Cross The Line (Manish Vidhani)**

**Over The *Line*?**

**Hecklers Cross The *Line***

**Interrupt performance of Israel Horovitz's play '*Line*' at India Habitat Center Manish Vidhani reports on the unsavoury event**



### Crossing the Line?

Forgotten lines, falling pants, flying props, ringing mobile phones... I am sure at least one of these has at one point of time, or the other, been the reason behind an interrupted act. But, saturday night at the India Habitat Centre, the performance of Israel Horovitz's *Line* was interrupted by a protest.

A little insight, I believe, is necessary for some perspective.

*Line* is now in its 33<sup>rd</sup> year of continuous performance at 13th Street Repertory Theatre in New York and is the longest running 'off-off Broadway' production (Off-Off-Broadway refers to Non-Broadway theatrical productions of New York City in small theatres having fewer than 100 seats.

Its adaptation, directed by Mallika Taneja and Neel Chaudhuri, being performed by The First City Theatre Foundation at the India Habitat Centre was interrupted by some of the audience who walked out of the hall and forced the production team to stop the performance, following which the play was abruptly stopped. The "due to unavoidable circumstances..." routine was duly performed. The crew and the staff were as clueless as the

audiences were, to the extent that nobody knew who necessitated the action and for what reason.

Apparently, it was “too much” and unacceptable to some. Sure, the dialogues were explicit and there was foul language in the play. No denying the fact. But, what exactly is expected from a play, the entry ticket for which clearly says that the entry is for adults only? A loud beep every time a four letter word is used? The naivety of treating *Adults only*, as blithely as *Shake well before use* is inexplicable.

I hope that our select group of audience who prodded me into writing this article read this and reflect on the following. The team did their job by specifying that the play was for adults. Neither did they intrude your comfort zone by beaming vulgar images on your television at primetime nor did they put obscene posters around the city. It was you who forced your opinion on them and a hundred other audiences by interrupting the performance.

Although, I am grateful for the fact, that there was no display of hooliganism. No slogans, no angry words were exchanged. Yet, it struck the same chord inside me. Is it true that we have become a nation of self-righteous people who have more opinions than information? Whatever little awareness we have, seems to be directed only at reinforcing our insecurities and not otherwise.

Well, all said and done, after fifteen minutes of chaos, confusion and refunding of tickets, the performance was continued due to the decisiveness of the rest of the audience and their support.

As far as the play is concerned, *Line* is a mirror to our flaws and provides food for thought. It is the story of five people waiting in a line. What is the line for and what are these people waiting for? These questions seem irrelevant when compared to what each of them does, to be the first in the

line. In stark contrast to the unhurried initial minutes, the one act show leaves the audience and more so, the actors, breathless. The beauty of it lies in the fact that one detests these characters by the end. A fast and high energy show with absorbing sound effects and intelligent stage utilization is a memorable one breaking News.

BRT JAM

. **Manish Vidhani**

Stagebuzz Correspondent