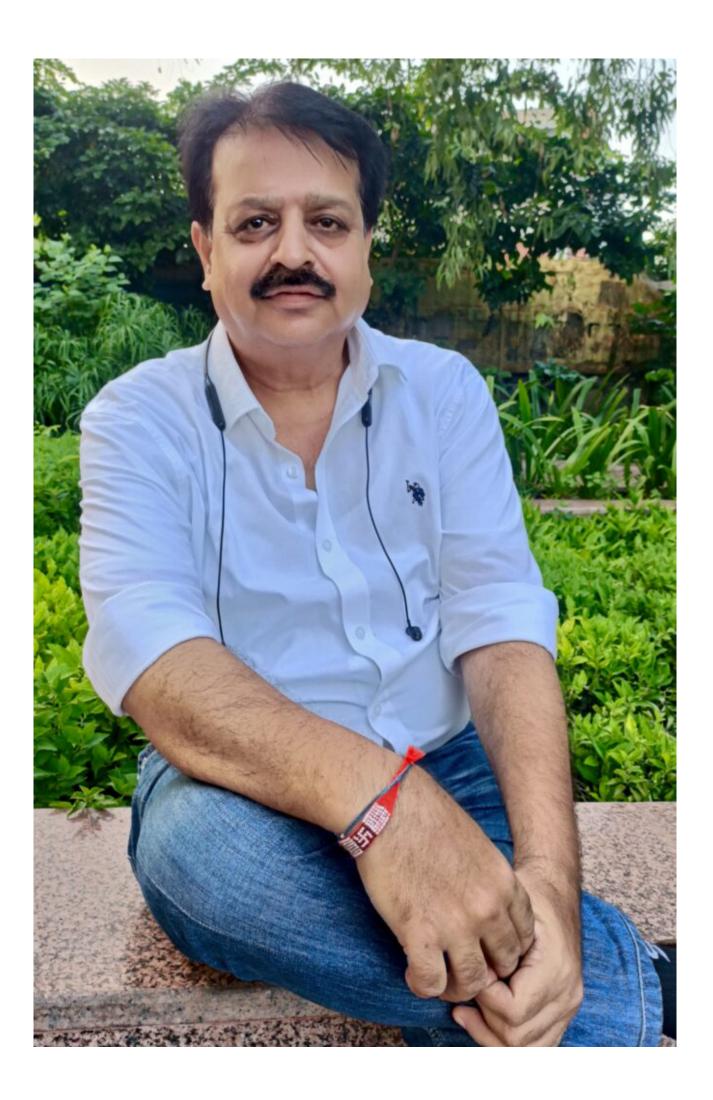
Shyam Swami: A Journey from Stage to Screen



The theatrical journey of **Shyam Swami**, which began in the historic lanes of Bikaner, Rajasthan, has evolved over the years into a significant cultural odyssey, seamlessly bridging the worlds of stage and screen. His earliest tryst with performance took place during his school years, where weekly assemblies became a platform for reciting poems, narrating stories, and enacting skits. His selection for a drama in the annual function further nurtured this emerging passion for theatre.

A pivotal moment arrived before his college years when he was selected for the Theatre Summer Workshop organized by the Jodhpur Sangeet Natak Akademi. This workshop provided him with an intensive introduction to various theatrical forms and techniques. It was here that he played the lead role in Charpai, written by Suresh Awasthi and directed by S.D. Chauhan — a performance that marked his first significant step as a theatre practitioner.

Following this, Swami became associated with the Marudhara Theatre Society. Under the direction of Ashok Joshi, he performed the lead role in *Tidorav*, a Rajasthani play authored by Harish Bhadani, which was successfully staged across the state in nine performances. During this period, he also participated in a *National School of Drama (NSD) workshop* conducted by Vagish Kumar Singh. The workshop resulted in the creation of *Ek Ped Ki Kahani*, an environment-themed play that was performed over 37 times throughout Rajasthan and received widespread acclaim from audiences.

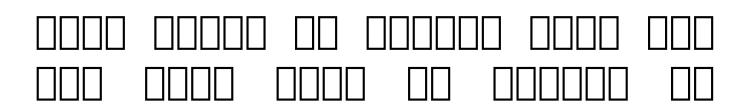
Upon completing his graduation, Swami moved to Delhi for professional reasons. Although he stepped away from active theatre for a period, his engagement with the art continued through regular attendance at performances. A fortuitous meeting with director Ashok Talwar at Shri Ram Centre opened new avenues, leading to his selection for a role in the television serial *Vaidik Kaleen Nariyaan*. This opportunity brought him closer to the worlds of acting and production,

marking the beginning of a new phase in his artistic journey.

Swami then fully embraced production work, collaborating with some of the most eminent figures in Indian theatre and cinema, including *Tigmanshu Dhulia*, *Gulzar Sahab*, *Sagar Sarhadi*, *and Meghna Gulzar*. His passion for theatre remained constant, reflected in his significant contribution to the production of *Amal Allana's* teleplay *Devyani Ka Kehna*, a noteworthy milestone in his career.

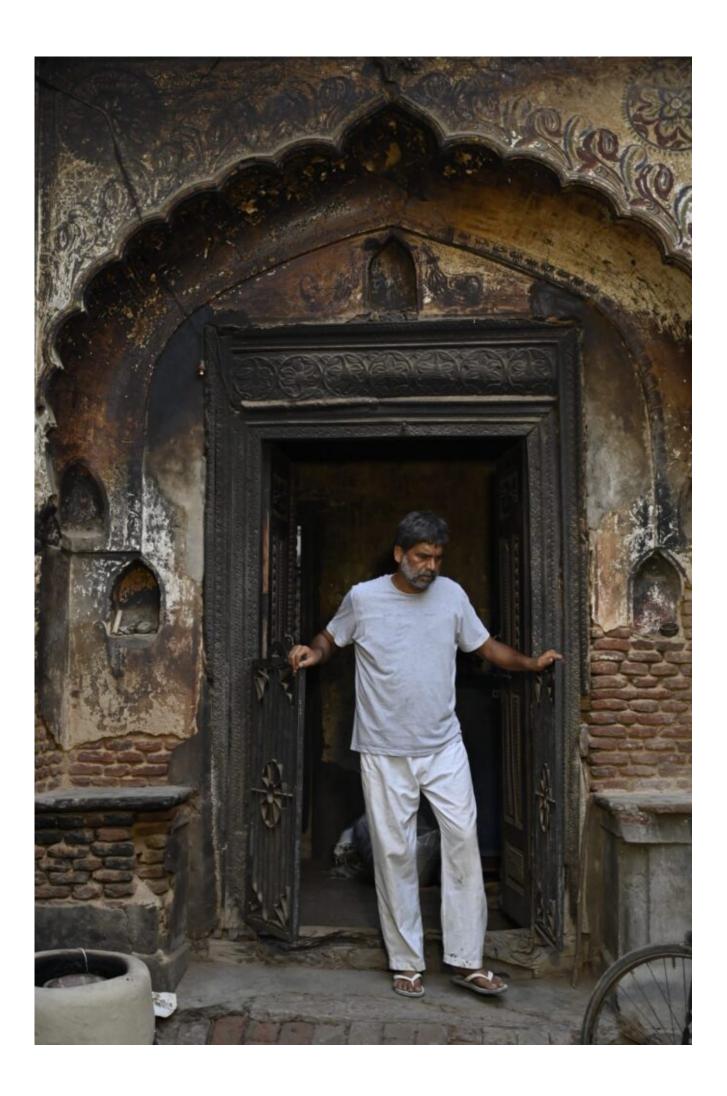
During the Commonwealth Games, he undertook the production responsibilities for NSD professor Hema Singh's acclaimed solo play Zindagi Madhur Hai, Kuman Senu Mein, which was successfully performed more than thirteen times across India, including at the Bharat Rang Mahotsav. His dual role as actor and production member in the Parsi play Khoobsurat Bala, directed by Vagish Kumar Singh and Hema Singh for the Theatre Olympics, stands as a highlight of his theatrical career.

Years of active involvement in both theatre and screen ultimately inspired him to establish the *Skin and Stage Foundation (Trust)*. Today, Shyam Swami brings together his acting expertise and production experience to lead this institution as a vibrant cultural initiative. His journey exemplifies how dedication, passion, and creativity can converge to shape a meaningful artistic legacy, contributing to both traditional theatre and contemporary media.





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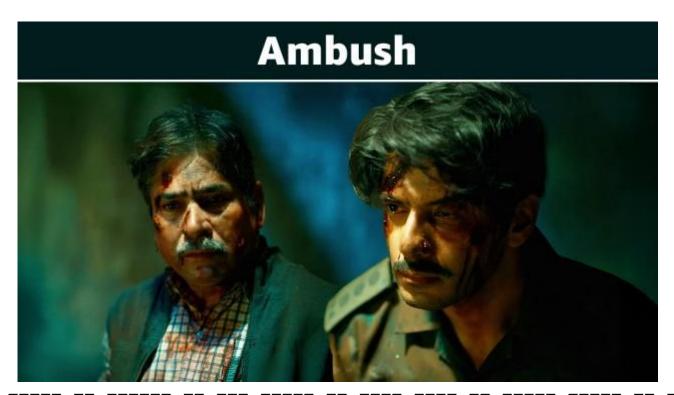
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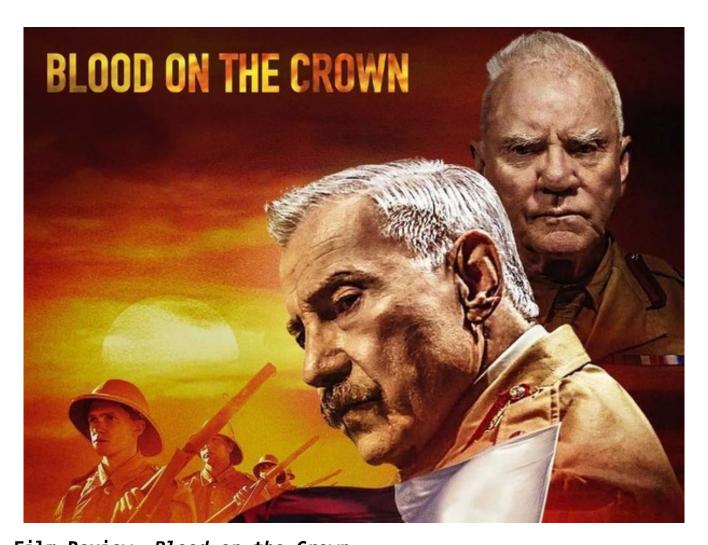
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Blood On The Crown — a film

from Malta and its Historical synergy with Indian History



Film Review: Blood on the CrownDirected by Davide Ferrario | Starring Harvey Keitel, Malcolm McDowell, Tom Prior

Blood on the Crown (originally titled Just Noise) is a historical drama that brings to screen one of the most pivotal yet underrepresented events in Malta's history—the Sette Giugno (June 7) uprising of 1919. With an international cast and a subject deeply rooted in national identity, the film aims to spotlight a moment of civil unrest that marked the Maltese people's resistance to British colonial rule.

Historical Context

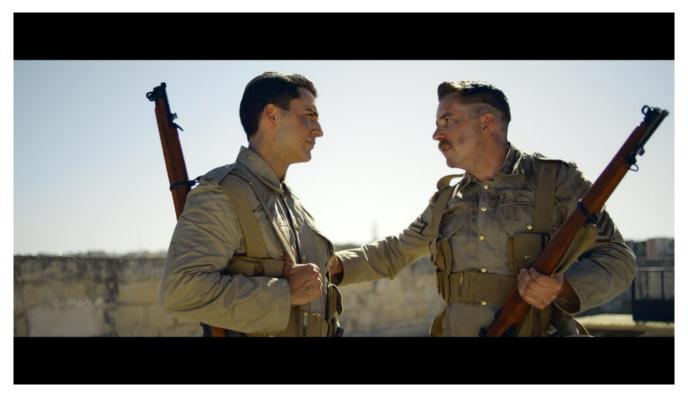
The film recounts the events surrounding June 7, 1919, when British troops opened fire on unarmed Maltese civilians protesting inflation, food shortages, and political marginalization under colonial administration. The uprising resulted in the deaths of four Maltese citizens and galvanized the movement for greater self-governance, which would eventually lead to Malta's independence decades later. It was presented by Reuben Gauci, High Commissioner of Malta in India on 1st May, 2025 to celebrate 60 years of Malta-India diplomatic relations and also to mark 106 years of Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the June 7 uprising in Malta, parallel events from the contemporary history of the two countries.

Story and Execution

Blood on the Crown attempts to balance dramatic storytelling with historical accuracy. The narrative alternates between perspectives—those of local protestors, British administrators, and foreign journalists—giving viewers a panoramic sense of the tensions on the island. Tom Prior plays a young journalist who uncovers the human cost of colonial suppression, while screen veterans Harvey Keitel and Malcolm McDowell lend weight to the roles of the high-ranking officials caught between imperial duty and conscience.

The film succeeds in portraying the injustice and brutality of colonial authority, especially in scenes depicting the shooting of protestors and the desperate attempts of civilians to assert their dignity. However, some aspects of the script feel overly expository, and at times the emotional resonance is undercut by uneven pacing and production constraints.

Visuals and Atmosphere



Shot on location in Malta, the film leverages its historical setting beautifully. Narrow streets, baroque architecture, and sunlit piazzas add authenticity to the period setting. The cinematography is evocative, though the limited budget occasionally shows in crowd scenes and action sequences that could have benefited from more scale or realism.

Cultural Impact

For a Maltese audience, *Blood on the Crown* is more than just a film—it's a cinematic reckoning with national trauma and pride. By dramatizing a moment often relegated to textbooks, the film contributes to a broader international awareness of Malta's struggle for sovereignty and the sacrifices made along the way.

Verdict

While not without its flaws, *Blood on the Crown* is a bold and important film that sheds light on a forgotten chapter of colonial resistance. It serves as a tribute to those who stood up against oppression and is a meaningful addition to the limited canon of Maltese historical cinema.

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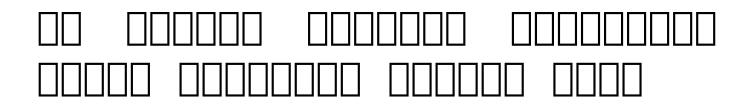






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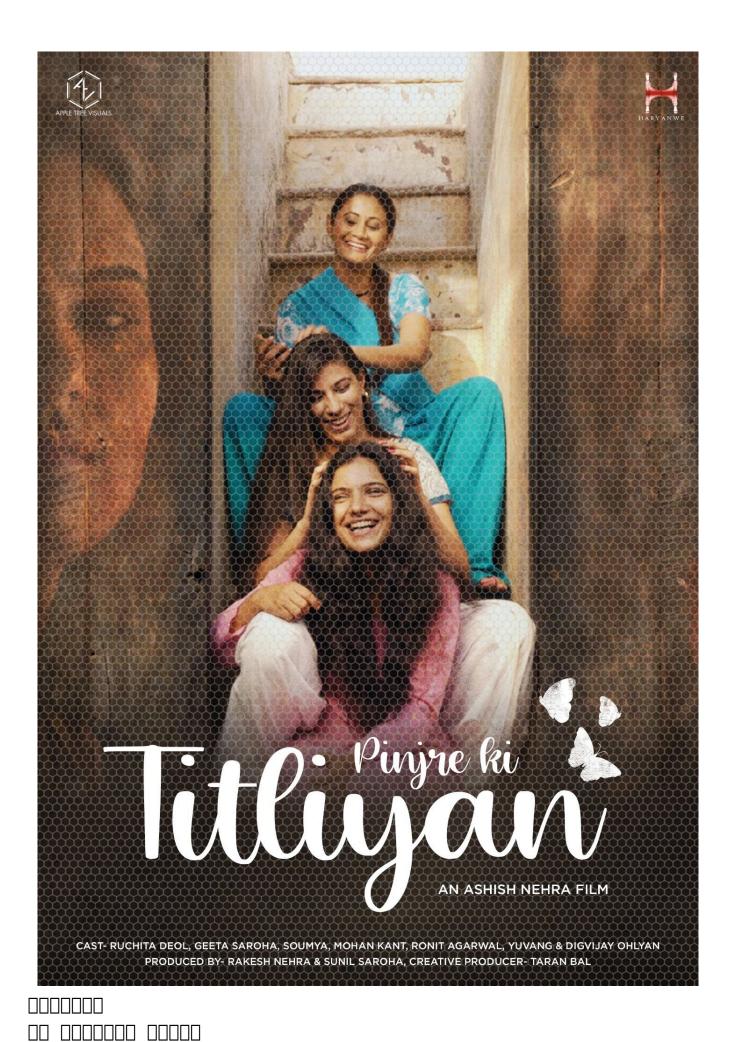
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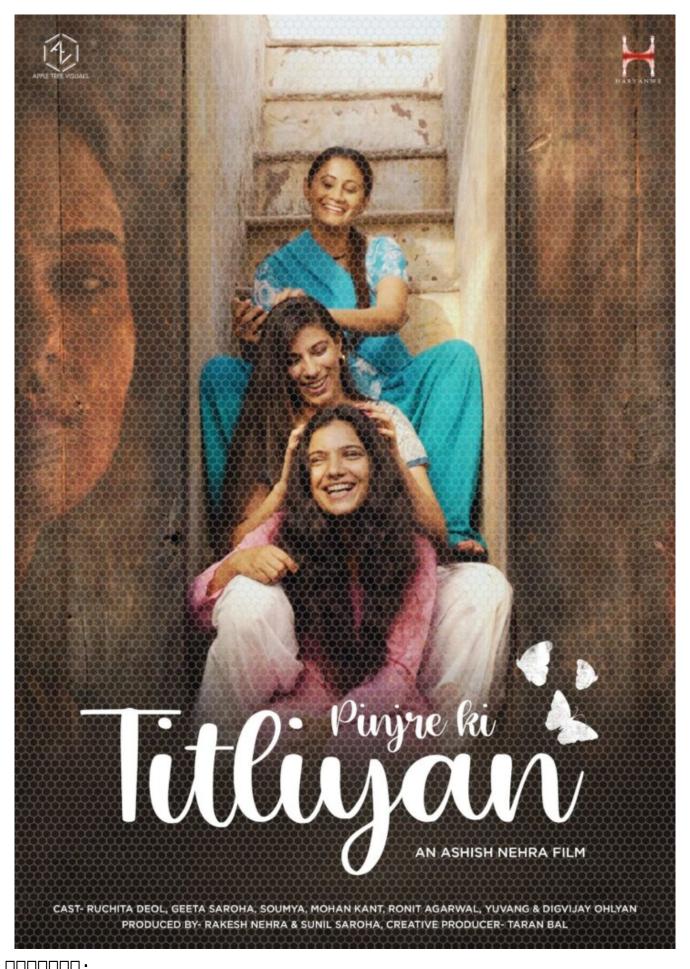
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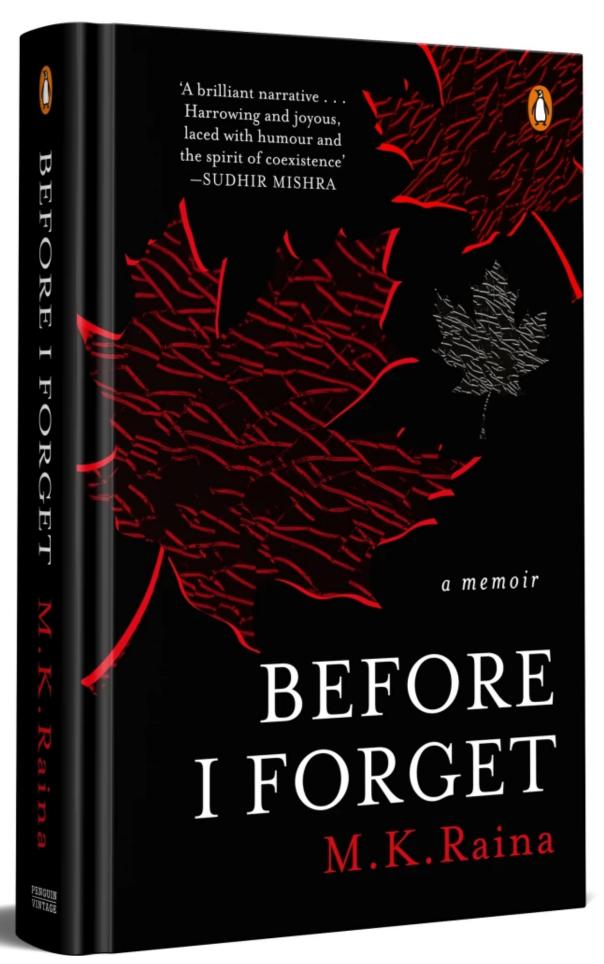
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An Unforgettable Book Discussion Conducted by Sujata and Oroon

Conversations: Before I Forget

Reviewed by Manohar Khushalani



M.K. Raina's memoir, "Before I Forget," is a deeply moving chronicle of his multifaceted life as a theatre actor,

director, and cultural activist. The memoir weaves through various stages of his life, from his serene childhood in Kashmir to his influential role in Delhi's theatre scene, and his poignant experiences during the turbulent periods of Kashmir's history. At IIC,



Sujata Prasad and Oroon Das, conducted an extremely engaging and memorable conversation with the author.

His narrative began with memories of his early years in Kashmir, painting a picture of harmony and cultural richness. He describes the idyllic days in the Sheetal Nath Sathu Mohalla, where Hindus and Muslims lived together in peace, and his nurturing education at Lal Ded Primary School. This nostalgic recounting provides a stark contrast to the later chapters, which detail the descent of Kashmir into violence and chaos in the 1990s.

The core of Raina's memoir focuses on his efforts to use

theatre as a tool for social change and healing. Despite the insurgency and violence in regions like Kashmir and the North-East, Raina set up theatre workshops aimed at reviving folk traditions and fostering community spirit. His work often put him in danger, yet he persisted, driven by a cause greater than activism—a belief in mending the fabric of society. One of his significant achievements was the successful theatre workshop in Kashmir in 2000, where he taught young locals not just theatre, but values of rationality and responsibility.

Raina's reflections on the political and cultural history of India are profound. He recounts witnessing turbulent times, the Emergency period, Indira Gandhi's assassination, the Delhi riots, and the death of playwright Safdar Hashmi. These events are narrated with a historian's precision and a poet's sensitivity, capturing both the joy and sorrow of living through India's tumultuous times.

The memoir delves deeply into the traumatic period of the 1990s in Kashmir. Raina's mother's illness during the violence-ridden winter. Amidst curfews and security checks, he navigated the challenges of getting medical care for his mother, only to face the heartbreak of her passing. The exodus of Kashmiri Pandits during this period is another painful memory, highlighting the erosion of centuries-old communal bonds.

Raina's narrative does not shy away from the complexities and mistrust that grew among communities: How even brothers became strangers, emphasizing the profound impact of fear. His return to Kashmir in the 2000s to conduct theatre workshops marked a significant effort to rebuild trust and revive cultural practices like the traditional folk theatre, Bhand Pather.

Raina balances personal anecdotes with broader socio-political observations. His encounters with cultural luminaries in Delhi, such as Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, and Om Puri, are interspersed with reflections on the decline of the city's

once-vibrant theatre scene

"Before I Forget" is a testament to M.K. Raina's unwavering dedication to his craft and his cause. It is a poignant reminder of the importance of cultural heritage in fostering understanding and unity in times of conflict. His declaration, "We should never forget but always forgive"

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