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**BOLLYWOOD**  
INTERNATIONAL  
FILM  
FESTIVAL



4TH SEASON

*Welcome you*

20 JANUARY 2024  
10:00AM TO 10:00PM

VENUE:  
VEDA KUNBA THEATRE: CINTAA TOWER, NEAR  
KOKILABEN HOSPITAL, FOUR BUNGALOWS, ANDHERI  
WEST, MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA

YASHPAL SHARMA ( FOUNDER )	OUR BIFF TEAM	PRATIBHA SHARMA ( FOUNDER )

RAMPAL BALHARA	DR. ALPANA SUHASINI	SUNIL BENIWAL	VISHAL SHARMA	DALBIR SINGH	DR. MINAXI SINGH

DR. TABASSUM JAHAN	MONICA DAWAR	SONIA SARTAJ	DR. PRATIBHA PHADKE GUPTA	MAUNA SHAH

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ஊர்: சேலம்  
தலைப்பு: 'ஊர்' மற்றும் 'நகரம்' என்ற கருத்துக்களைப் பற்றி ஒரு கட்டுரை எழுதினார்.

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## Garbage Free Society

Today's Indian and Hindi cinema in particular seems the kind of garbage in and out- Irrelevant data producing irrelevant output. This general perception justifiably springs from the conspicuously lavish supply of extravagant violence and sex that's become an inseparable part of the films we see today. Nonetheless, if the makers of films are supposed to be held responsible for displaying such content, I feel, the audiences are equally responsible for paying undue attention to such frivolous foolery that is not worthy of even an iota of today's extremely busy minds that have much serious and deservedly important tasks to dwell upon. My question is "why do we even talk about such content?" The moment we see a sleazy or excessively violent film trailer, why do we not discard it from our vicinity instead of just investing our time writing critical articles, dislodging them or engaging in mass protests against them.

If banning a film could have saved our highly vulnerable youth

extremely anxious to watch age restricted videos, we could have successfully been able to divert their concentration towards participating in intellectual activities rather than getting hooked to violate all rules of censorship under the pretext of modernity. Indeed it is the gusto of radicalism that provokes the younger generation of today to watch violence and sex that spoils their mind and deviates them towards unwarranted actions.

If juvenile delinquency is a major concern today, it is not because of only films, it is because of our inability as responsible adults to rationally explain the youth the adequate reason beneath our denial to watch such explicit content on Television. Yes, somewhere down the line we have failed as parents and guardians to make our children understand the detrimental factors of becoming susceptible to the addiction of such films and hence we see the generation today watches all the provocative material.

Imposing the rule of not watching Netflix or OTT platform will not help. The rules are supposed to be broken is the anthem of many such youths that are unregulated on account of the fact that they are misguided. Many a times, the working parents and guardians are too engrossed in their own problems to fathom the necessity of counselling curious minds.

It is not by stringent principles but by a forthright and sensitized counselling that the youth of today can be made to understand the need to focus on the ethically correct and age appropriate matter. Three four days back, I found a very young 8<sup>th</sup> standard student reading a novel that wasn't compatible with his age. On asking, he told me that the book was given to him by a girl of his class and on further inquiry it was discerned that the girl had got it from one of her friends who happens to be outside of the academic organization. This means that the child is being persuaded to pursue something that isn't good for her. She's influenced and does not even realize

that someone has tried to intoxicate her with the wrong thoughts through a very indirect mode of approach.

Apparently, in today's times, it has become very easy to spoil young minds by implicit method of exposing them to inapt literary and entertainment media. The reason these hypnotise young minds is that these vouch as tempting modes providing access to all that is apparently denied to them. The prohibited content is like a forbidden fruit that appears more irresistible and therefore getting carried away by it is evidently easy. Argument, altercation and stipulating precepts against watching the sensitive content does not make any sense and does not work. It is only a healthy and candid discussion with them that enables them to cultivate the understanding that they are not mature enough to get exposed to mature content.

When we advocate sex education to the youths of today for their safety, it must be ensured that they learn the subject with decency by appropriately highlighting the health hazards involved in the same. Similarly, the jeopardy of inculcating violent traits in nature by watching exorbitant violence needs to be adequately explained. Most importantly, these notions enter into the minds of those that have been honourably initiated into culture and tradition which endorses decency and sobriety.

It is my personal observation as a teacher that unless young people have very strong ethical values taught to them by their parents and guardians, they do not comprehend the benefits of living a sober life. This is true in case of every child because it is a blatant reality that children that do not have a proper guidance in their youth are directed towards delinquent behaviour very frequently. Teaching the worthiness of abstaining from matter that does not complement the age is the indispensable responsibility of the parents and guardians. The centres of education like the schools and colleges may hold on value education classes but the primary teaching of

ethics and principles certainly comes from the family; this fact cannot be dispensed with.

We cannot expect a clean society without attempting to clean it. Merely sitting comfortably on our chairs and critiquing a certain realm of enterprise will not help. It is our moral duty to ensure we guide our youth in the right direction rationally without dictating the dos and don'ts to them in an old school fashion. Today's times I find the dearth of such matured adults that construe the need to focus all their energy and attention towards constructive ways of living life and becoming true mentors for the present day youth. What I find is a bunch of critics that raise a barrage of complaints against violent and sexually explicit content, burn effigies of celebrities or rant continually against them. The moment we mind our own business and not indulge in such foppery to avail media attention, we would make this world indubitably a better and safer place to live in. It is not by ruthlessly protesting and banning films but by educating our youth rightfully that we would ultimately gain immunity against such inappropriate content. It will not affect us anymore and therefore whether it is displayed or not displayed in front of us will make not a tinge of difference. We would not get susceptible to it in any way. **This is how we make a garbage free society, not by pouring out our anger against these content creators in a rancorous way.**

For comments (if any) please post in the box given below.

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**Is Ethical teaching to**

# students possible in the modern pragmatic times?

Teaching is not just a method. It is a principle forming ethical code of conduct that students and teachers are inevitably required to retain in order that education becomes something more than just a curriculum driven enterprise. Today, times have changed and so has the value system being reformed which makes it quite interesting and challenging to balance the rightful morals and the modern alternatives on the part of both students and teachers. To adequately select the kind of valuable precepts to be followed and those to be accurately negated for the higher good of futuristic learning which is far from being simply a matter of 'obeying the fixed norms set by authorities is indeed an intricate choice to make.

The present day has shown us the theory of relativism which operates on the notions that 'good' and 'bad' are mere perspectives and there isn't a hard and fast rule behind following or rejecting certain behavioural codes; the academic sector also not being excluded from the same. We know we have many who seem to be confused whether rules are meant to be followed or broken. That's the tragedy of the modern times that we aren't able to draw a visible and clear line between the dos and the don'ts in our lives. Consequently, we all try ways and means to adjust ourselves the way we can without being bothered about being essentially - 'ethically' correct. There isn't anyone who could be straightaway blamed for the circumstances that have resulted on account of the modern man's own lethargy of finding out the adequate distinctions between morally correct and incorrect. All we can do is simply state that the times have changed and so we need to accommodate ourselves with the altering times wherein teachers

and students may take certain deviations from the stringent norms of maintaining a conventional –Guru-Shishya, Teacher-disciple relationship. It can be based on camaraderie rather than a pedagogic alliance between the two and the one who teaches and the one who learns both can be on the same platform; each learning from the other. There isn't any harm of course in accepting this fact for this is the truth of today's era that encourages equitable learning which rests on the principle of non-discriminatory teaching enterprise wherein the teachers act as mentors and facilitators providing the best of their knowledge and at the same time remain receptive towards accepting the points of view of their mentees.

Apparently, this is healthy and seems oriented towards eradicating orthopraxy wherein the teachers dwell on the notions of stringent dominion and the students hardly get a chance to ask questions or engage in any healthy discussion that could enliven the concept of education as a holistic learning approach. In such an overtly adequate environment, it seems rather inconsequential to demarcate the teachers and the students as seniors and juniors or experienced and novice etc. These terms that are viewed as derogatory by those that regularly endorse teaching as the means of effacing teacher student difference and making the teacher an approachable entity rather than a formidable personality. Nonetheless, as the thin line of difference has been blurred, it now becomes very difficult to justifiably present the requisite of the need to treat teaching as a respectable profession and teacher as the one that deservedly ought to be revered for the contribution that one makes in the field of imparting education. The repercussions of this phenomenon are such that neither the teacher nor the student and not even the parents of the respective students are able to offer an appropriate wisdom on how teachers and students should be when they are in an academic setting. In addition to this there seems absentia of guidelines in the matter of interactions between teacher

and student in the external environment outside the school.

It is under the pretext of being 'modern' educationists that teachers today at times dismiss the mandate of being 'obeyed' irrespective of the child becoming assertive or demanding or even at times irreverent in one's demeanour. Ignoring under the guise of being receptive towards informal approach of the students in order to make them feel comfortable in one's presence seems simply an excuse. It is universally acknowledged that a teacher ought to let one's students understand that a certain code of conduct is supposed to be followed when one chooses to interact with an elderly and experienced mentor. A student often escapes the guilt of being impertinent with the teacher on account of one's tender age wherein immature language lapse and unregulated mannerisms are labelled as juvenile misdemeanours. A teacher on the other hand is responsible for the mistake a student makes while taking the self-respect of the mentor for granted.

Teaching is just not disseminating the information contained in the books. It is the onus on the teacher of 'shaping characters'. This process is not only serious but also challenging. Not all the students are open-minded towards the process of 'ethical guidance'. It therefore becomes inevitable for a teacher to identify the mental readiness of each student towards adopting what we term as 'good manners'. Moreover, the difficulty is also on account of the fact that the contemporary society is heavily oriented towards promulgating the notions of pragmatism which unfortunately dispense with the requirement of including ethical values and principles of life. It is erroneously proclaimed by many so called modernists that being sensitized towards cultivating humanitarian virtues founded on the principle of emotions is a sign of weakness. Those people that get influenced by such misconceptions become hard hearted and focus only on attaining material success. That pragmatism is the only need of the present day and emotional thinking is a waste of time and

energy is the most convenient theory adopted today. This is generally the belief of those that perhaps do not comprehend the rationality of being modest and courteous without which apparently there is no chance of establishing a healthy human society. Since the minds of the children are so impressionistic, they are the ones that get misguided by such wrong concepts and because they do not know the difference between being practical and being insensitive, these two concepts overlap and shape the deformed personality of many as we see them today.

Teachers have an integral role to play in this regard and even parents need to extend their support in the establishment of value education as a priority. Opted by many academic institutions these days, it is indeed beneficial to have a course on righteous conduct that may enable the children understand the worthiness of being ethical in their attitude. Together with the students, today's teachers also need to undergo a vigorous training on retention of ethical virtues. Ensuring equity in their approach towards students that effaces distinctions of any kind based on either their academic progress report or their social stature is fundamental. Practicing the principles endorsed to the students in one's own life is another mandate that the teachers indispensably need to follow in order that the students develop respect for them; respect cannot be demanded, it is to be commanded is a well-known adage. Thus, value education is not to be myopically understood as another subject to be taught to the students. It is something that is ought to become a regular habit inculcated in the lives of the teachers first and then through them in the lives of the students in order to have clarity that we all strive hard today to achieve about the goal of the teaching profession.

It is very easy to state that the child is beyond control or discipline is not possible to be imposed as a rule in today's high-tech secular environment wherein students are smarter and



more informed than the teachers as they are exposed to the techno-savvy world. The fact is that corrective measures are the right granted to every teacher and they need to be adopted as the means to bring about the change in the misinformed students that have been wrongly manipulated towards the ideas of liberty and secularism. The goal is achievable and is not something that is too far-fetched or larger than life to be experienced as a reality in our lives. Let us as teachers try our level best to strike a balance between ethical values and modern pragmatic concerns that demand constructive alternatives in the existing traditional systems of education. This balance is the adequate mode of making teaching something more than just a mundane exercise carried out as a professional endeavour offering lucrative benefits. The day when teacher learns to make learning a holistic experience for a student and selflessly impart education retaining ethical values, this world will certainly have better citizens committed towards living a virtuous life. The teacher student relationship will definitely be exemplary of an amicable affinity between a true mentor and a responsible mentee.

For comments if any please send in the box below.

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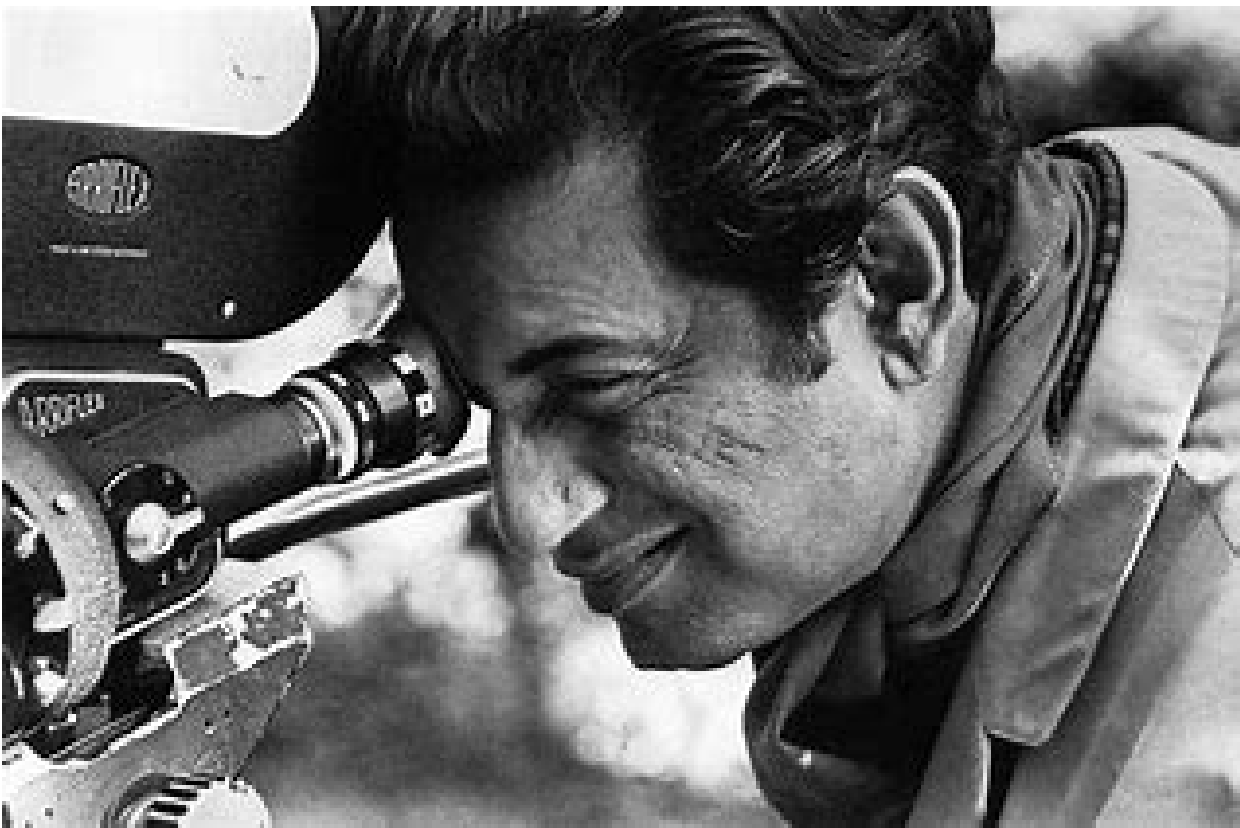
## **Sherni: The latest Vidya Balan starrer on Amazon Prime / Sanjiva Sahai**

This is Aastha Tiku's very first attempt at story and screenplay. Quite impressive. Dialogues by Yashaswi and Amit appear improvised, sound natural and sharp. Lovely. Benedict and Naren have come up with some extremely restrained musical

scores that elevate the sense of mystery in the jungle. And yes, Rakesh Haridas with his available-light shots provide some real-life experience for the viewers.

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## Remembering Ray | Kanika Aurora



Rabindranath Tagore wrote a poem in the autograph book of young Satyajit whom he met in idyllic Shantiniketan.

The poem, translated in English, reads: 'Too long I've wandered from place to place/Seen mountains and seas at vast expense/Why haven't I stepped two yards from my house/Opened my eyes and gazed very close/At a glistening drop of dew on a piece of paddy grain?'

Years later, Satyajit Ray the celebrated Renaissance Man,

captured this beauty, which is just two steps away from our homes but which we fail to appreciate on our own in many of his masterpieces stunning the audience with his gritty, neo realistic films in which he wore several hats- writing all his screenplays with finely detailed sketches of shot sequences and experimenting in lighting, music, editing and incorporating unusual camera angles. Several of his films were based on his own stories and his appreciation of classical music is fairly apparent in his music compositions resulting in some rather distinctive signature Ray tunes collaborating with renowned classical musicians such as Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar and Vilayat Khan.

No surprises there. Born a hundred years ago in 1921 in an extraordinarily talented Bengali Brahmo family, Satyajit Ray carried forward his illustrious legacy with astonishing ease and finesse.

Both his grandfather Upendra Kishore RayChaudhuri and his father Sukumar RayChaudhuri are extremely well known children's writers. It is said that there is hardly any Bengali child who has not grown up listening to or reading Upendra Kishore's stories about the feisty little bird Tuntuni or the musicians Goopy Gyne and Bagha Byne. He also launched Sandesh, perhaps the first children's magazine in India. Satyajit revived it in 1961 and it is currently available online as well.

He also established the Calcutta Film Society in 1947 with some like mind friends and film enthusiasts; the first film club of its kind in India, dedicated to watching and discussing the best of world cinema.

Pather Panchali (The Song of the Road), directed by Satyajit Ray is rightly considered as one of the greatest landmarks in Indian film history, placing our country firmly on the world's cinematic map inspiring several generations of film directors.

After watching Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*, he recalled his emotions in a lecture in 1984. The film had "gored" him. "I came out of the theatre with my mind firmly made up. I would become a filmmaker. The prospect of giving up a job didn't daunt me any more. I would make my film exactly as De Sica had made his: working with non-professional actors, using modest resources, and shooting on actual locations."

"I was familiar with the camera, possessing a second-hand Leica. And paying homage to a photographer I considered to be the greatest of all—Henri Cartier-Bresson—I wanted my film to look as if it was shot with available light à la Cartier-Bresson... I had absolutely no doubt in my mind that I would become a filmmaker, starting my career with *Pather Panchali*. If it didn't work out, I would be back at my desk at Keymer's, tail between my legs. But if it did work, there would be no stopping me." (My Years with Apu.)

But there was no money to make the film. After failing to procure the bare minimum amount required to even contemplate filming, Ray decided to ask some of his friends to contribute a thousand rupees each. The budget of the film had been fixed at ₹ 70,000. He collected ₹ 17,000, and started filming in the October of 1952. The very first sequence that was shot is perhaps the most iconic of the film: Apu and his elder sister Durga running through a field of kaash flowers to see a train for the first time in their lives.

Pandit Ravi Shankar would provide the music and Subrata Mitra was the 21-year-old cinematographer who had never operated a motion picture camera before this. Today he is acknowledged in the cinema world as one of the finest ever to operate a movie camera.

The rest as they say is history.

*Pather Panchali* went to the Cannes Film Festival and there is a popular anecdote about how initially it was exhibited late

at night at a small theatre with less than a dozen people watching including Francois Truffaut, then a critic who would eventually go on to become a great film director, leaving the hall within 10 minutes, bored by the slow pace of the film. Truffaut later apologized several times and Ray and he became good friends.

Lotte Eisner, who would go on to become the chief curator of the Cinematheque Francaise, as Providence would have it decided that the film deserved a second screening. She lobbied and campaigned for it, resulting in a second show which was well attended and Pather Panchali won the special jury prize for the 'Best Human Document'.

Ray could now become a full-time film director. He started work on Pather Panchali's sequel Aparajito (The Unvanquished), which depicts Apu's teenage years is arguably the finest and most touching film of the Apu trilogy.

Although the first film he wanted to make was Ghare Baire, the one that got made was of course, Pather Panchali. An adaptation of Tagore's 1916 novel, Ghare Baire (The Home and the World) eventually did get made in 1984 and got nominated for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival that year.

In 1982, delivering a lecture, Ray spoke about his work.

"There is a special problem that faces one who must talk about films. Lectures on art should ideally be illustrated. One who talks on paintings usually comes armed with slides and a projector. This solves the difficulty of having to describe in words, what must be seen with the eyes. The lecturer on music must bless the silicon revolution, which enables him to cram all his examples into a cassette no bigger than a small bar of chocolate. But the lecturer on cinema has no such advantage—at least not in the present state of technology in our country. If he wishes to cite an example, he can do no more than give a barely adequate description in words, of what is usually

perceived with all one's senses. A film is pictures, a film is words, a film is movement, a film is drama, a film is music, a film is a story, a film is a thousand expressive aural and visual details. These days one must also add that film is colour. Even a segment of film that lasts barely a minute can display all these aspects simultaneously. You will realize what a hopeless task it is to describe a scene from a film in words. They can't even begin to do justice to a language which is so complex."

Ray thought of cinema as a language. "Cinema is images and sound," he said.

"The problem," he wrote, "was over the word 'art'. If the word 'language' was used instead, I think the true nature of cinema will become clearer and there will be no need for debate." Cinema was a language defined by fade-ins, and fade-outs, camera angles, clever editing and quick cuts complemented by classical music.

Composing music for his films was essential to him too. "How interesting to know... that film and music had so much in common!" he wrote (Speaking of Films). "Both unfold over a period of time; both are concerned with pace and rhythm and contrast; both can be described in terms of mood—sad, cheerful, pensive, boisterous, tragic, jubilant."

Ray had mastered the art of conveying the message without actually making it explicitly obvious. In *Apur Sansar*, for instance, the audience gets a sense of the intimacy and comfort that Apu (the incredibly gifted Soumitra Chatterjee, who passed away recently and worked with Ray in fourteen films) and his wife Aparna (Sharmila Tagore in her first film role, who was apparently expelled from her convent school for appearing in a film) enjoy from the little sequences like Apu waking up in the morning, looking decidedly happy and satiated, opening his packet of cigarettes and finding a note by Aparna inside, asking him not to smoke too much.

Ray also ensures that women in his movies exhibit dignity and courage in the face of adversities.

Charulata, based on a Tagore novella called *Nashtaneer*, whose literal translation is *The Ruined Nest* (home in this instance) with the English title, *The Lonely Wife* is a masterpiece by any standards.

The opening sequence which establishes her soul destroying loneliness with no dialogues is fascinating and portrays her unique disposition in seven minutes of near silent shots.

In Ray's own words the seven minutes were about (from *Speaking Of Films*) attempting to use a language entirely free from literary and theatrical influences. Except for one line of dialogue in its seven minutes, the scene says what it has to say in terms that speak to the eye and the ear.

Madhabi Mukherjee, his rumoured muse and more accomplished the job with practiced ease in the scene which is still etched in his fans' collective memory; the embroidery, the chiming of the grandfather clock, casual lifting of the piano lid and striking a note; the monkey man, the palki, lorgnette and all.

Another personal favourite is her swinging gaily with fairly unusual camera angles and positioning perhaps influence by his mentor Renoir's *A Day in the Country*. So is the brilliant montage announcing the arrival of rains in *Pather Panchali*.

Everyone has a list of their cherished sequence, I daresay from scores of profound, layered and thematically rich Ray films, such as *Jalsaghar*, *Devi* or *The Calcutta Trilogy: Pratidwandi, Seemabaddha & Jana Aranya*.

One is spoilt for choice out of his 28 films which he directed in over four decades.

Most of these are based on classic Bengali literary works, and two; *Shatranj Ke Khilari* and the telefilm *Sadgati* on stories

written by Munshi Premchand. Others are based on contemporary novels and short stories, and some, like Kanchanjungha and Nayak are original scripts written by Ray himself. One of his last films, Ganashatru was inspired by Ibsen's play, An Enemy of The People.

A few of his films like Parash Pathar (The Philosopher's Stone), and the two Feluda detective novels of his which he made into film—Sonar Kella (The Golden Fortress) and Joi Baba Felunath (The Elephant God) are breezy and immensely entertaining. His two Goopy-Bagha films, Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne and Hirak Rajar Deshe (The Kingdom of Diamonds) delighted the children as musicals.

A little known fact about Ray is that without knowing it, he was indeed the first “graphic designer” in India. He even designed two English typefaces -Ray Roman and Ray Bizarre.

One of the most influential, multi-faceted and greatest filmmakers of all times, Satyajit Ray mastered the art of telling intimate human stories, the journey, the trials and tribulations of the ordinary men and women with extraordinary expertise embodying and showcasing the magic of cinema at its very best.

To recognize his enormous contributions to cinema, he was awarded the Academy Honorary Award days before his death. He was also awarded India's highest civilian honour Bharat Ratna by the Government of India

The legendary Japanese auteur Akira Kurosawa one famously remarked about Ray, “Not to have seen the cinema of Ray means existing in the world without seeing the sun or the moon.”

Satyajit Ray shall forever continue to illuminate and inspire.



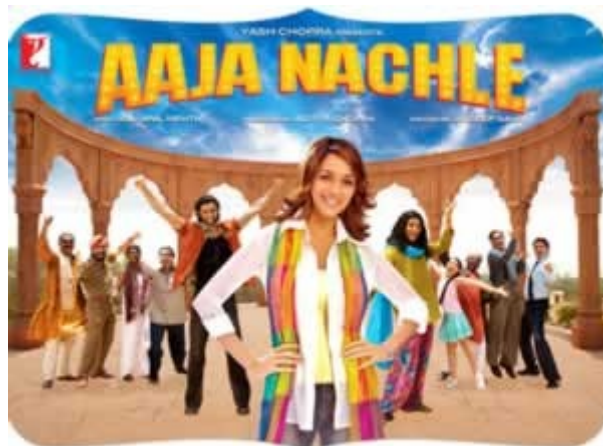


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# Dancing Away the Big Bad Wolf

Dancing Away the Big Bad Wolf:  
Culture as a Site of Resistance to Big Capital

Joya John



I recently saw Madhuri Dixit's comeback film *Aaja Nachle*. However before you tell me that it is a little too late for a film review, I must clarify this not a film review. For those of you who have not seen the film a quick overview of the plot is necessary to see where my argument will lead.

Madhuri Dixit, or Diya as her character is called, returns from New York to the town of Shamli to revive a dance theatre called Ajanta, embodied in a performance space, that is to be mowed down to build a mall. Diya, strikes a deal with the rather flamboyant M.P. of the town played by Akshay Khanna, that in two months if she is able to stage a successful performance enacted by performers from Shamli itself, the M.P. will have to reconsider the proposal of building a mall. It is an uphill task, for Diya as she struggles with local goons and a motley crew of actors with no experience of performance or dance. The local businessman, played by Irfan Khan who has a vested interest in seeing the mall built tries to jeopardize the performance by buying off the local magnate, who was initially supporting the project, and also spreading vicious rumors about Diya's past (Diya had eloped with an American journalist leaving her parents to bear the social stigma). Needless to say the project is a success, the performance of *Laila Majnu* by the group is a roaring success and the destruction of Ajanta is temporarily halted.

Art and Culture is often the site where this conflict between public resources and private interest, or small enterprise versus big capital is fought out. There are equivalents of it in Hollywood. The film, *Sister Act*, starring Whoopi Goldberg, portrays a state school the only hope for black children from the ghettos, on the brink of closure. A 'successful' performance by the school choir helps to stall attempts to close down the school. What nobody notices in the bargain is the pressure on schools to show themselves as performing assets to continue getting funds from the government. The film *When Harry met Sally*, portrays a small community based bookstore threatened by the opening up of a multimillion chain of bookstores. The USP of the small bookstore owned, by Meg Ryan, is its personalized customer care as opposed to the impersonality of the big chain. It however cannot

compete with the magnitude of books and choices the big chain can provide at a less price. Here the romantic entanglement of Meg Ryan who runs the small bookstore and Tom Hanks the CEO of the chain provides a resolution to the conflict between small enterprise and big business capital. Big Capital (Tom Hanks) learns that it has to have a *heart* while doing business and it has much to learn from the expertise of the small bookstore. Meg Ryan's bookstore however does close down, while the values it epitomizes get transferred to that of that the big chain. So the big chain wins out in the end anyway.

While these attempts reflect a certain subliminal awareness of a conflict between the public and private interests the resolutions that these films suggest remain inadequate. Often enough the critique of private, commercial interest seems to spring from assumptions of its crassness. Ajantatheatre is art for art's sake, the *sanskriti* of Shamli, while the mall is only grimy commerce. Pitting a rarefied field of culture versus commerce is a risk. These oppositions are one that commerce and private interest would only be too comfortable with because this opposition de-links art from the processes of survival and livelihood. After all, an employee in a mall doesn't need to be an accomplished dancer and performer to make a living. What stakes does a potential, uncultured, employee of a mall have in the preservation of an Ajanta?

**The problem with *Aaja Nachle* lies in the circumscribed role it gives to art. While Shamli risks losing a public space because of the vested interests of business and local politicians the troupe struggles to stage a performance of *Laila Majnu*. The distance of Ajanta, from the hub of the city, is replayed in the remoteness of its theme, deliberately shorn of any topicality. The alienation and decrepitude that Ajanta faces, and which becomes a rationale for its destruction, perhaps springs from its deliberate eschewing of a more politically sharpened content. While Laila and Majnu meet their tragic fates a teary eyed Shamli, is temporarily united by art. However romance cannot take away the fact that someday someone in Shamli will still want to use public land to build a plush mall.**

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