

# Insights Volume III

Exploring Memory through Cinema

**Publisher**

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

**ISBN****Design and Page Layout**

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Obtained from promotional material of relevant films

**Published**

May 2017

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★ Rating taken from imdb

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## Introduction

Throughout life we go through a range of experiences. Each one is unique and leaves behind its very own trace, a memory. Our memories are unwritten records of our lived reality. Being a product of our past however does not lessen the relevance memories have for our day-to-day lives. Quite the opposite is the case. Memories are one of the most influential factors in shaping the way we perceive the world. By penetrating into every aspect of our thinking, acting and speech they affect our present as much as our future and have the power to nurture hate or to foster peace.

After decades of violent conflict in Sri Lanka the question of how to deal with the country's difficult recent history has gained significant attention. The sensitivity surrounding the topic of memory in this specific context is the underlying foundation for this film guide titled "Exploring Memory through Cinema". A diverse collection of movies tells the stories of individuals and communities that find their own ways of coming to terms with the memories of their difficult past, may it be in the public or the private sphere.

"Exploring Memory through Cinema" is the third volume of the "Insights" series, dedicated to engaging with the powerful medium of film to enable discussion of highly sensitive topics. As it has been experienced with Insights Volume 1 "Exploring Social Cohesion through Cinema" and Insights Volume 2 "Exploring Modern Relationships through Cinema", the medium of film allows us to look at a theme from a variety of angles. This in turn can catalyse fruitful discussions, inviting audiences to reflect on their own lives and dominant perceptions in their societies.

Just like in the previous guides, the movies selected for this guide spread over a broad range of genres, countries and themes, and differ in complexity and language, making the guide easily accessible to a broad audience. It is targeted towards those who want to create a space of reflection and discussion about the importance of memory and the different ways in which people try to come to terms with their past. This includes teachers and professors; activists and facilitators of workshops; religious and community leaders, as well as film enthusiasts and film clubs.

The movies in this guide are not exemplary but rather have been selected for their ability to spark stimulating discussions about the importance of dealing with memory and the different ways in which this can be achieved. Thus, it does not provide the answer on how to deal with a difficult past, but it might bring those using the guide closer to finding one that best fits their very own needs.







## Film as a Dialogue on Memory

Films tell stories, stories about the past, the present and the future. They make present reality look exciting, the future mysterious and the past nostalgic. What is shown in films might not always be scientifically accurate, but as fantastic as the shown events might be, they ultimately all tell stories of people and their emotions. That is why, no matter what the setting might be, we are able to relate to films. This relatability is an important attribute of films, as it allows us to reflect on our own lives and the way we perceive our past, present and future.

Films are a great medium to deal with topics that are not willingly spoken about, especially events in our individual or collective pasts. Films allow us to walk down memory lane and to find similarities between what we see on the screen and what we experience in our own lives. Revisiting our memory can help us in shaping our future in a desired way, or it can guide us in making better future decisions.

Each and every one of us has a unique past and our own story to tell. Film is perhaps the most appropriate medium to recreate sensations experienced by the human mind; projecting images in our memory, that otherwise occurs only in our heads, onto the screen. Our personal memories are not a perfect chronology of the past, but by the end of every movie a linear story can be identified, that allows us to understand connections with greater ease. In this sense, a movie depicts "the perfect story", that can be deconstructed and analysed much more easily than our own life stories. This is why movies allow us to draw life lessons and to gain new perspectives on familiar issues.

When it comes to movies about memory, the most popular themes have been amnesia or dementia, which portray permanent or temporary memory loss or memory degradation, due to certain traumatic "events" or the onset of disease. Most of the movies in this category are highly successful box office hits. The reason why no films of this category have been chosen for this film guide is because they do not depict people struggling with past memories, an aspect that is foregrounded in this film guide. The films we have chosen may not be the most popular movies on memory made in the history of cinema, but the themes they address match the local context and the issues currently being dealt with, a priority of this film guide.

Many of the movies in this guide are located in foreign lands and are often in a foreign language. Certain issues addressed in some films may also seem very foreign. However, film has a unique language, a visual language that we all understand and that transcends many borders and boundaries. That is the power of films.





## Understanding the Work of Memory

The most common understanding of memory is that it is the sum total of what we remember. It involves the human brain encoding, storing and subsequently retrieving stored information. We are able to learn from, adapt and modify our behaviour and thoughts by drawing on our previous experiences. Thus, memory is inextricably intertwined with the past.

However, remembering the past is not an easy, seamless process, particularly when the past is associated with many painful experiences. Remembering often involves a conscious effort, a lot of hard work. That is why we are referring here to the work of memory. Often, when we have had painful experiences, our first response is to try to forget that experience and all thoughts and feelings associated with it. This can result in us either consciously suppressing memories or unconsciously repressing them.

Recalling suppressed and repressed memories again may be possible after a lapse of time or due to an unexpected memory trigger, for example the company of others who have had similar experiences. This form of remembering requires work and the support of sympathetic and sensitive individuals or facilitators. Painful memories that have been repressed or relegated to our unconscious can also continue to influence our actions and feelings often surfacing through nightmares, flashbacks, temper tantrums, panic attacks etc., resulting in medical diagnoses such as depression, mania, psychosomatism, and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). The main goal of psychoanalysis has been to help such individuals gradually unearth and confront their repressed memories in order to enable healing.

The films chosen for this guide all focus on various ways in which the main protagonist(s) wrestle with either suppressed or repressed memory as a result of painful past experiences and encounters. In this regard, some protagonists have been more successful than others in reconciling with their past: acknowledging one's wrongdoing, granting forgiveness, coming to terms with one's grief, assuaging one's guilt, taking revenge, seeking justice and accountability, understanding the other's pain or the taking of one's life. Individual facilitators and/or supportive networks have played a decisive role in the final outcome.

Sri Lanka too is at a similar crossroads right now. There are many ways and means through which we can address our painful and individual pasts. We hope the films offered here will facilitate your reflections and discussions on what might be the best route we should follow in order to ensure that generations to come will not inherit our pain.

REVENGE IS  
NEVER A  
STRAIGHT LINE

COLIN FIRTH NICOLE KIDMAN JEREMY IRVINE STELLAN SKARSGÅRD

# THE RAILWAY MAN

BASED ON A TRUE STORY

# *The Railway Man*

A FILM BY JONATHAN TEPLITZKY – 2013

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Best Film – Australian Film Critics Association Awards 2014  
Best Adapted Screen Play – ACCTA Awards 2014



The main character comes to terms with his memory by returning to the place of his suffering and confronting his torturer

“An incredible tale of love courage, humanity and their opposites”

*Sky Movies*

## Key Themes

Living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD]

Forgiveness and revenge

Seeking closure

## *Plot*

The Railway man tells the story of Eric Lomax, a railway enthusiast, who was a British officer during the Second World War. While Lomax was stationed in Singapore he and his comrades were captured by the Japanese army and placed in a POW (Prisoner of War) Camp, where the detainees were forced to build the Thai-Burma Railway line. Lomax is suspected of being a spy and is severely tortured by the military secret police, Kempeitai, until the allied forces dissolve the camp and free the prisoners. Decades after the end of the war, Lomax, now a middle-aged man, is haunted by his memories of the camp, but refuses to speak about it. His despairing wife Patty reaches out to Lomax’s friend Finley, who had been in the POW Camp with him. Finley convinces Lomax to return to the camp and to take revenge on his former camp torturer Nagase, who is now working as a tourist guide at the site. With the constant support of his wife, Lomax finally decides to confront Nagase. However, hearing Nagase’s story, Lomax abandons his plans of revenge and returns to Britain, where soon a letter from Nagase reaches him. Reading the letter Lomax feels the urge to return to Thailand, but this time he wants his wife to accompany him. When meeting Nagase, who once more conveys his deepest apologies, Lomax hands him a letter. The letter states, that despite never being able to forget, Nagase can be assured of his forgiveness. That is the beginning of their life-long friendship.







## Target Audience

Activists  
(Ex) combatants  
Trauma survivors

## Notes

The Railway Man is set in 1970s Great Britain, 25 years after the end of World War II. Lomax and his fellow ex-servicemen lead what seems a tranquil life on the outside, but on the inside they are still haunted by memories of their war-time experiences.

Although Lomax's physical wounds from torture have healed, his mental wounds have not. He keeps being haunted by memories of his humiliation and victimisation. He is unable to speak to anyone about his feelings, as he feels a deep sense of shame for not having been able to stand up to his torturers, while his wife and fellow combatants perceive him as a hero for his courageous actions during captivity. Throughout the film, the disparity between the inner and outer world of Lomax is clearly shown and is a recurrent theme in the movie.

Lomax's wife Patti is the chief facilitator in his struggles with his memories. Having been a nurse during WWII, she understands the toll war takes on everyone involved, especially the soldiers. Patti supports Lomax during his recurring trauma attacks, proactively approaching Finley for advice, and encouraging Lomax to finally confront his torturer.

The turning point of the story and the beginning of Lomax's healing process is his meeting with Nagase. His drive for revenge is dissipated, when Lomax comes to understand the pain Nagase is going through, as he deals with his memories of having been an accomplice to the torturing and killing of hundreds of soldiers during the war. Their meetings finally help both men deal with their memories and to ask for and grant forgiveness, thus bringing closure to their struggles and helping them to establish a deep friendship.

### Key Questions

- Why can't Lomax talk about his past?
- What role does Patti play in helping Lomax deal with his situation and finding closure?
- How did the encounter between Lomax and Nagase help both to deal with their past?
- Nagase and Lomax were able to reconcile and become friends. How can such a friendship be established between opposing parties to the conflict in the Sri Lankan context?

TOM HANKS SANDRA BULLOCK

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF 'THE HOURS',  
'THE READER' AND 'BILLY ELLIOT'

# EXTREMELY LOUD & INCREDIBLY CLOSE

THOMAS HORN    MAX VON SYDOW    VIOLA DAVIS    JOHN GOODMAN    JEFFREY WRIGHT    ZOE CALDWELL

WARNER BROS. PICTURES PRESENTS

A SCOTT RUDIN PRODUCTION A STEPHEN DALDRY FILM TOM HANKS SANDRA BULLOCK "EXTREMELY LOUD & INCREDIBLY CLOSE" THOMAS HORN  
MAX VON SYDOW VIOLA DAVIS JOHN GOODMAN JEFFREY WRIGHT MUSIC BY ALEXANDRE DESPLAT EDITED BY CLAIRE SIMPSON PRODUCTION DESIGNER K.K. BARRETT  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS MENGES BASED ON THE NOVEL BY JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CELIA COSTAS MARK ROYBAL NORA SKINNER SCREENPLAY BY ERIC ROTH

PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED  
Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13  
EMOTIONAL THEMATIC MATERIAL, SOME

PRODUCED BY SCOTT RUDIN THIS DECEMBER

BY STEPHEN DALDRY

WARNER BROS. PICTURES



# *Extremely Loud, Incredibly Close*

A FILM BY STEPHEN DALDRY – 2011

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Best Picture – Academy Awards Nomination 2012  
Best Supporting Actor – Academy Awards Nomination 2012



The main character comes to terms with his memories by going on a journey that teaches him to overcome his fears and deal with his guilt

“Daldry has created yet another masterpiece that showcases the value of relationships, the heavy burden of loss & internal pain” - *ArtsGuild*

## Key Themes

Loss of a loved one  
Dealing with guilt  
Parents as facilitators

## *Plot*

Nine-year old Oskar is an intelligent boy, for whom however, interacting with other people is a great challenge. Given the boy's condition, his father Thomas invents games that require communicating with other people, to help Oskar develop better social skills. On September 11, 2001, when Oskar returns home from school, he finds five messages from his father on the answering machine, saying that he is trapped in the World Trade Centre, which had just been hit by an airplane. When his father calls for the sixth time, and records a message on the answering machine, Oscar, unable to move in his fear, sees the building collapse on TV. He then hides the answering machine's recordings from his mother, with whom he has a difficult relationship. Later, in his father's closet he finds a key in an envelope saying "Black" and vows to find what fits the key. He tracks down and visits all New Yorkers with the name "Black" and asks them about his father. In the process, Oskar learns to face his fears and grows as a person. When Oskar locates William, the owner of the key, who reveals that the key was sold accidentally to Oskar's father, he is disappointed and confesses to William that he did not pick up the phone during his father's sixth and final phone call, finally relieving his guilty conscious. The film ends with Oskar's mother revealing that she knew he was contacting the Blacks, which made her visit each Black in advance to prepare them for Oskar's visit. Their relationship finally improves and both are able to overcome the memory of their lost father/husband.



## Target Audience

Youth  
Parents and care givers  
Social workers

## *Notes*

The story is set in New York and revolves around the World Trade Centre attack on 11th September 2001 and Oskar's struggles with the grief of losing his father in this attack. The trauma of hearing his father's last words through the answering machine, and presuming his death by watching the towers collapse on TV, are intertwined with the guilt of not having picked up the phone and being there for his father in his last moments. Oskar projects his anger onto his grieving mother and completely distances himself from her, believing that he has lost the only person who really understood him.

Oskar's journey begins with the assumption that his father has left him something, which he must seek out in order to find closure. The search helps Oskar to come to terms with his guilt by overcoming his fears and thus becoming the person his father always encouraged him to be. He also uses the journey to undo his guilt by making up for his perceived "wrongdoing" of not having been there for his father, when he most needed him.

Oskar's mother plays the role of an unseen facilitator, who helps her son to undergo this journey without being harmed, as she knows that she has to allow Oskar to pursue his quest in order for him to come to terms with the loss of his father. By helping Oskar, she comes to terms with her own loss, and becomes closer to her son than she ever had been.

### Key Questions

- How does Oscar's search help him and his mother to deal with their loss?
- What causes guilt, what causes grievance and what causes trauma in Oscar?
- How can guilt be overcome, when the person who can grant forgiveness is no longer alive?





# Autograph

A FILM BY CHERAN – 2004

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Best Popular Film – 52nd National Film Awards 2005 (India)  
Best Film – 52nd Filmfare Awards South 2005



The main character comes to terms with his memories by revisiting key people of his past to receive their blessings for the new chapter of his life in order to find closure

“Autograph is sure to delight one and all to recall their memories and enjoy the past”

*Jaya TV*

## Key Themes

Nostalgia

Seeking closure

Memories as an upholder of structural differences

## Plot

The story begins with the main character Senthil setting off on a journey to invite his friends and family for his forthcoming wedding. His first destination is the village in which he grew up. Passing through the village he remembers his school time love Kamala. When he reaches her house to hand her an invitation, he has difficulties recognizing her, as she looks tired and aged, having lost her youthful beauty. However, while talking to her he realizes that she is happy with her life and her husband. Relieved and fulfilled he heads off to his second destination: Kerala. Senthil was a university student in Kerala until he and his family were forced to leave the town due to Senthil’s relationship with Lathika, whose family opposed their affair and married her off to her cousin. Arriving in Kerala he meets his old university friend, who tells him that Lathika has become a widow. He goes to visit her but the view of her deeply disturbs him and fills him with guilt and regret. He returns home, where he meets his best friend Divya, who had helped him in the past to overcome his grief over having lost Lathika. Again, she helps him to bring his focus back to the present, which this time is his upcoming wedding. The film ends with Senthil receiving the well-wishes of all the people who shaped him in becoming the person he is, allowing him to leave his past behind and start a new chapter of his life with a positive spirit.





## Target Audience

Rural audience

Youth

Civil society

## *Notes*

The film is set in different locations throughout South India and shows the various challenges Senthil has faced in his life such as his struggles with heart break and alcoholism, though he now appears to have overcome them as he sets off on his journey into his past, as a strong, confident young man.

However, though Senthil believes that he has overcome his past relationships, which gives him the courage to revisit them, as his journey continues it soon becomes clear that he is not fully reconciled with his past. Senthil is still emotionally attached to the places of his past and the people who were close to him during that time. He cries tears of joy and pain in memory of his past, and at one point, even considers changing his wedding plans. His journey therefore becomes a journey that helps him to find the closure he thought he had found long ago.

In the movie, Senthil's friend Divya plays the role of the facilitator who helps him stay focused on the present moment rather than dwelling on the past. Senthil is thus able to free himself from the painful memories of his past and face his future in a better frame of mind.

The film portrays a range of different memories that can shape a person in different ways and thus takes the stance that good and bad memories are all part of life, and that they enrich us in different ways.

### Key Questions

- Why does Senthil revisit his past in the guise of distributing wedding invitations?
- How do Senthil's different relationships impact him and how does he come to terms with them?
- How do Lathika's memories of Senthil affect her life?
- Why does Senthil finally decide to settle for an arranged marriage?





# *The Kite Runner*

A FILM BY MARC FORSTER – 2007

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Best Feature – Christopher Awards 2008

Best Foreign Language Film – North Texas Film Critics Association US 2008



The main character comes to terms with his memories by returning to his destroyed home country and committing an act of immense courage in order to put his guilt to rest

“A compelling and uplifting tale”

*USA Today*

## Key Themes

Memories of the diaspora communities

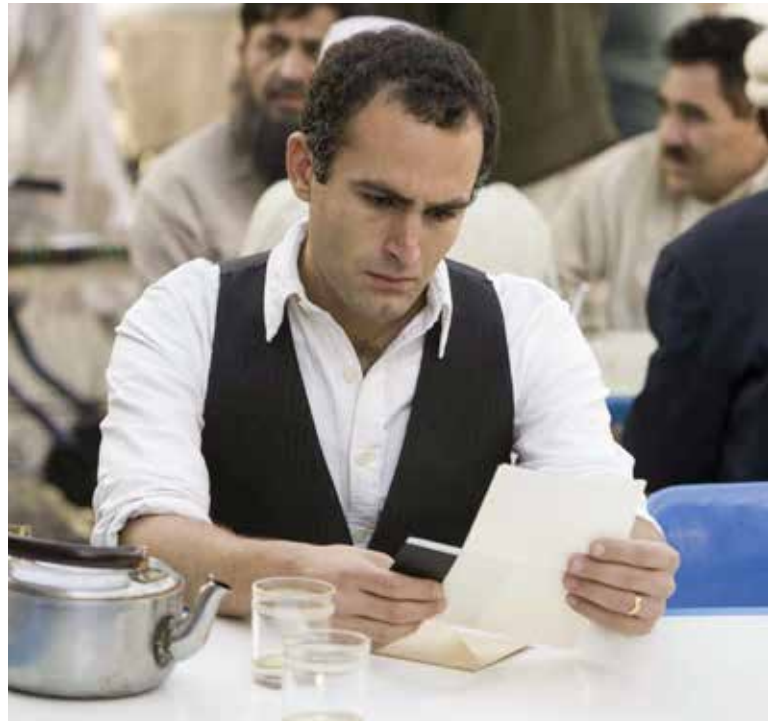
Lasting resentment

Erasing guilt

## *Plot*

Young Amir lives with his father and two servants, Ali and his son Hassan, in Kabul, Afghanistan. Ali and Hassan are Hazaras, an ethnic minority in the country. During a kite-fighting tournament, Amir wins the challenge and Hassan runs after the losing kite in order to bring it back as a trophy for Amir. When Amir goes in search of Hassan, he witnesses Hassan being raped by Assef, an aggressive boy with a cruel urge to subjugate and humiliate Hazaras. Amir runs off and pretends as if nothing had happened. After this incident, the boys' friendship slowly falls apart. Amir, wracked by guilt and jealous of his father's admiration and affection for Hassan, falsely accuses Hassan of stealing his watch, resulting in the servants leaving the household. Years later, when Kabul is invaded by the Soviets, Amir and his father flee to California. There, Amir marries Soraya, the daughter of a former general in the Afghan army known to his father. Amir continues to be haunted by the childhood incident in which he betrayed Hassan's trust. He and Soraya remain childless. One day, an old family friend, Rahim Khan, asks Amir to visit him in Pakistan. During that visit, Amir learns that Hassan was actually his step brother, and that he and his wife were killed by the Taliban, while their son Sohrab was kidnapped by them. The critically ill Rahim Khan wants Amir to go to Kabul to find Sohrab and bring him to Pakistan. Back in Afghanistan, Amir finds out that Sohrab has been enslaved by a high ranking Taliban leader who turns out to be Assef. Amir and Sohrab manage to escape the Taliban stronghold due to Sohrab's bravery, and Amir is able to bring Sohrab to the US, where he becomes a member of Amir's family.







## Target Audience

Diaspora Community  
University Students  
Civil Society

## Notes

The Kite Runner has two settings. It starts off in 1960s Afghanistan, a relatively liberal political context which drastically changes when the Soviet Army invades the country in the late 1970s, resulting in the main characters fleeing to the United States.

The second setting is California, USA, several years later. Afghanistan, in the meantime, has come under the control of the Taliban.

The Afghan diaspora community is portrayed as attempting to strongly uphold its traditional values and the hierarchical structures from their former home. Despite having been able to adapt to his new environment easily, Amir cannot let go of certain memories from Afghanistan either. He is particularly haunted by his memory of having betrayed Hassan. The physical distance from the place the incident took place, allows him to push this memory to the back of his mind, but even the smallest trigger from the past makes this memory return with all its might.

Amir has always been in the shadow of Hassan, who was constantly praised for his bravery and loyalty by Amir's father. The struggle of always having been second to Hassan, in the eyes of his father, also haunts Amir.

The turning point of the story and the overcoming of all of Amir's past baggage is the rescue of Hassan's son Sohrab and his return to the USA with the boy. The act in itself shows Amir's growth as a person. However, more than anything else it reflects a freeing from past guilt and shame, marking a turning point in Amir's life.

### Key Questions

- What are the memories that are haunting the main characters?
- How did Amir's memory of Hassan shape him to be the person he became?
- How does Amir's act of courage, of saving his nephew, help him to deal with his guilt?
- How does the memory of their home country affect the diaspora community in their new home?



# *Anantha Rathriya*

A FILM BY PRASANNA VITHANAGE – 1996

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Best New Asian Director – Honourable Mention -Pusan International Film Festival 1997



One main character tries to come to terms with his memories by seeking forgiveness, while the other main character deals with her memories by not granting forgiveness

“It's a potent examination of class division, spiritual dissolution and moral anxiety”

*Strictly Film School*

## Key Themes

Living with guilt

Inability to forgive

Absence of a facilitator in dealing with memory

## *Plot*

Anantha Rathriya tells the story of Suvisal, who comes from a wealthy household, and Piyum, who is a servant in this household. Suvisal notices Piyum when he returns to his ancestral home to work on his thesis. He seduces her and soon thereafter has to return to his university. Piyum writes regularly to him and Suvisal soon discovers that she is pregnant, leading him to break off all contact with her. Several decades later he gets a call from his fiancée, who reminds him that he has to sit on the jury of a trial for the next three days. It turns out that it is Piyum who is being tried for murder and theft. Piyum has now become a Sex worker. One night, when she finds out that her client is unable to pay her, she puts sleeping tablets in his drink. Realising that the unintended overdose has killed her client, Piyum rushes out of the room. On the second day of the trial Suvisal goes to meet his old friend Vicky, who is a lawyer. After hearing the story, Vicky advises Suvisal not to reveal his identity to Piyum and to simply wait for the trial to end. Throughout the trial, Piyum does not show any signs of recognizing Suvisal. After Piyum is sentenced to ten years in prison, Suvisal, unable to bear his guilt, visits her in jail. He finally reveals his identity to her and offers to help her, but she rejects his offer and requests him to never contact her again. With that, their paths divert and both go their separate ways.





## Target Audience

Youth  
Activists  
Social workers

## Notes

Set in 1990s Sri Lanka, Anantha Rathriya deals with structural inequalities and gender exploitation that are part of Sri Lanka's socio-economic mosaic.

Suvisal, being the son of a feudal family that for generations has wielded power and even ownership over the lives of their workers, was easily able to use the existing hierarchical structures to place Piyum in a situation, where she couldn't refuse his sexual advances. While Suvisal blithely walked away from the consequences of their intimate encounter, Piyum's entire life was impacted by it.

As an unmarried young woman, who had lost her virginity as well as her child, Piyum saw no other option but to become a sex worker. Therefore, the tragic path her life takes, mainly due to rigid societal structures, never allows her to forget or come to terms with her past.

This is the base for the grudge Piyum carries against Suvisal and the guilt he feels towards her. Both have not found a way to deal with their memories and the lack of a facilitator, who may have been able to mediate, is one possible explanation for the outcome depicted in the movie.

The final seeking of forgiveness by the perpetrator Suvisal from his victim Piyum and her unwillingness to grant it concludes the film and opens a space for debate regarding whether forgiveness is necessary to overcome guilt and to deal with difficult memories, and whether a person has a moral obligation to forgive, when forgiveness is sincerely sought.

### Key Questions

- What caused Suvisal's discomfort as a jury member in Piyum's case?
- What role does Suvisal's friend play in the story?
- Why do you think Piyum did not want to forgive Suvisal?
- Can guilt be overcome without forgiveness?



ANWAR RASHEED ENTERTAINMENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
WEEKEND BLOCKBUSTERS PRESENTS

WRITER & DIRECTOR  
**ANJALI MENON**  
PRODUCERS  
**ANWAR RASHEED**  
**SOPHIA PAUL**  
CINEMATOGRAPHER  
**SAMEER THAHIR**

# BANGALORE DAYS



MUSIC GOPI SUNDER LYRICS SANTHOSH VARMA & RAFAEO AHAMED EDITOR PRAVEEN PRABHAKAR ART DIRECTOR SUNIL BABU  
PRODUCTION CONTROLLER ALEX E KURIAN SOUND RAJAKRISHNAN COSTUME DESIGN PAMPA BISWAS MAKEUP RONEX XAVIER  
STILLS ANUP CHACKO & VISHNU THANDASSERY DESIGN THOUGHT STATION



AAA RELEASE  
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/BANGALORESDAYS



# Bangalore Days

A FILM BY ANJALI MENON – 2014

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Best Screenplay – Kerala State Film Awards 2014  
Most Popular Film – Asianet Film Awards 2014



The character that deals with his memory the most tries to come to terms with it by fully investing himself in his work and changing his lifestyle entirely. However, he is only able to come to terms with his memories once he is forgiven for his past deeds

“It’s refreshing to have a film about marriage and relationships that is ultimately so optimistic and hopeful” - *Cinema Chat*

## Key Themes

The role of memorabilia

The desire to forget

The role of a confidante/family in dealing with memory

## Plot

Bangalore Days is a romantic mixture of Drama and Comedy that revolves around three cousins, Arjun (Aju), Divya (Kunju) and Krishnan (Kuttan), who have shared a close friendship since their childhood and whose lives are about to change in Bangalore. Arjun works as a biker gang mechanic and Kuttan as a software engineer, while Divya is pushed into a marriage with Shivadas (Das), a cold-hearted workaholic. What Divya and her cousins do not know is that Das was the notorious leader of a biker gang and turned his life around after losing his former girlfriend in a tragic motorbike accident. He is haunted by the guilt of having caused her death and keeps memorabilia of her in a separate room in his house. Already unhappy in her marriage with Das, finding his room of memorabilia is the trigger for Divya to finally leave him. In the meantime Arjun falls for Sarah, a paraplegic radio jockey, who is about to leave the country on a university scholarship. Kuttan falls in love with an air hostess, who fulfils all his criteria of a traditional Kerala woman, but turns out to be a nightmare. Things turn out well for the protagonists in the end: Arjun realises how much Sarah means to him and decides to ask her to stay with him in Bangalore. Kuttan meets a foreigner named Michelle, a European Bharatha Natyam dancer and marries her. After Divya helps Das overcome his past they get their lives back on track, and finally Arjun, Kuttan, Divya and Das are able to find happiness in Bangalore.





ANWAR RASHEED ENTERTAINMENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH WEEKEND BLOCKBUSTERS PRESENTS

# മിഷൻ നവം

WRITER & DIRECTOR  
**ANJALI MENON**

PRODUCERS  
**ANWAR RASHEED**  
**SOPHIA PAUL**

CINEMATOGRAPHER  
**SAMEER THAHIR**

MUSIC: Gopi Sunder (Songs: SANTHOSH VARMA & RAFEEL AHAMED) EDITOR: PRAVEEN PRABHAKAR LITERATURE: SUNIL BABU  
PRODUCTION CONTROLLER: ALEX & KURIAN DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: RAJAKRISHNAN COSTUME DESIGNER: PAMPA BISWAS MAKEUP: JONEX XAVIER  
STILLS: ANUR CHAKR & VISHNU THANDASSERY FILM THOUGHT STATION

A & A RELEASE  
KUBUST CINEMAS



## Target Audience

Youth  
Parents and care givers  
University students

## *Notes*

Bangalore Days is set in modern day South India, contrasting romanticised, rural life in the main characters' village, with the buzzing urban lifestyle of Bangalore. Aspiration for an exciting future is what drives the three to the city, where each of them is confronted with their own set of challenges. From a memory angle, it is Das who plays the most important role. In order to deal with his memories he changes his life completely and cuts off all ties to his former friends. Nothing shall remind him of his past. His emotional and physical isolation almost appears as a form of self-punishment and his dedication to his work seems to be a way to distract his mind of his guilt. However, Das allows himself to reminisce whenever he enters the small room at the corner of his apartment, which is dedicated to his former girlfriend. The memorabilia he exposes himself to on a regular basis do not allow him to leave the past behind. In that way, he stands in his own way of finding closure and moving on.

It is Divya and Arjun, who act as facilitators in assisting Das to deal with his memories and the trauma of his loss by preparing a meeting with his former girlfriend's parents and creating an opportunity for Das to seek forgiveness. Das finally finds the relief he was seeking for many years, enabling him to finally turn his life around.

### Key Questions

- How can Das' development from a freedom loving biker to a cold hearted workaholic be explained?
- What prevents Das from dealing with his memory constructively?
- How does Divya help Das to come to terms with his memories?
- What role does memorabilia play in preserving memory?





# *Labyrinth of Lies*

A FILM BY GIULIO RICCIARELLI – 2014

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Best Foreign Language Film – Capri Hollywood 2015  
Audience Award – Palms Spring International Film Festival 2016



The main character comes to terms with his memories by seeking justice for the wrongs committed in the past

“A smart and well-acted take on a historically significant if little-known story”

*Toronto Review*

## Key Themes

Collective consciousness of guilt

Justice and accountability

State-led memory

## *Plot*

It is 1958, 13 years after the end of World War II, when Johan Radmann, a young, idealistic German public prosecutor finds out that a former commander of the Auschwitz extermination camp has become a teacher at a school, which by law is forbidden. Learning more about Auschwitz himself, he is enraged by how little people know about the gruesome crimes that took place at this camp. When Radmann voices his frustration, he is met with indifference or hostility and comes to realize that the state apparatus is infiltrated by former Nazis, who cover up for each other and prevent any constructive dealing of the past. However, Radmann does not give up. His perseverance and commitment is noticed by his boss, the prosecutor-general Fritz Bauer, who puts Radmann in charge of investigating former workers at the Auschwitz concentration camp. By gaining access to the files of the U.S. occupation forces, Radmann learns that there were thousands of camp workers who were never held accountable for the crimes they had committed at the camp, and have returned to civilian life, unnoticed. He also finds out that his own father was a Nazi, which triggers a personal crisis in Radmann. Despite all, Radmann tirelessly goes through days and nights of investigations, in which he listens to one witness after another testifying about their gruesome experiences. However, this work is not in vain, as the film ends with several former camp workers being tried at the infamous Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials, and Radmann coming to terms with his and his country's past.







## Target Audience

Activists  
University Students  
Policy makers

## *Notes*

To many, Germany's war crimes were dealt with at the Nuremberg trials (1945/46), where the victorious allies held their defeated German counterparts to account. The Labyrinth of Lies however focuses on a completely different episode in German history, commencing 13 years after the war's end, when a former inmate of Auschwitz comes face to face with one of his past tormentors, working as a teacher in a primary school in Frankfurt.

Germany 13 years after the end of the war, is depicted very much like Sri Lanka is today, a divided society, where people do not want to break the silence on past atrocities. The German state, which is now a model and active proponent of transitional justice principles was far from willing to "open the can of worms", as Radmann is accused of trying to do, when he sets out to investigate the allegations. Through its different institutions the state promoted a certain view of the past, which could only be broken by someone like Radmann, who started off his investigations with the moral high ground of being uninvolved due to his young age, and the belief that his father was not a Nazi. However, when this fundamental belief of his is broken, his whole world starts falling apart and he begins to question what should be the right thing to do. Finally, he comes to realise that the matter is not a question of what is right or wrong, but rather a question of justice. This is what brings him back on track. Therefore, it can be said that the film, despite being a fictionalised account of the investigations that lead to the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials, ultimately depicts the very real battle within the collective consciousness of a population between wanting to forget and wanting to remember so as to ensure non-recurrence.

### Key Questions

- What do the different main characters consider as the right approach for the country to deal with the past?
- Why were the victims so reluctant to speak about their experience?
- What changes the collective consciousness of shared guilt among people?
- How does winning or losing a war affect your obligation to be held accountable?

VIJAY SETHUPATHI  
PRODUCTIONS  
PRESENTS

COMMON MAN  
PRESENTS  
B. GANESH



VIJAY SETHUPATHI IN

Orange  
mittai

*Journey is destination*

DIRECTED, PHOTOGRAPHED & EDITED

BIJU VISWANATH

MUSIC JUSTIN PRABHAKAR



# Orange Mittai

A FILM BY BIJU VISHWANATH – 2015

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Best Feature – Christopher Awards 2008  
Best Foreign Language Film – North Texas Film Critics Association US 2008



The main characters deal with memories by making up for their lost opportunities with the help of each other

“A quiet ode to the bittersweet life”

*Hindustan Times*

## Key Themes

Memories as lessons of life

Dealing with regret

Intergenerational memory

## Plot

On the day of his father’s death anniversary, the Emergency Medical Technician Sathya receives a call to pick up the elderly patient Kailasam, who claims to have suffered a heart attack. From the moment Sathya picks Kailasam up, he is being ordered around by the old man and gets more and more irritated by his grumpy and obstinate nature. The journey continues amidst unforeseen occurrences, including a failed suicide attempt of a man whose girlfriend refuses to marry him due to her father disapproving their relationship. This and other events affect Sathya as they trigger memories of humiliation and regret. When Sathya and Kailasam finally reach the hospital that evening, Kailasam’s doctor requests Sathya to admit him to a bigger hospital in the town as the old man is supposedly critically ill. By the time they reach the hospital, Kailasam has become fond of Sathya and stands up for the young man, when he is being wrongly scolded. Sathya also takes Kailasam to his son, who however does not want to see his father and asks Sathya to come back once Kailasam has died. Such an attitude is unacceptable to Sathya, who is haunted by his inability to reconcile with his own father before his death, and he scolds Kailasam’s son. The empathy Kailasam and Sathya feel for each other due to their past experiences, brings them closer together, and finally allows Kailasam to reconnect with his son and enables Sathya to resume his relationship with his girlfriend.





## Target Audience

Artists  
University students  
Parents and Caregivers

## *Notes*

In modern day Tamil Nadu, Sathya and Kailasam are struggling with a range of memories from the distant but also the recent past, extending from regret over bitterness to guilt. Sathya is struggling with the memory of the previous day's exchange between him and his girlfriend's father, who humiliated him by suggesting that Sathya should leave his job and join one of his businesses, thus implying that his current profession is a demeaning one. Sathya also regrets that he did not appreciate his father more while he was still alive and that he did not build a proper relationship with him. Although his father clearly loved him, Sathya never reciprocated those feelings.

Kailasam is dealing with the loss of his daughter-in-law, who he was very close to, and the estrangement of his son, who has completely distanced himself from Kailasam over time. Kailasam carries the guilt of not having been able to show love to his own father, and now to his son. He now wants to be loved and to show love but feels trapped because the people currently closest to him have distanced themselves from him.

Very similar memories of lost opportunities are what bring Sathya and Kailasam closer together. Kailasam becoming a father figure to Sathya, and Sathya becomes a son to Kailasam, enabling both individuals to make up for their past mistakes and thus overcome their guilt and remorse. Their deep understanding of each other also allows them to become facilitators for each other. This in turn helps both of them to turn their lives around.

### Key Questions

- What was distracting Sathya from his job during his first few encounters with Kailasam?
- How do Kailasam and Sathya help each other in coming to terms with their memories?
- What is it that finally reconciles Kailasam and his son?
- How can one prevent intergenerational memories from harming present relationships?

Love is never enough...

a film by Prasanna Vithanage  
OBA NATHUWA, OBA EKKA | PIRAGU

# with you, without you

Shyam Fernando Anjali Patil

LASANTHA NAWARATHNA MOHAMED ADAMALY PRASANNA VITHANAGE PRODUCTIONS & AAKAR PRESENT  
WITH YOU, WITHOUT YOU (OBA NATHUWA, OBA EKKA | PIRAGU) Production Designer ROB BEVIS Music by LAKSHMAN JOSEPH DE SARAW  
Sound Design TAPAS NAYAK Edited by A. SREERAR PRASAD Director of Photography M.D. MAHENDAPALA Executive Producers RAHUL ROY  
NADIRA ADAMALY IBANTHI ABEYSINGHE SUNIL PONSEKA Produced by LASANTHA NAWARATHNA MOHAMED ADAMALY  
Written & Directed by PRASANNA VITHANAGE

[withyouwithoutyou.com](http://withyouwithoutyou.com)



# *Oba Nathuwa Oba*

## *Ekka*

A FILM BY PRASANNA VITHANAGE – 2012

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Signis Award – Milano African Asian Film Festival 2013  
Best film Cyclod’or – Vesoul Asian Film Festival 2013



The main character comes to terms with his memories by returning to his destroyed home country and committing an act of immense courage in order to put his guilt to rest

“Without question, the film’s viewers will long remember the skilled and moving performances”

- *World Socialist Website* - *Wasantha Rupasinghe and Panini Wijesiriwardane*

### Key Themes

Seeking closure

Dealing with guilt

Impact of collective memory on individual relationships

### *Plot*

Sarathsiri is a Sinhala pawnbroker in his mid forties. While working at his pawnshop he meets Selvi, a young Tamil women from Kilinochchi, who pawns her earrings. After their first encounter, she keeps returning to his shop to pawn small items of little value. Sarathsiri develops an interest in her and saves her from an unwanted marriage with a wealthy old widower by marrying her himself. One day, an old friend of his appears at his doorstep and Selvi finds out that the two were in the army together. She is horrified and confronts Sarathsiri, revealing that Sinhala soldiers had killed her two brothers, and that her parents had sent her away in order to save her. The argument between the two ends unresolved and Selvi starts distancing herself from Sarathsiri. Shortly after, she falls sick, and Sarathsiri blames himself for having caused her sickness. Fearful of losing Selvi, he promises to change. However, he also confesses that during his time in the army he gave false testimony in a rape case in order to protect his friends. This gives Selvi a second shock but the next morning she appears to have recovered and tells him that she is ready to be the wife he wishes for and apologises for having caused him pain. Overjoyed Sarathsiri sells his pawn-shop, and heads out to buy air tickets for a trip to India, as Selvi had always dreamt of visiting that country. However, when he returns, he finds that she has killed herself.





## Target Audience

Artists  
Civil society  
University students

## Notes

The film attempts to deal with the complex relationship between the Sinhala and Tamil community, as Sri Lanka emerges from a 30-years of civil war. Sarathsiri and Selvi both deal with memories of their troubled past, that they struggle to reconcile with.

In the absence of close friends or relatives, the two main characters are isolated from the external world and lack the presence of a facilitator, who could help them find a way to deal with their memories of the war. Instead, there is only negative facilitation, provided by Sarathsiri's former army colleague, who bluntly exposes Sarathsiri's past to Selvi, and horrifies her.

After her experiences of the war, Selvi cannot accept the fact that she is married to a former soldier, but her feelings for Sarathsiri and her dependence on him do not allow her to take any action either, making her fall into a deep depression. Sarathsiri, in the meantime, is unable to understand why his past is so significant to Selvi, as he has never bothered to question her about her past. His display of anger when she questions him clearly shows that he has not come to terms with his own past and is mainly trying to forget it rather than facing it squarely.

When Sarathsiri, fearful of losing Selvi to her depression, finally confesses his past deeds to her, it is freeing for him but leaves Selvi with an even greater burden, leading to her tragic suicide.

### Key Questions

- What led Sarathsiri to confess the truth about his past to Selvi and how did it affect him?
- Why did Selvi commit suicide?
- What would have helped the two to leave their past behind and come to terms with their memories?
- In what ways does memory affect the collective consciousness of the divided Sri Lankan society?

A LEBANON WAR STORY

# WALTZ WITH BASHIR

*"Exemplary . . . The message of the futility of war has rarely been painted with such bold strokes."*

—**TIME**

A GRAPHIC NOVEL  
**ARI FOLMAN AND DAVID POLONSKY**



# Waltz with Bashir

A FILM BY ARI FOLMAN – 2008

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Best Film – NSFA Awards 2009  
Best Foreign Language Film – Golden Globe 2009



The main character deals with his lacking memory by seeking out people who have gone through similar experiences, in order to obtain a coherent picture of the events that took place in the past

“An extraordinary harrowing, provocative picture”

*The Guardian*

## Key Themes

Repressed and suppressed memory

Reconstructing memory

The impact of time on memory work

## Plot

As a 19 year old, the Israeli Ari Folman was recruited for the Lebanon war. Five years later, he finds himself with no memories whatsoever of the war. It is an encounter with a former comrade, who is haunted by nightmares, that triggers the rise of surreal images of the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Folman. He is however unable to recall what actually happened. Feeling restless, he seeks the advice of a childhood friend, who is a psychologist. He explains to Folman how the brain processes memories, and advises him to find others who were with him in the Lebanon war, to help him revive his memory. Folman's varied encounters show how different people try to come to terms with their memories in different ways. While many claim not to remember anything, the conversations they have with Folman reveal that their memory of that time period is still very vivid. By hearing the stories of others Folman is able to reconstruct his role during the war. He discovers that he was one of the soldiers who surrounded the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila and the surrounding neighbourhood of Sabra, in Lebanon, where the massacres took place. He also learns that he was among those who fired flares to illuminate the camp for the Lebanese Christian Phalange militia that committed the massacres. Folman finally solves the mystery of his amnesia, realizing that it was his feeling of guilt and the responsibility he carried for the massacres that made him lose his memory of the war as a teenager. The film ends with the animation dissolving into actual footage of the aftermath of the massacre.





## Target Audience

(Ex) combatants

Journalists

Activists

## Notes

Waltz with Bashir is an animated war docu-feature film that is set in Israel, more than two decades after the end of the first Lebanon war of 1982. It seeks to recount the stories of Israeli veterans who fought in that war with producer and director Ari Folman also being the chief protagonist of the film. Folman claims to have repressed his memory to such an extent that despite remembering the basic progression of the war, he has large gaps in his memory. Folman's task in the film is to fill these gaps and in the process, enables other veterans to tell their stories as well. It becomes clear that all of them, although reluctant at the beginning, feel the need to speak about their memories of the war. However, many deal with their either repressed or consciously suppressed memory, depending on their experiences and their emotional and moral orientation towards the events. It is only due to the passage of time that some of them, like Folman, now want to either remember or tell their story, which they had tried so hard to forget over the years.

The film shows the importance temporal distance plays in memory work. It also addresses the need of a supportive network consisting of other people who have gone through similar experiences, but also of psychologists, psychiatrists and other experts, who can facilitate and give guidance on how to deal with haunting or completely missing memories.

Waltz With Bashir is considered "one of the very best films on conflict"<sup>1</sup> and while celebrated by the international community, it has also earned support from Israeli officialdom.

### Key Questions

- What drove Ari Folman's search for his lost memory?
- What are the possible reasons some of the characters repress their memories while others suppress them?
- Why is it important to remember a difficult past and search for the truth?
- How can (ex)combatants be supported in addressing their memories of war?





# *Smarana Samapthi*

A FILM BY SATYAJITH MAITIFE – 1999

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Best Tele Film – Sumathi Awards 2000



The main character comes to terms with his memories by empathising with the pain of those, who did him wrong

“A story woven around the dark days of the late eighties in Sri Lanka where thousands of youth met with their untimely death” - *Susitha R. Fernando The Sunday Times*

## Key Themes

Dealing with trauma through empathy

Trauma caused by guilt

Search for the truth

## *Plot*

After many years Asanga returns to his village to work at the local hospital as a doctor. Originally born to a potter family under the name Jayarathne, he had to face the horror of his whole family being killed during the JVP uprising in the 1980s. No one in the village, including his former schoolmistress whom he encounters at the hospital, recognizes Asanga, now armed with his medical qualifications and a new name. When his home was attacked during the JVP uprising, young Asanga had turned to his schoolmistress for protection, but she had refused to shelter him in her house. Due to Asanga's inability to deal with his memories, his fiancée Maya starts taking the lead in the search for the hidden pieces of the story. Asanga and Maya get to know that the schoolmistress is also haunted by the tragic losses she faced; her son was shot by the rebels and the same shooting left her husband crippled. Towards the end of the movie, Asanga finds out where his family was buried and pays his last respects, which helps him in closing that chapter of his life. In the meantime, Maya continues her investigations and finds out that it was the schoolmistress, who, through a letter to her son in the army, ultimately caused Asanga's family's tragic death. Shortly afterwards, the schoolmistress falls and is critically injured, requiring Asanga to save her life. The film ends with Maya accompanying him to the hospital, with only her face revealing the new moral burden she is carrying.





## Target Audience

Youth  
Civil society  
Rural communities

## Notes

Smarana Samapthi is set more than a decade after the JVP uprising in the 1980s that led to the killing of Asanga's family. While the timely distance allows Asanga to view incidents from his past with a somewhat emotional stability and a sense of curiosity, he is still unable to carry out investigations into the attack on his family. Despite his calm demeanour, Asanga is still haunted by the memories of his past that keep him awake at night and trigger attacks of rage and fear. Asanga breaks out of the web of memories that have trapped him, when he visits his family's former home, where now a new, happy potter family lives. This allows him to replace his last horrifying memories connected to the house with a more positive image. This is followed by a visit to the cemetery, where Asanga's family is buried, and finally, the holding of a dhane or almsgiving, through which he symbolically accepts the death of his family. The third and most powerful factor helping Asanga to find closure is the revelation of the pain the schoolmasters had undergone due to the JVP uprising, allowing Asanga to free himself from any negative feelings towards her and rather to feel empathy. Throughout the story, Maya plays the role of an active facilitator, enabling Asanga to be a passive spectator and to slowly come to terms with his memories. However, the moral burden Maya is left with raises the question whether a point exists at which it is better to stop digging for the truth.

### Key Questions

- Why does Asanga not want to reveal his true identity?
- What role does Maya play in helping Asanga come to terms with his past?
- How does the schoolteacher deal with her memories and the guilt of knowing that she might have caused two tragedies?
- Is there a point at which it is better to stop searching for the past?





# Han Gong-ju

A FILM BY LEE SU-JIN – 2013

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CGV Movie Collage Award & Citizen Reviewers' Award – Busan International Film Festival 2013  
Tiger Award – Rotterdam International Film Festival 2014



The main character tries to come to terms with her memories by carving out a new life for herself in a new city, until her tragic past catches up with her

“A skilfully crafted and highly accomplished debut...this film lures the spectator to participate in the pleasures of storytelling through an extraordinary and intricate narrative puzzle” - *Rotterdam Film Festival Jury*

## Key Themes

Mental scars of rape survivors  
Consequences of victim blaming  
The impact of missing support systems

## Plot

High school student, Han Gong-ju, traumatised by a brutal gang rape, struggles to pick up the pieces of her life in a new school in a new city. Gong-ju has no one to confide in, as her closest friend, who was victim to the same gang rape, commits suicide, her father is an alcoholic and her mother has remarried and avoids all contact with her. It is her former teacher, who arranges for her to stay with his mother, the cantankerous Ms Lee who runs a grocery store and is having an affair with a married policeman. A tenuous relationship of mutual support and caring blossoms between these two women as well as between Gong-ju's new classmate, Eun-hee, although she continues to hide her tragic past from both of them. Quiet and withdrawn, Gong-ju is constantly haunted by memories of her past. Unlike her new classmates, Gong-ju can no longer be a carefree, frivolous schoolgirl. Having a beautiful voice, Han Gong-ju finds solace in composing soulful songs which as her classmates note, seem to arise from a place of great pain, normally not accessible to a young schoolgirl. Gong-ju's joy at receiving an invitation from a recording studio is shortlived. Her new found fame reveals her new location and the parents of her rapists start besieging her, requesting her to sign statements absolving their children of wrongdoing. The horrific details of her gang rape are also publicised, resulting in even Ms Lee and Eun-hee abandoning her. In her despair, Gong-ju finally commits suicide.





## Target Audience

Students

Teachers

Social workers

## *Notes*

Han Gong-ju is set in contemporary South Korea and was inspired by a shocking real life incident, the Miryang gang rape of 2004. However, rather than focusing on the horrific details of the crime, young director Su-jin seeks to delve into the thoughts and feelings of the rape survivor as she struggles to keep living after such a traumatic experience.

Han Gong-ju, the main protagonist, continues to be haunted by memories of her past, despite moving to a new school in a new city. She feels the loss of her closest friend very keenly and tries to seek the comfort and support of her mother who cruelly rejects her. While some closeness is established with Ms Lee who provides a home to her and her warm and caring classmate, Eun-hee, Gong-ju is unable to confide in them and thus there always remains a certain distance between them. This also results in them being unable to play the role of facilitators and help Gong-ju address her painful memories. Gong-ju becomes very quiet and withdrawn but the strength of character we see in her, prior to her gang rape, is also what sustains her in her struggle to keep living despite her traumatic past. Her beautiful voice and her enjoyment of music are her only forms of solace but eventually end up shattering the new life she had tentatively begun to construct for herself due to the culture of victim blaming and shaming, which is persistent throughout Asia and does not allow a rape survivor to leave the past behind and come to terms with one's memories.

### Key Questions

- How does Gong-ju respond after her brutal rape?
- Why does she expend so much effort to find her mother?
- Why doesn't Gong-ju confide in Eun-hee or Ms Lee?
- How does victim blaming affect the healing process of the mental scars rape survivors carry?





# *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

A FILM BY MICHEL GONDRY – 2004

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Best Original Screenplay – Academy Awards 2005

Best Original Screenplay – BAFTA Awards 2005



The main characters attempt to come to terms with the memories of their painful pasts by erasing them

“The core of the movie is what's going on in Joel's head. And it's here that the filmmakers lavish their most creative and insightful notions” - *Rolling Stones*

## Key Themes

Escaping vs. dealing with memory

Significance of memorabilia in retaining memory

The need for bad memories as a learning tool for life

## *Plot*

Joel Barish and Clementine Kruczynski meet while traveling to Montauk. Despite their very different personalities, they soon fall in love with each other. Their relationship experiences many ups and downs and ends up becoming so toxic that Clementine hires the services of a company named Lacuna, to erase all her memories of Joel. When they meet again and Clementine does not recognize Joel, he is heartbroken. After learning about Lacuna and the procedure Clementine underwent, Joel decides to erase all memories of Clementine as well. The rest of the story mainly takes place in Joel's mind, while his memories of Clementine are being erased by Lacuna, one by one, while he is asleep. Flipping from one memory to the other, Joel rediscovers that he still has feelings for Clementine and tries to preserve the remaining memories of her by hiding them in remote parts of his subconscious. However, he loses all of them by the end of the procedure. In the meantime Mary, a nurse at Lacuna, finds out that her memories have been erased once before as well. In her anger and shock she collects the files of all Lacuna's patients and returns them to their owners. Joel and Clementine receive their files as well. At that point in time, they had got to know each other anew and only by discovering the files they realise that they had shared a past with each other. Despite the difficulties of accepting the rediscovery of their bitter memories of each other, they finally learn to accept the past and decide to start their life together anew.





## Target Audience

Artists  
Academics  
Social workers

## *Notes*

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind is a romantic, science-fiction comedy-drama, which takes place in present day New York. A non-linear narrative is used to tell the story, which alternately depicts the present and the past.

Clementine's and Joel's very different personalities are also reflected in the way they deal with problems. While Clementine impulsively decides to erase all memories of Joel in order to escape the pain their relationship has brought upon her, Joel is shown to be suffering from the break-up, unable to come to terms with the way their relationship has turned out. However, when he goes through the process of getting his memory of Clementine erased himself, he realizes that among all the bitter memories of Clementine there are many sweet memories as well that he does not want to forget.

Another aspect the film clearly points out is that memories are necessary in order to progress in life, as the lack of memories lets people repeat the same mistakes over and over again. After deleting their memories, Joel and Clementine meet each other again, but having erased their memory, they fall in love with each other again, since the attraction they feel towards each other has not changed. However, the consequence is that their relationship takes the same tragic turn it took the first time. The same applies to Mary and Dr. Mierzwiak, the head of Lacuna.

The film teaches us that memories are always a compilation of the good and bad experiences of life, and that even the worst memories are needed in order to not repeat the same mistakes again.

### Key Questions

- Why did Joel and Clementine attempt to erase their memories?
- Why did Joel try to stop the erasing of his memory?
- What are the consequences of blocking out memories?
- Would you use a service that offers to erase your memory?

## Word of Thanks

First and foremost, the directors of the selected movies have to be thanked for the creation of pieces of Art that are so carefully thought through. Furthermore they credibly depict in all its facets the impact memory has on our lives.

Our heartfelt thanks extends to everyone, who with their expertise, patience, advice and skills contributed to this handbook and invested their time and effort into shaping it into the form it has finally taken.

Finally, we would like to thank the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Germany for supporting this publication.

We hope you will enjoy working with it and that it will stir some engaging discussions.