

Insight: A guide to films on coexistence

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Foreword

Sri Lanka has suffered for a prolonged period of time due to the fierce conflict caused by ethnic division. Although the war is over, a complete ending to the grief is yet to happen. The social body ails not only from the ethnic conflict. Society also bleeds from violence erupting from various social fault lines such as caste, gender and many other lines of division, which may not be obvious to the naked eye. In terms of the ethnic conflict, although the protracted war has ended, it is impossible to state that the structural and cultural elements in its background have transformed and that society has developed positive peace and integration.

It is time that we organized efforts that would transform Sri Lanka into a cultured, peaceful society, which incorporates integration and co-existence in its human relationships and transforms the said numerous social conflicts in a positive manner. We would like to reinforce, however, that the dominant social forces' mere desire to contribute to such a reformist campaign is insufficient. Those who shoulder such a complex social exercise must necessarily possess a deep understanding and cumulative skills. What we conceptualize as 'wisdom for co-existence' is society's such knowledge and cumulative skills that are required to trigger the positive processes of peaceful conflict transformation and social integration.

For this purpose, we must especially possess a detailed knowledge of the structural and cultural dimensions that instigate and propel social



conflicts. Moreover, social activists must attempt to grasp the mutual relationship that prevails between such paired dimensions, the socio-cultural dynamics they generate, and the various guises in which they function under complex situations. Ultimately, as social agents, we must have the ability to transform ourselves and such conflictive structures and cultural dimensions via mediation. FLICT specifically compiled, for distribution amongst selected target groups, the knowledge and skills of the three-day workshop it developed and presented under the theme 'wisdom of coexistence', as a result of the organization's effort over a considerable period of time. (For more details, please read the 'wisdom for co-existence' workshop manual. We recommend Sunil Wijesiriwardena's book titled *Puravesi Manpeth* for a more profound theoretical understanding in relation to this matter.)

This film guide is specially designed for the use of resource persons and facilitators of the above mentioned workshop or for those conducting similar educational workshops. Yet, in addition, we believe that it would be a useful aid to watching films in a critical way in many other formal and informal educational spaces. Similarly, this handbook could be of immense use to social communicators such as school teachers, university academics, artists, media personnel, religious leaders, community leaders and social activists. Since they are all particular kinds of social communicators, we believe they hold the special ability to contribute towards social integration.

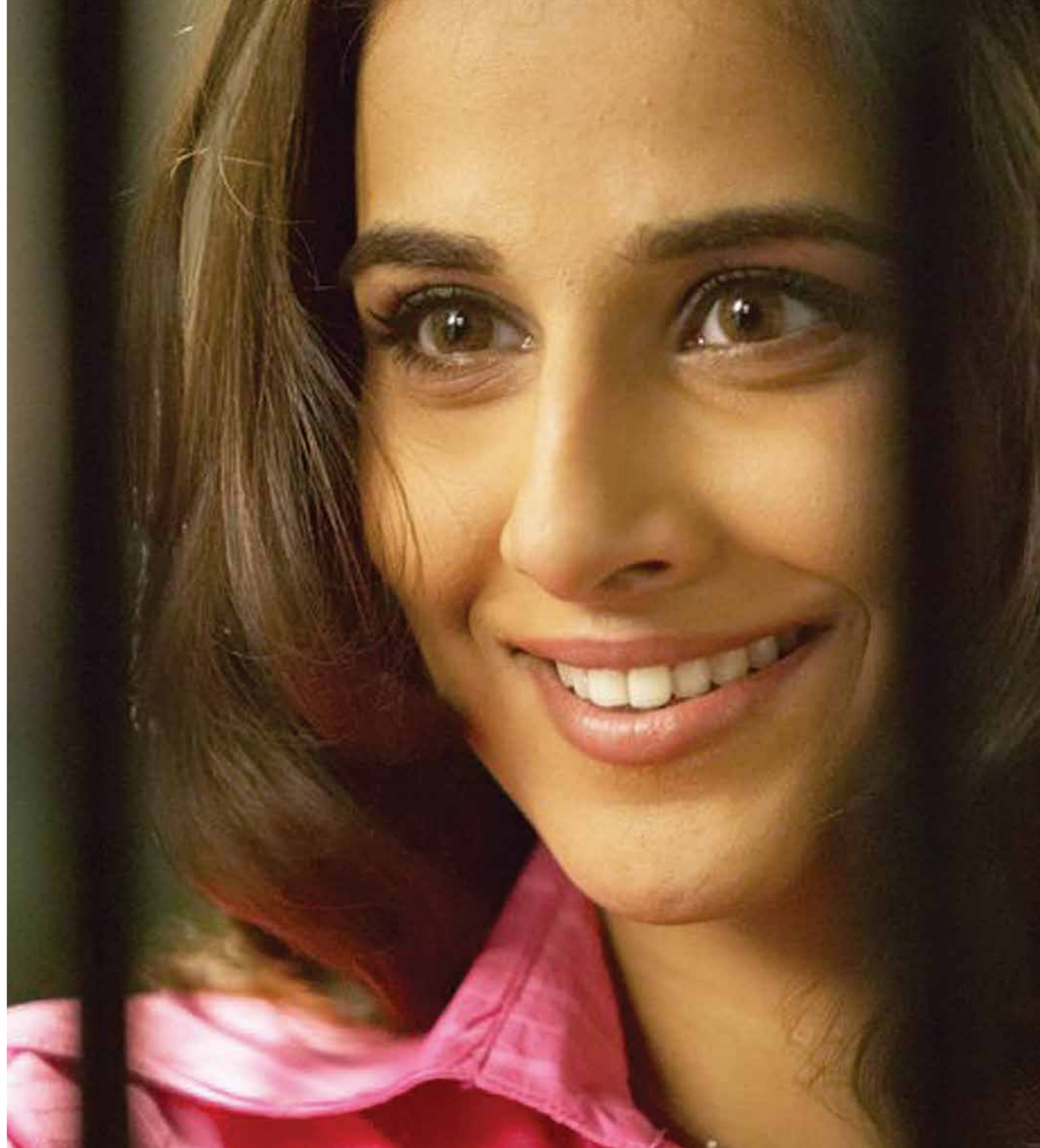


The Strength of Cinema as a Social Mediator

The cinema is a special artistic space which encounters a multitude of artistic sets. It becomes, in the pure sense of definition, “the art of cinema” with the assistance of science and a special technical foundation. Like other lasting forms of art, the cinema in certain ways displays a more profound social mediation capacity; it also engages in generating and transmitting meaning in relation to human life, its wellbeing and its transformation. Good cinema, like certain other forms of art, assists in breeding and providing the knowledge and insight needed for managing our emotions. Moreover, it develops our feelings, and contributes to make people more humane while culturally-spiritually enriching them. When one trains for a sensitive appreciation of cinema, a medium that helps to keenly understand the various, effective and negative discourses in which social life is engulfed in opens up. Such complex knowledge differences needed to be obtained with great energy and effort via modern scientific areas can be easily accessed through cinematic pieces of work in a more different and powerful experience. It is also impossible to substitute certain knowledge we receive generally through artistic media, especially through the cinema with that we receive through science; if what we receive through science is an ‘analytical’ sense by studying the dissected world, certain knowledge we receive from art is ‘synthetical’ in its nature.

That is, it is a ‘holistic’ and inter-knowledgeable intelligence that results from an effort to grasp life in a handful. However, while cinema holds all these capacities, it becomes a powerful medium that assists a social integration process because of another very valuable inherent skill. Unlike in other social spaces, and where there is no space to meet, when people gather in the cinema, they go across the lines that limit and disintegrate society across various divisionary lines, and make space for meeting, uniting and conversing with others. Once they gather as such, they face a common experience. Afterwards when they leave the cinema, not only do they build their own experiences, but they also enter conversational spaces in the public sphere such as conference halls and the mass media.

Activists who mediate in social integration processes could develop more organized and intense conversational spaces with the use of cinema. Various personnel across their divisional lines who generally do not meet each other could be brought into such big or small cinema spaces. This would show you how the cinema could be a successful tool that assists the development of a positive dialogue amongst various parties of conflict. Such spaces can also be effectively utilized to empower and integrate disempowered, marginalized groups in society.



The Content

This handbook, based on the perspective of 'wisdom for co-existence', is arranged for the use of 14 especially selected films. It consists of general information on the films' production and their plot synopsis. In addition, workshop facilitators and developers of 'conversational spaces' who intend to utilize this handbook would find the following information and data that assists in planning participatory dialogues focused on the selected films;

Several identified main themes of a film on the aforesaid perspective

A short note that directs towards a deep conversation on the discourse aspect of each film is compiled herein.

Several target questions that would be useful in conducting the dialogue among participatory viewers in a more effective manner are also compiled.

Most of the films in this handbook are those produced in India. Amongst them, films such as Bombay, Lagaan, Lago Rahe Munna Bhai and Rang De Basanthi are popular films in the Bollywood cinema stream. These films easily venture into the scope and taste of most types of targets groups in Sri Lanka. Renowned Bengali director Aparna Sen's Mr & Mrs Iyer and Japanese Wife are two films of the artistic stream that may appeal to audiences interested in the sociological depth of issues such as caste and identity.

Although director Kiran Rao's Dhobi Ghat is considered a commercial film, it could also be considered an art film with sociological depth. The American films Avatar, Freedom Writers and Invictus could be most suitable for any urban or youth audience, while it is suitable to mention that the film Invictus could be a magnificent tool for 'leadership development workshops' associated with the film's relevant perspective. The Sinhala films Machan and Bambaru Evith can be easily presented to any Sinhala audience due to their convenient language. Yet, Machan is a piece of work that would more closely approach the youth audience. It is observable that the film Bambaru Evith could reap higher results if directed to an audience of comparatively high education. Lemon Tree, the Israel film could undergo a more close reading in a women's audience in addition to a general spectatorship.

According to our experience, this collection of films can be purchased from DVD stalls in the capital and in main cities. Most of them are also obtainable via the internet.





LAGO RAHE MUNNA BHAI

Directed by Rajkumar Hirani **Produced by** Vidhu Vinod Chopra **Script by** Rajkumar Hirani Abhijat Joshi
Starring Sanjay Dutt Arshad Warsi Vidya Balan **Running time** 144 minutes **Language** Hindi **Country of Production** India **Awards** for Best film in 2007 at the Indian National Film Awards

Plot synopsis Munna is an underworld leader in Mumbai. His favourite daily feature is to listen to the radio programme 'Good Morning Show' aired by the announcer Janhavi. Munna falls in love with her voice. He achieves his desire to meet Janhavi by taking part in a quiz programme. In order to win this programme on Mahatma Gandhi, Munna abducts a group of history professors. Munna, who attempts to deeply study Gandhian philosophy to take part in Janhavi's radio programme, actually starts seeing an incarnation of Gandhi. Munna falls in love at first sight of Janhavi and introduces himself as a professor of history. By presenting himself as a Gandhian follower, Munna gets close to Janhavi and her friends. Meanwhile, Munna's underworld gang leader attempts to own the house that Janhavi lives in. Munna, who opposes this, is suppressed by the threat to reveal his truth to Janhavi. Following Gandhian philosophy, Munna starts a movement to repossess Janhavi's house. Munna changes his profession from a gang leader to a radio announcer, and assists thousands of his listeners distressed with problems to make their lives cheerful by providing solutions according to Gandhian philosophy. Pursuing in accordance to the Gandhian way, Munna ultimately even helps his most powerful opponent. Janhavi abandons Munna when she finds out that he is an underworld leader, but returns to him afterwards.



Notes This film is an attempt to introduce Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence for winning rights to the modern-day generation. The comedy brings entertainment and a life philosophy and is considered to be a rare film that leads the community to adopt such a way of life. It is also observed that the film Lago Rahe Munna Bhai directed India, America and Pakistan to pursue their struggles for rights in a new energy and methodology. One such endeavour was the Indian environmentalists' act of sending thousands of roses to Ratan Tata, the President of Tata Motors, as a protest against building a harbour obstructing a turtle breeding site

(Ratan was the owner of the proposed harbour). The Indian Congress Party stated that Lago Rahe Munna Bhai is a film that must be viewed by all party members. It is also recorded as the first Indian film shown at the United Nations. The MunnaBhai film even succeeded in changing the behaviour of Indian underworld giant Babloo Srivastava. It is said that after watching the film, he delivered roses to several of his opponents. The Mumbai government, on realizing that the film helps propagate Gandhian philosophy in India once again, released it from tax levy. The film also contributed by adding the neologism 'Gandhigiri' to Gandhian philosophy.



Nominated audience

Community social activists

Themes

Non-productive harm, non-violent movements
 Community mediation for rights
 Corrupted social institutions

Questionnaire

1. Discuss the problems Sri Lanka could resolve in future, or could have resolved in the past using non-violence instead of harm.
2. What are the reasons for Munna and Janhavi's character transformation?
3. Compare and inquire how non-violence is used as a tool in the struggle for justice and how Sri Lanka has considered the concept of non-violent struggle.





AVATAR

Script and Directed by James Cameron **Produced by** James Cameron John Landhu **Starring** Sam Worthington Zoe Saldana **Music by** James Horner **Running time** 162 minutes **Language** English **Country of Production** USA **Awards** in 2009 Highest-grossing film of all time Best Cinematography Visual Effects Art Direction Oscar Awards 2010

Plot synopsis Future time. Year 2154. Place Planet Pandora in the Alpha Centauri star system. Aliens from Earth or humans mine to own a valuable mineral. A habitat and sacred site of the blue-skinned humanoid species inhabiting this planet is situated upon this priceless mineral. In order to acquire it, Earth inhabitants require evacuating the Na'vi, the blue humanoids from the area. Prior to the strategic or forceful evacuation of the Na'vi from the relevant locations, a group is dispatched to gather intelligence to study the Na'vi's lifestyles, secrets and strengths and to spy on them. 'Avatar' is a super human Na'vi body created by means of using human DNA and its relevant mental energies. Jake, a former Navy soldier with disabled legs, joins the study team to fill the vacant space of his brother. Jake who is attacked by Pandora's jungle creatures, is rescued by Neytiri, the Na'vi clan leader's daughter, who also receives the order to give Jake the Pandora training. With time, the two register as partners. The group that directs the team of Earth inhabitants does not stand the bond between Jake and the Na'vi and attempt to destroy Jake, his avatar and friends. The mission in the meanwhile also operates to drive the Na'vi away from their motherland by weapon force. The Na'vi lose faith in Jake when they reveal that he is a spy. Jake, by following Na'vi tradition, re-acclaims their trust, leads their fight against Earth inhabitants, and restores Pandorians with the right to their land.

Notes Avatar is a film that profoundly questions the general knowledge of humanity in the neo-liberal age. The film creates a form of life that humans from Earth derogatorily refer to as the 'blue monkeys' and who are not dignifiedly identified as a similar human species. Humans of the capitalist American future visiting Pandora could only view its environment, like as on Earth, as a heap of raw materials available for manufacturing goods. A small circle of this group including Jake start to observe that planet Pandora together with its inhabitant humanoid species is a magnificent, complex and inter-related bio-system. The group who develops love and respect for Pandorians become 'traitors' by betraying 'humans' and taking the side of the non-humans. Yet, who has true humanity? How human are those who created American capitalism? The story of planet Pandora enforces us to re-think the relationship of our own Earth's bio-system and humans, and to identify the subtle unobservable 'inter-relationship' between the two.



Nominated audience
Community social activists

Themes
Conflict with environment, non-productive harm, Cultural wisdom, Community struggles for rights, Aggressive capitalism

Questionnaire

1. Compare the two ways in which the Na'vi and capitalist invaders view the relationship between humans and environment.
2. How do you observe the reference to Pandorians as blue monkeys and Jake as traitor?
3. Investigate other local or foreign experiences similar to the story in Avatar. (Watch the short film 'Mine- Story of a Sacred Mountain')



INVICTUS

Produced and Directed by Clint Eastwood **Co-Produced by** Morgan Freeman Robert Lorenz **Screenplay by** Anthony Peckham **Starring** Morgan Freeman Matt Damon **Running time** 134 minutes **Language** English Afrikaans Maori **Country of Production** USA **Awards** in 2009 Golden Globe for Best Production Actor and Supporting Actor (Nominated) Oscars 2010 Best Actor and Supporting Actor (Nominated)

Plot synopsis Based on John Carlin's book titled Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation, Invictus is a film of a true story. Nelson Mandela, South Africa's leader in its struggle for freedom, is released in 1990 after serving 27 years in jail. The biggest challenge he faces upon his subsequent Presidency is to building the nation after normalizing blacks' inner instincts and the minority's fear of it. While continuing his fight to reduce unemployment and crimes, Mandela's thoughts are taken up by a marvellous instrument suitable for nation building. That is Rugby. Rugby played by the minority and the Springboks team which

represented it was a phenomenon that the blacks disliked. Therefore, in a game of Rugby, the black population cheers the team's opponents. Mandela who realizes that in one year, in 1995, South Africa is scheduled to hold the Rugby World Cup, gets together with Pienaar, the team's captain and uplifts Rugby and national cohesion. Beyond anyone's imagination, South Africa qualifies for the World Cup final, to compete with the World greatest New Zealand's The All Blacks. South Africa wins the World Cup amidst the cheer of both black and white. South Africans savour victory over the Apartheid.

Notes The Blacks observe the South African Springboks Rugby team as a symbol of White authority. Hence, they loathe and hate the team and the Rugby sport. Although the Apartheid was officially abolished, this proves that a law cannot sweep away this long-standing, deeply ingrained hatred. Mandela chooses Rugby to instigate integration. It enables to bring both the Blacks who used to cheer against South Africa and the Whites

who deplored them to one goal. The South African leadership realizes racial harmony is a major factor in the country's process of improvement. Going slightly beyond the fact that he is a symbol of White leadership, the Rugby team leader also accepts the challenge as a duty for his country. A specialty of this story is that it has a group of people who believe in establishing racial harmony, and who believe that it could be realized.



Nominated audience

Community social activists, Sport fans

Themes

Racism, Social integration, Leadership

Questionnaire

1. Why do Blacks cheer against the South African team?
2. Is 'sport' a suitable instrument for racial cohesion? If so, why?
3. How does leadership power affect in establishing integration among races? Is it a decisive factor? For what reasons?





DHOBI GHAT

Script and Directed by Kiran Rao **Produced by** Aamir Khan **Starring** Aamir Khan Prateik Babbar Monica Kriti Malhotra **Running time** 95 minutes **Language** Hindi **Country of Production** India **Year** 2011

Plot synopsis A story of the experiences, inter-relations and expectations of four people who come to Mumbai from various directions. Artist Arun meets American banker Shai and initiates a curious relationship after being unable to keep up the relationship after the first night. 'Munna' is both Arun's and Shai's dhobi (washer-man). Munna and Shai become friends. Munna who has come from far and dreams of becoming an actor in Mumbai, washes clothes and kills rats at night to earn a living, is disoriented with the friendship of Shai who has an



American nature. Arun finds the confessional video tapes of Yasmin's life story in his apartment.

From the first night, Shai thinks of and desires Arun- his surreal behaviour. Munna becomes a good friend to her. He finds it difficult to define Shai's American nature and her friendship. He allows his unconscious to sense it as a dream-love. Munna shows Shai the different facets of Mumbai to help her with her hobby of photography. As a favour to help him realize his dream of becoming an actor, she shoots Munna's portfolio. Arun mostly deals with Yasmin's recorded story. He expresses his

ideas via painting. Arun finds new meaning for his paintings by entering into Yasmin's world through her story. Newly married Yasmin who comes to Mumbai with thousands of new hopes identifies her husband's true nature only with time. Yasmin, who becomes a destitute between her husband's extra-marital affairs and her own sad life, concludes the confession hinting at a possible suicide. Arun who is deeply disturbed by this decides to change his apartment yet again. Shai's and Munna's last meeting concludes with an expression of Shai's love for Arun and Munna's deep displeasure towards Arun (along with Munna's undisclosed love for Shai).



Notes The film's subject matter is human life in an environment of cyclonic neo-liberal capitalism that blows across the great city of Mumbai, with minimal harm on conventional social divides and problems. Although one could state that the film's theme is 'alienation', a Marxist meaning which is a problem from the birth of capitalist society, it is an incomplete conception. What we observe is the utmost difficulty of men and women in the film to fuse humanly with each other when they meet. Although they require it, cultural and spiritual issues impair true communication between them. They live in their own small worlds-restricted in their independent dreams. Yasmin's story which surfaces by means of digital pictures from the depth of their story gives us a hint of the atrocious, conventional world that lies underneath the dream-like neo-liberal world on top. Even the life an artist sensitive enough to view this is in crisis!

Nominated audience

Artists, Students in the Arts stream, Socio-cultural activists

Themes

Neo-liberal globalization
Great cities of the Third World
Cultural clashes

Questionnaire

1. What are the common features pertaining to Arun - Shai - Munna and Yasmin? What are the common problems and challenges they face?
2. Identify Shai and Munna's perspectives on their relationship
3. Probe into communication remoteness between the characters that lie herein





LEMON TREE

Script Produced and Directed by Eran Riklis **Script by** Suha Arraf **Starring** Hiam Abbass Ali **Languages** Arabic Hebrew **Country of Production** Israel Germany France **Running time** 106 minutes **Awards** in 2008 Berlin Film Festival 2008 Panorama Audience Award

Plot synopsis Salma makes a living by taking care of the lemon grove she inherited from her ancestry. A Palestinian, she lives close to the country's border. The Israeli Defence Minister moves to the house neighbouring Salma's. The Israeli defence forces view Salma's lemon grove as a threat to the Minister's security. Accordingly, it is decided to cut down the lemon trees and provide Salma a compensation for the loss. Yet, the lemon trees, more than mere economic strength, are a very valuable treasure of inheritance and love for her. Salma complains to the military courts. It is dismissed. With the help of the young lawyer Ziad, Salma takes her fight all the

way to the Supreme Court. 'Mira' the Defence Minister's wife starts a spiritual relationship with Salma. Mira expresses views in opposition to her husband to the media. Like Salma, Mira lives in a complex state of loneliness. Her attempt to start a conversation with Salma is prevented by the security forces who keep her under house arrest. The Supreme Court orders to cut down a section of Salma's lemon grove. Both parties receive semi-victory. The young lawyer who effaced Salma's loneliness marries a Minister's daughter. Abandoning her husband, Mira moves out in search for her life. Salma restarts her desolate life with her partially destroyed lemon trees.

Notes On the onset, the Lemon Tree film seems to be a story of a crop caught in the midst of two parties who have been stakeholders of thousands of years of conflict. Rather than expressing the political harm created by parties of the well-known conflict, this has attempted to show the lives of those who live amidst it. Palestinian Salma and the Israeli Minister's wife in

Salma's opposition are both passing through the same sentiments. Both encounter friends in parties accepted as enemies. Along with Salma's friendship with Ziad the lawyer, it is possible to observe how Salma's own group, deep-seated in conventionality, develop an opposition against her. Ziad's attempt is to draw personal benefit by politicizing his case. Going against his own



consciousness and to escape from the so called enemy group, the Minister takes decisions

that could aggravate conflicts, without even engaging in a dialogue with them.



Nominated audience
Socio-political activists
Political representatives

Themes
Reasons for social conflict, how conflicts affect people's inter-relations, women's mediation, marginalization of women, the community's activity, media's mediation.

Questionnaire
1. Enquire into the integration between Salma, the lemon grove and the caretaker.
2. Compare how the characters of Salma and Mira are akin and differ.
3. Probe into the socio-political pressures that have an impact on the issues faced by the four main characters.





FREEDOM WRITERS

Script and Directed by Richard La Gravenese **Produced by** Danny De Vito Michael Shamberg Stacey Sher **Starring** Hilary Swank Patrick Dempsey Scott Glenn **Language** English **Country of Production** USA **Running time** 122 minutes **Year** 2007 **Based on** the book 'The Freedom Writers Diary' by Erin Gruwell and her students

Plot synopsis Erin comes to teach at Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach, California with an inspired enthusiasm on her new job. She is assigned to teach English to students who are segregated into racial groups, have made street gang fights their life and are members of the semi-underworld. What Erin receives from these students noted by the school itself as 'unteachable' or 'thugs' is not a cordial welcome. One day Erin, who explores various techniques to get the attention of students, takes up the topic of the 'Holocaust' for discussion. Sindy's (a student in the class) boyfriend is shot at and killed by Eva's (student in the same class) boyfriend. Within racial crisis, such matters endorse to protect one's own in the face of law. Erin prevails upon her

students to write a diary- to write things they could not relate to another or felt reluctant to do so. Erin facilitates these students, who swear to take revenge for the loss of their relatives and friends who were killed by racial and street clashes, to meet with several Holocaust survivors. Erin's effort is to make the students realize the history of racism, its spread, enormity and destruction. Her marriage is shattered because of the attraction she has to the school. She receives only draw backs from the school's department head as well. Erin's class who reads 'The Diary of Anne Frank' invites Miep, the woman who actually sheltered Anne. Miep's views help Eva to testify the truth during the court hearing. The film is based on a real life story.



Notes Erin's class is not a profile of the American racial groups. The class has only one White. He becomes a lonely Black in this instance. His character exemplifies how a person in such a situation lives in great fear and insecurity. Groups in the class of Cambodian and Spanish origin experience suffer as minority outside of it, and give the same affliction to the White student in class. One of the main reasons they refuse to pay respect to Erin as their teacher is her very skin colour. Students of racial/ethnic minority engage in an armed conflict outside class, to protect themselves from Whites and from other ethnic minorities. They define it as standing for an 'America where we can live freely'. The statement

suggests that they have taken arms because they have not received equal rights and for their own defence. Eva's father who is jailed in vain proves that being the leader of a minority group itself is an offense. Others believe that the ethnic majority gains pleasure in harming ethnic minorities. Yet, prior to Erin, there seems to have been none who has attempted to abolish this thought from the students' minds. They are used to identifying all who they feel are a threat to their existence as their enemies. What Miep, the woman who sheltered Anne Frank, tells students is that 'she is not a hero and merely did what she felt right, and that every ordinary human being can do something small for justice'.



Nominated audience

Youth groups of racial diversity
Youth social leaders, teachers, educationists

Themes

Reasons for social conflicts, how socio-economic and class divisions generate conflict, racism's impact on racial conflict / conflict, how 'conflict' affects inter-personal relationships, children / future generation in the midst of conflict, women's activity, leadership role

Questionnaire

1. What is the theme most developed by this film?
2. Align the reasons that allured 'Eva' to testify the truth during the case.
3. What methods could be drawn from this film to



4. bring human fractions, which are racially divided and cannot be brought to a consensus, to a common platform?
4. Identify and analyse 'Erin's' conflicts



AAMIR KHAN PRODUCTIONS

LAGAAN

LAGAAN

Directed by Ashutosh Gowariker **Produced by** Aamir Khan **Script by** Ashutosh Gowariker Kumar Dave Sanjay Dayma **Starring** Aamir Khan Gracy Singh Rachel Shelley **Music by** A.R. Rahman **Running time** 224 minutes **Language** English Avadhi **Country of Production** India **Awards** in 2001 Best Foreign Language Film (nominated) Oscars 2002 Best Film Indian Film Awards IIFA Filmfare Awards 2002.

Plot synopsis The story's background is a remote village in western India's (modern) State of Gujarat. Agricultural villagers who cultivate with rain water are suffering from a severe drought. It's the year 1893. Although villagers meet officials and request to reduce the land tax (lagaan) due to abandoned harvest, it is of no use. Leader of the village youth 'Bhuvan' witnesses a British's cricket match, mocks it and gets into a fight with a British authority. The fight ends in a challenge. The British's invite

the villagers to a game of cricket. If the villagers win, they will be free from the tax for three years. If defeated, they would have to pay three times for the normal rate of tax for the next three years. Despite the villagers' disapproval, Bhuvan accepts the challenge. Coming to the aid of the villagers, the British officer 'Russell's' sister 'Elizabeth' teaches them the rules and regulations of the game. Lakha who is enraged by Bhuvan's declaration of love for the village beauty Gauri, decides in revenge to assist the British whilst being

in the villagers' team. Meanwhile, Bhuvan despite the team's objection takes action to invite Kachra, an untouchable youth whose mere touch is deemed unclean. The cricket match begins. The British opt to bat first. Lakha, who supports them drops many catches and begs pardon from Bhuvan. Once more, Bhuvan initiates the fight on behalf of the village. Kachra engages in a bowling spell. Bhuvan and Ismail bring victory to the villagers' team in the last over.

Notes This film incorporates a framework that is beyond a simple nationalist dialogue on colonialism and the struggle for independence. What is observed on the surface is the colonial masters' injustice and brutality. Yet, the film flows challenging the simple nationalistic frame of bifurcations such as west / east, colonial master / colonial, good / bad, etc. Both friendly / enemy cantonments have no uniform formation. They are complex. In both we see processes and struggles for justice and humanity. Hence we observe how human alliances are built across the boundaries of the cantonments, and how betrayal happens in friendly cantonments due to selfish ambitions. In the end, the challenge of

winning the cricket match transforms into one of team building. We could view how the community's skills and strength is halved because of boundaries of narrow social identity that divide them, and how social divisions need to be surpassed if those energies are to be unified. According to Tagore-Gandhian vision there is resistance to the invader, but not a resistance to 'white skin'. While Elizabeth who is dedicated to the villagers and helps them is a British, we could observe that even she is engaged in a struggle for justice. The film develops a strong dialogue on the reason why India, like a sleeping giant, succumbs to the invader, and on the path towards independence.

Nominated audience

Youth, sport lovers, community audience

Themes

Oppressor and the oppressed, fights for rights devoid of harm, sectarianism, caste distinctions, community activity for obtaining rights.

Questionnaire

1. Identify the complexities between the two cantonments.
2. Discuss the factors for success.
3. Comment on Lakha's and Elizabeth's behaviour.





MACHAN

Directed by Uberto Pasolini **Produced by** Prasanna Vithanage **Script by** Ruwanthie De Chickera Uberto Pasolini **Starring** Dharmapriya Dias Gihan De Chickera Namal Jayasinghe Dharshan Dharmaraj Sujeewa Priyalal **Language** Sinhala English **Country of Production** Sri Lanka Germany **Running time** 109 minutes

Plot synopsis The only hope of Stanley, a pavement fruit vendor, and Manoj, a bartender, is to flee to Germany. While their applications for visa are rejected the first time, they hear of a handball tournament scheduled to be held in Germany. Friends who now nothing of handball create the 'Sri Lanka National Handball' team and decide to run away to Germany. Another group who hears of the friends' exercise join the team with or without invitation. Amongst the group are those from policemen to a grave digger. Most in this group are those who suffer from economic hardships. Some join this team believing Europe is a heaven

while others join to have a better income. Their visa applications are rejected for the second time since they have no government seal. In this time of need, Manoj calls Ruwan who has embezzled money from Stanley promising he would send him abroad. A new group including Ruwan joins and together with twenty three members, the handball team is formed. Upon receiving visa, their time is spent not on practicing the sport, but on preparing for the trip. Manoj decides in the last minute that he cannot abandon his family. Viraj, who until then ridiculed his friends and had dedicated his life for the country through his father's left politics,

joins the team. Change in the tournament's timetable and the organizers' welcome makes the team give up their idea of dispersing immediately upon setting foot in Germany. When the team is defeated in their first event in a score of 70 to 0, the team falls under the organizers' suspicion. In order to avoid the tendency for the truth to reveal and their possible arrest, the team agrees to collaboratively play in the next two events. When the police arrive one morning to arrest them, they have all reached their own dream lands. The film is based on a true story that happened in Sri Lanka.

Notes The dreams, life, weaknesses as well as strengths of a group of socially marginalized urban slum dwellers suffering from extreme poverty are related to the theme of this film. This group of extremely diverse religious, ethnic and occupational identities unifies in order to flee, by any means of fraud, to their dream lands and break away from their arduous life. It looks at Sri Lankan society from a non-elite perspective. Hence, it is possible to state that it is a work that encompasses strong criticism on the social system. The question, if only Sri Lanka had a better social environment to hold the various skills as well as courage and bravery that individuals in this group possess; if it would have been a society humane enough to hold them, arises in the minds of the viewers.



Nominated audience

Community, urban-youth and economically depressed groups, groups which dream of migration

Themes

How economic, social and class distinctions initiate conflict, Illegal migration, the right to tour and engage in an occupation

Questionnaire

1. Explore the political meanings of migrating to more democratic and economically prosperous nations.
2. How must the social background in Sri Lanka be structured in order to retain the youth in the film within the country?
3. Explore the path they take towards team formation, strategy, identifying skills, unity and victory.





RANG DE BASANTI

Directed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra **Produced by** R.O.M. Ronnie Screwvala **Script by** R.O.M. Renzil D' Silva **Starring** Aamir Khan Joshi Waheeda Rehman R. Madhavan Siddharth Narayan **Music by** A.R. Rahman **Running time** 154 minutes **Language** Hindi English Punjabi **Country of Production** India **Awards** in 2006 Indian National Film Award for Best Popular Film British Academy Award for Best Film not in English Language (Nominated)

Plot synopsis British filmmaker 'Susie' arrives in India with the intention of making a documentary film on five heroes during the Indian independence movement. Four friends of Susie's Indian friend Sonia are selected to portray the main characters. As university students, they only have disgust on the country's present social, rather than an enthusiasm on its history. Hence, their initial effort to bring the relevant characters to life is a failure. With Susie's invite, the friends' adversary political party activist

Laxman also joins cast. He treats Aslam, the Muslim, as a debased foreigner. The film is filmed amidst the harmony and sophistications between the new cast's behaviour and the historical characters they bring to life. Towards the end of it, the friends who until then led carefree aimless lives start to think of life anew. Meanwhile Sonia's fiancé pilot 'Ajay' is killed in an accident. Media states that he died in the struggle until the last moment where he avoided his jet crashing into a populated area. The defence minister believes

the damage was caused due to Ajay's carelessness. DJ and friends make a peaceful protest against the minister's vision. It ends in a severe police attack in which Ajay's mother is hurt and falls into a coma. The friends kill the defence minister in revenge to achieve justice. Karan's father who brought the aircraft spare parts is killed by Karan. Yet, the government views all these as the work of a group of terrorists. The friends who believe that they must make a voice for justice forcibly take over a radio station and confess.

Notes 'Rang de Basanti' is a film that firmly captured Indian youth with its cast's performance, cinematography, music and story. Is the India that the Indian freedom fighters envisioned by sacrificing their lives available today? The young Indian generation does not believe so. Thus, they have forgotten the wonder of the independence movement. The film brings about criticism on how 'Indian governments' that built and developed in post-independence seemingly took a path towards scoring out the ambitions of the initial fight for freedom. In the end, the young generation like their previous heroes, take up the struggle to create a society that will be free forever. They also bring in

Nominated audience

Youth political party activists, urban youth groups

Themes

Social injustice, corrupted politics, non-transparent rule / deals, lack of understanding among generations, religion-based anger, non-productive harm

Religious and ethnic co-existence into their fight's agenda, thereby challenging fraudulent political power.

Events in the aftermath of the film Rang de Basanti prove that it had direct impact on the Indian society. The media that consistently referred to the film's precedence over the actions that followed coined the term 'RDB effect'. A survey revealed that the peaceful public protests against two notorious murders and cases of rape were backed by the effect of the RDB film. Inspired by the film, Pakistan's national newspaper 'Jang' launched a television channel to report on public needs and activism.



Questionnaire

1. How would you explain Daljith and his friends' life style according to the beginning of the film?
2. Why did they become radicals? What were the alternative ways they could have adopted?
3. How does the Director view the two opposing dimensions of the need for nation building and government?



JAPANESE WIFE

Directed by Aparna Sen **Produced by** Sanjeev Gointha Apurv Nagpal **Script by** Aparna Sen **Story by** Kunal Basu **Starring** Rahul Bose Raima Sen Moushumi Chatterjee Chigusa Takaku **Language** English Bengali **Country of Production** India **Running time** 105 minutes **Year** 2010

Plot synopsis Since his adolescence, Snehmoy has had a Japanese pen friend by the name Miyage. Both are not much sociable and live in their own worlds. As time pass, Snehmoy and Miyage exchange wedding vows through letters. The two who lived apart in distant countries, live as faithful partners. Although fifteen years lapse in this manner, they do not get the opportunity to really meet one another. Miyage sends a bunch of kites to Snehmoy for their

fifteenth wedding anniversary. Sandhya, the beautiful widow, comes to live in Snehmoy's house with her son after her husband's sudden death. More than with any other, the boy develops a close bond with Snehmoy. He loves the boy to the extent that he gives him the kites Miyage sends, and also has a kite competition with the boy. At first, though Sandhya keeps her distance from Snehmoy as much as possible and engages in household work, she inexplicably

gets close. Yet, Snehmoy tries not to be even slightly unfaithful to his unseen wife living abroad. Meanwhile, Miyage falls ill with a cancer. Being a teacher, Snehmoy obtains leave from his school and visiting many Ayurvedic doctors buys medicine for the illness, and sends them to Japan. After this attempt, Snehmoy catches pneumonia during a time of storm, dies of the disease by not being able to obtain the antibiotics. Widowed Miyage visits Snehmoy's house.

Notes It could be said that this film quite subtly touches several important social, political and cultural themes pertaining to era of Bengali renaissance (especially those raised by Tagore). On one hand, the film also contains the theme of the 'widow'. On the other, it also displays how people can create the most beautiful human relations across boundaries (cultural or social). There are three widows in the film. All three in a way work

towards a life complete with love, going across 'tradition' which works against human life. The film mainly hints at the beauty of the relationship between two different cultures. The film which voices that 'differences' are opportunities for people to share and love, also displays on the other hand, how people develop these differences into 'divisions' and create enemy fences amongst them.



Nominated audience

Art lovers, teachers, learners of the cinema

Themes

Tradition, trust in and respect for the 'other', reasons that could initiate conflict, nationalism, the Indian widow, inter-cultural exchange

Questionnaire

1. Discuss about the three widows and tradition
2. What does the directress symbolize with kites?
3. How do you identify network of relationships between the characters in the film?





BOMBAY

Script and Directed by Mani Ratnam **Produced by** S. Sriram **Starring** Arvind Swamy Manisha Koirala **Music by** A.R. Rahman **Running time** 138 minutes **Language** Tamil **Country of Production** India **Awards** in 1995 Filmfare Awards for Best Film Indian National Film Award in 1996 for Best Film on National Integration

Plot synopsis Shekhar is a young Hindu born in a seaside village in the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu. A journalism student studying in Bombay, Shekhar visits back home to see his parents. He meets Shaila in the village. A young Muslim girl, Shaila initially attempts to distance herself from Shekhar, anticipating the fearful conflict it would generate in future. Yet, both cannot help falling in love with each other. Due to religious opposition, the

fathers of both parties, behaving aggressively, oppose a marriage between the two. Shaila who escapes from the village meets Shekhar in Bombay and the two get married. The couple give birth to twins. The Shekhars' lives, which peacefully flows after their relocation in Bombay amidst its commotion and noise, changes in 1992 when religious outbursts erupt on an issue surrounding a place of worship in Ayodhya. Shekhar and Shaila's parents keep

their anger away and visit their children after the first inter-ethnic riots. The two children, who grow amidst the teachings of both religions, together with Shekhar and Sahila become targets during the tensions in the second stage. The parents who at a time propelled sectarian hatred are killed during the ethnic clashes. The children, who are lost in the midst of the tension, are eventually re-united with their parents.



Notes Shekhar and Shaila's love story is born in a social environment where religious anger is deep-seated. The filmmaker's intention is to destroy the inhuman ideological germ that states 'Hindu – Muslim blood does not mix'. The fact that Shekhar and Shaila have twins is symbolic.

Their Hindu and Muslim names in the midst of religious sections which violently clash with each other remind the 'twin' nature of religions. The film also focuses on how politicians and other bad forces use religion to accomplish their own power intentions.



Nominated audience

Community, youth groups and those with strong religious ideological backgrounds, religious leaders

Themes

Ethnic / religious conflicts, opportunistic politics, non-productive harm, community mediation for prevention of conflict

Questionnaire

1. What reasons do you observe that caused members of Shekhar and Shaila's families to initially non-resolve with each other and later on do so?
2. How would you analyse the mentality of those who instil harm? Do you believe that there is an invisible force behind them?
3. According to the film Director, how similar are the challenges that modern India must face to those Sri Lanka faces?





ANKUR

Script and Directed by Shyam Benegal **Produced by** Lalith M. Bijlani **Starring** Shabana Azmi Anant Nag Meher Priya Tendulkar **Language** Dakhani **Country of Production** India **Running time** 125 minutes **Awards** in 1974 Indian National Film Award for Best Film (Second place) 1975 Berlin International Film Festival Golden Berlin Bear (Nominated) 1974.

Plot synopsis Based on a true story, the film's story unfolds from the view point of the two main protagonists, Lakshmi and Surya. Surya is the son of the powerful village landlord. It is in his youth that he was invested with the responsibility of looking after his share of the father's property. Saru, who is yet not of age, is already been betrothed to Surya. Hence, Surya lives under pressure. Lakshmi and her husband Kishtayya are servants of the house. They are both of the low caste 'Dalit'. Surya who finds Lakshmi attractive, whips her deaf-mute alcoholic husband for stealing toddy and chases him from the village. Lakshmi becomes Surya's mistress. Surya's husband is also one who has a mistress and treats her better than his wife. The villagers believe that history repeats in the same manner. However, in a few days after Lakshmi conceives Surya's

legal wife comes home. She even rejects touching the food prepared by low caste Lakshmi. When she finds out Surya's and Lakshmi's affair, she finds Lakshmi guilty for stealing rice and chases her from the house. In the meanwhile, Kishtayya returns to the village having cured himself of his alcoholism and made some money. Surya's sees his return as a threat. On hearing that Lakshmi is pregnant Kishtayya goes to the temple and salutes the goddess. One day on seeing Kishtayya coming towards him with a stick and believing that he comes to seek avenge, Surya gets hold of Kishtayya and whips him. At this moment, Lakshmi, who is overwhelmed with a feeling of guilt believing she has betrayed her husband, comes forward to save him. The story ends by showing how Surya achieves his intentions by listening to his wife and is rejected by villagers.

Notes 'Ankur' is successful in portraying a realistic profile of the social background of an Indian village of the 1950s decade. It displays the struggle between the landowning, high-caste, rich class and the low-caste, economically deprived community. It creates how the wealthy and traditionally elite group exploits the majority who owns neither of these. The film exceptionally shows how the social class believed to have wealth and power exploits not only the labour and wealth, but also the sexuality of those who do not have the said aspects. The God-given privileges bestowed on them by traditional society have prevented the community from questioning or opposing them. It is possible to witness men in an oppressed, social-stratified background set aside women's rights and re-create stratifications. Here, the weak is destroyed. The strong saves his/her life. Yet, they do not have the cultural and mental strength to stand against what is high. Society has obstructed those opportunities. It is clear how landowners and labourers, men and women as well as the filmmaker have paid attention to the high and low castes. The story narrates how the low-castes become high when they are needed, and how they are kept back in their places when not useful.



Nominated audience
Amateurs, community social activists

Themes
The wealthy and poor, rulers and labourers, patriarchy and women, sexual oppression

Questionnaire

1. Compare the common caste hierarchy of India and Sri Lanka.
2. Investigate the Sri Lankan experience of how local high-caste elite sexually exploit low-caste women.





BAMBARU EVITH

Script Co-Produced and Directed by Dharmasena Pathiraja **Starring** Malini Fonseka Vijaya Kumaratunga Cyril Wickramage Joe Abeywickrema **Music by** Premasiri Khemadasa **Language** Sinhala **Country of Production** Sri Lanka **Running time** 110 minutes **Awards** in 1978OCIC Awards1979 for Best Film

Plot synopsis Victor comes to a seaside fishing village near Kalpitiya with the intention of pursuing his sick father's fish trade. It does not take him many days to meet Helen, the beauty of the fishing village. Helen is betrothed to marry Cyril, a fishing youth in the village. Cyril works for Anton, the village's chief fish vendor. Victor's arrival creates a main competitor for Anton's fish business. For Cyril, the fight with Victor is to save his fiancée from him. Helen finds Victor attractive. She attempts to

visualize the hero in her mind through his image. While Victor tries to assure his power in the fish trade on the beach competing with Antony, Cyril plans to avenge the relationship in relation to Helen. While Anton has sworn to take revenge on Victor for Cyril's death, Francis, Victor's cook, slaughters and kills Anton. Francis is killed by Anton's followers. In the midst of this change and trend of murders that occur in the fishing village, Victor decided to leave the village. Helen is left alone.



Notes Victor's friend Weerawansa sees the social system on the beach as a pre-communist environment. The lives of people in the fishing village are free. They control themselves. Victor comes to the village with capitalism and many of its elements. Fishermen fall into Victor's control because of his wealth. Helen

falls for his looks. Victor believes all this belongs to him. Helen succumbs to this law. His behaviour from the very beginning proves that his relationship with Helen is purely sexual. Although Helen is wrapped in a mental illusion, it seems she realized the truth when Victor kicks her when he leaves. Yet, the fishermen do

not understand the social injustice and exploitation that Weerawansa preaches. While friends leave the village in their own ways, the civil law (police) comes to the village. Although the history of exploitation is repeated, the story ends by suggesting that methodologies for such exploitation have been created.



Nominated audience

Community, rural and urban youth, political activists

Themes

Arrival of capitalism, profit system, sexual prowess / exploitation unlawful / civil rule, urbanization

Questionnaire

1. Investigate Helen's selection and the political change that occurs in the village as a result of Victor's arrival.
2. What is proclaimed by Weerawansa's statements and how the villagers respond to them?
3. Discuss the root causes behind the trend of harm that instigates in the village.



MR & MRS IYER

Script and Directed by Aparna Sen Produced by N. Venkatesan Rupali Mehta Starring Rahul Bose Konkona Sen Running time 120 minutes Language English Country of Production India USA Awards in 2002 Indian National Film Awards 2003 for Best Film on Integration

Plot synopsis Meenakshi Iyer and Raja meet at the bus station because of friends of both parties. Her parents hand over the responsibility of assisting Meenakshi and her baby who are both due to travel long distance by bus to Raja. Their journey is suddenly halted on the way due to sectarian turmoil between Hindus and Muslims. It is then that Meenakshi discovers that Raja is a Muslim. In response she initially treats him with abhorrence, but saves him from the Hindus who get into the bus to kill Muslims,

saying that he is her husband. While those in the bus represent a profile of India's communities, the tragedy they face in the midst of struggles and harm flows as incidents in the background. Raja and Meenakshi who are identified as husband and wife receive the assistance of a police officer because of the infant. The conflicts that arise due to incidents and places, such as the shelter in the forest, the only bedroom, the caretaker of the place and religious ideologies, reveal the human qualities within Raja and

Meenakshi. Once again they escape from once who instigate harm (this time Muslims). In the midst of this sectarian violence and struggle to save life, it is observable how a verbally unstated, behaviourally subtly expressed love develops between Meenakshi and Raja. The couple who yet again receives the help of the police officer boards a train and tries to envision their future. Raja who hands over Meenakshi to her own husband at the destination station, eventually bids farewell with their verbally unexpressed love.



Notes It is possible to consider that the film's first and foremost objective is to show how identities such as caste, religion, ethnicity or race mix in various ways and separate people from one another, how they become strong ideologies-walls that change people into harmful enemies, and the ability people possess to reach towards humanity across these walls. The story takes our attention to human relations in an environment of Hindu-Muslim violence in India. The bus in the

film and its journey is highly symbolic. It expresses India's complex cultural-social diversity as well as the challenge of moving together with diversity. Meenakshi and Raja, the two main characters are developed in an amazing manner. Meenakshi's character is constructed as one of Brahmin caste, which is believed to be of high status in South India and as developed in a strong traditional Hindu environment. Although she has received university education on science subjects, it remains on

the surface and has not reached the depths of her life. Though the character we encounter as Raja is said to be of Muslim background, it is not the 'Muslim character' that is created on the popular views of Hindu society. Raja is a free-spirited, kind, man who loves his job and can simply do what has to be done for people. We can observe how their hearts are caught in transformation in the process of sharing their fate in an immensely tensed, oppressive environment, and how they are ready to re-think.



Nominated audience

Community social activists, mixed religious- ethnic groups

Themes

Sectarian conflict, non-productive

harm, religious anger, caste issue, Indian woman's right to choose / ability to choose

Questionnaire

1. What are the challenges Meenakshi and Raja would face if they attempted to protect their

subtly expressed love?
2. Explore science educated Meenakshi's behaviour within the two extremes of 'deep tradition' and 'education's' impact.
3. Investigate how justifiable is pre-judged attitudes of a person of community

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