

# MÉLANGE

Edition 7, August 2025



**My Dearest Shailaja**  
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**Sadda haq, Aithe rakh!**  
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# Preface



Welcome to *Mélange*,  
A literary magazine crafted by the students of the Department of Mass Media, Kishinchand Chellaram College, Mumbai. *Mélange* stands as a home ground for storytellers, a place where diverse voices come together to share their unique narratives. Our mission is to create a platform that unites and elevates a spectrum of ideas, stories, and perspectives, providing a rich tapestry of editorial penmanship and visually captivating designs.

In an age where every story matters, *Mélange* is dedicated to offering an inclusive space where both emerging and established voices can put forth their thought process. We believe in the power of storytelling to bridge gaps, foster understanding, and spark conversations that inform, educate and inspire people. Each edition of *Mélange* is carefully curated to reflect the vibrant and multifaceted nature of human experience, ensuring that every voice finds its place within our pages.

At the heart of *Mélange* is a commitment to nurture creativity and give out the freedom of expression. We invite you to explore the myriad of narratives presented here, to be moved by the artistry and authenticity of our contributors, and to join us in celebrating the boundless potential of storytelling. Let *Mélange* be your gateway to discovering newer ideas and exploring unheard tales of this wide and vivid world.

The views and opinions here do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board, college, or affiliated organisations. They are those of their respective contributors to *Mélange*. These perspectives are put forth with the intention to encourage discussion and do not represent any official statement or advice.

In this endeavour, we are eternally grateful to Prof. (Dr.) Hemlata K. Bagla [Vice-Chancellor HSNC University], Prof. (Dr.) Tejasree Shanbhag [Principal K. C. College], Prof. (Dr.) Shalini Sinha [Vice Principal & Head of the Mass Media Department] and Surya Gune [Convenor of Knot]. Thank you for providing your endless support and empowering our every pursuit!

# Editor's Note



July marks that pivotal month for cinema. A month when so many milestones were achieved. And this July, perhaps unexpectedly, became an important month for us as we started working on our 7th edition. I had no idea just how much it would come to mean to me.

There was always something in the air when we announced 'Cinema' as the theme. I found myself immersed in intense conversation and discussions with editors and contributors, each bringing a fresh angle, a bold lens. Topics were scrutinised. Recommendations were added to the watch list, while some were even seen. Interpretations were debated. Opinions were formed. Changed for the better. Evolved, enormously. I never realised the power of communication to expand your horizon until now with this edition in picture.

This edition has a special place for creativity: the cover photo. Cinema is broader to think and larger to see beyond. After many vague aspirations and trivial notions, we noticed how gravitated we were towards the concept of 'Noh mask.' Noh mask is a traditional Japanese theatre concept that represents emotions and character to stimulate the imagination. Influenced by the idea and driven by our strong experimental force, we used our imagination and vivid colour strokes to preserve what this concept means to us. A symbol to articulate our deepest expression, preserve our truer self, and the complexity of understanding in Cinema.

In the pages ahead, we hope you will behold the angles and savour the emotions served. From celebrating the work of Salim-Javed to remembering the 100 years of Guru Dutt's cinematic lament, an ode to Dev Anand, the essence of being an actor and analysing the position of Cinema today. This edition brings the perspectives to life, each one to draw lessons from.

In the timeless lyrics of 'Celluloid Heroes' by The Kinks,

Everybody's a dreamer  
And everybody's a star  
And everybody's in movies  
It doesn't matter who you are

Love and light,  
Yashvi  
Editor-in-Chief, Mélange

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By Aishwary Patil

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# Written & Orchestrated

By Elvee

I am the greatest writer this magazine has ever seen. The best contributor. I deserve a spot above the editor-in-chief.

Absurd? Maybe. True? Who knows. But bold? Hell yes! Just like the ones I am talking about...

Someone I fondly remember once asked me, "Where do you think films are really made, on a writer's page, a director's mind, or an editor's desk?"  
I never had an answer until now.

Now, I stand with two men. Two who didn't just claim, It begins on the writer's page, but made sure the entire country read it. They didn't whisper it in interviews. They painted it across skylines, stamped it onto posters, burned it into reels. They ruled the industry across 24 films, side by side, never just writing, but rewriting the rules.

The greatest writing duo Indian cinema has ever known. The men who made the writer bigger than the hero. None other than, **SALIM - JAVED**.

## Kitne aadmi the? Sarkaar, do aadmi the.

That's it. Just two names. Two minds. Two men who walked into an industry that barely paid heed to its writers and forced it to stand up and clap.

Their stories? Almost written in the same ink. Salim Khan, the son of a Deputy Inspector General in Indore, lost both his parents by the time he was fourteen. Javed Akhtar, son of the towering poet Jan Nisar Akhtar, had a father who was more famous in the world than he was in the room. They grew up in different cities, but carried the same hunger in their bones. The kind of hunger that doesn't let you sleep until the world knows your name.

They came to Bombay with pockets full of nothing and heads full of cinema.

Salim tried his hand at acting, blink-and-miss roles, cigarette ads, anything that paid. Javed walked from Dadar to Bandra, starving for three days straight because money was a myth.

But even then, even in the darkest corners of shared chawls and borrowed time, they knew. They were not meant to be ordinary.

One could build a scene. The other could set it on fire. One saw structure. The other felt soul. They hadn't met yet, but the storm was already forming. This was never about survival. This was about conquest.

Kitne aadmi the?

Sirf do.

Par cinema inke baad phir kabhi pehle jaisa nahi raha.



## Tum Log Kuch Kar Sakte Ho?



Their first official gig as a team came with Haathi Mere Saathi. A remake, a test, and a turning point. Rajesh Khanna asked them a simple question: "Tum log kuch kar sakte ho?" They didn't answer. They rewrote the entire film.

It became the highest-grossing film of the year. A roaring hit. And yet, when the posters came out, their names were missing. The writing credit went to another celebrated writer, someone who hadn't done what they had.

But they weren't here just for money. They wanted credit. And they wanted control.

So, they did something the industry didn't expect. They wrote Seeta Aur Geeta. A female-led film. Double role. No male saviour. Just one woman raising hell twice over. And people loved it.

That's when their signature started to show. Every character in their world had a voice. Not actor-driven, but soul-driven. Foreign return characters had throwaway lines in English. The street performer had local slang like laafa, khunnas, halkat, and more. They gave cinema a new dialect. Gutter-slick humour. Emotional madness. Dialogue that punched and echoed.

Even their jokes had bite.

"Neeche aa jao beti"

"Upar aa jao moti."

They were changing the language of Hindi cinema. But even after that, they were still sharing credit with departments. The pen had power. But not yet a name.

Is Ilaaq Mein Naye Aaye Ho Sahab? ... Varna Salim Javed Ko Kaun Nahi Jaanta

Zanjeer changed everything. For the industry, for the hero, for the screen itself. But when the posters went up, no sign of the men who wrote it. So what did they do? They hired a painter. One guy, one brush, one order:

"Write our names. On every damn poster in this city." And he did.

No producer approval. No permission. Just pure, mad confidence. Because they knew Zanjeer wasn't just a film, it was a statement. And the statement was theirs.

From that point on, they weren't just writers. They were storm-makers. They decided on the cast. Sat in on edits. Rewrote scenes on set. Their scripts weren't instructions. They were commandments.

Stars followed them. Studios chased them. And since then, for the first time in Indian cinema, a film could be sold on one line: "Written by Salim-Javed."

They didn't rise through the system. They rewrote it. With ink, blood, and no apologies.

## Mere Paas Maa Hai



The heroes in their films weren't just angry. They were broken. Restless. Searching for a hand, for a hug, for a home they never really had.

The villain was never just a dacoit or a don. It was most often the father. Absent. Unapproachable. Or simply not enough. And in the middle of all that fury, the mother wasn't a side character. She was the anchor. The tug. The only reason the hero hadn't burned the whole world down.

Salim and Javed saw life differently because they lived it differently. One feared his father. The other fantasised about him, like a rare guest. A favourite relative who might visit, might not. Never cruel.

And their closeness to their mothers wasn't just softness. It was the one place they weren't second-guessed. That ache for presence, for approval, for being seen, shaped every hero they ever wrote. It shaped every stunt they ever pulled. The painted posters weren't arrogant. They were two little boys banging on the glass, saying, "Look at me. I matter."

They didn't want to be behind the camera. They wanted to be the stars. And in their own way, they always were.

## Jo Darr Gaya... Samjho Marr Gaya

I didn't write this like a fan. I wrote it like someone who knows a good line when they land one. And let's be honest, I landed quite a few. (Learning from the best.)

Somewhere in the credits, they're smiling. And so am I.

# Old Stories New Screens

By Roshni Rajpurohit

In a world full of content, why do we still revisit the same stories that are already familiar to us? Remaking can be a factor in this, involving the retelling of old stories with new casts, music, technology, and changed perspectives. Apart from the criticism, the generations are still engaging with remakes sometimes, making them more successful and recognised than the originals.

Reimagining ideas and making them worth seeing again for the audience is a difficult task. They sell their ideas through the emotions of nostalgia, using the elements of culture with new modern storytelling techniques and cinematography. This results in making remakes a tribute to the originals and gives a chance for innovation. So, what makes them stand out? And why is it that some succeed while others fail? Is it the content that is good or bad, or is it the audience that is not ready to accept it?

## UNDERSTANDING REMAKES

In simple words, a remake is basically a new version of the existing film, where the central idea of the story remains constant. While changing some elements such as language, setting, tone, etc. In both Hollywood and Bollywood, remakes have been a common thing.

Whether it is *Kabir Singh*, the remake of *Arjun Reddy*, *The Ring*, the remake of *Ring*, or *Hera Pheri*, the remake of *Ramji Rao Speaking*. These are great examples of remakes being successful than the originals. These remakes made the originals known to the audience. This somehow shows how remakes are also working and sometimes better than the original. These are great examples of how remakes can also take stories to the next level. It helps reach more audiences as the people who watch just Bollywood would be introduced to movies from different regions without actually watching them. It is great to convey and tell your story to a mass audience. This makes the film get more attention and appreciation from its loved audience.

Remakes are very different from reboots, which reinvest a franchise from scratch. Or sequels that continue an existing story. The difference is vast and people often mistake remakes for the reboot. Remakes help the existing film's story to come to life again, whereas the reboot gives us a whole new story by just using the same characters or ideas.

## NOSTALGIA'S POWER IN REMAKES

Films are not just stories; they are memories. When a remake is announced, especially if it's a classic one, it stirs emotional excitement. The audience is curious to know how they are going to portray their characters with new technology and cinematography. Nowadays, people also like to review and compare the work. It also helps as the work gets recognition in either way. The best example for this can be Disney movies, which have been made in many different ways, from animated to live-action. *The Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *Cinderella*, and many more.

In films, nostalgia serves as a storytelling device and marketing strategy many times. When an old movie is remade, it brings back a wave of memories in the person's mind. They want to relive the characters and want to again experience them in theatres. This experience is like opening a time capsule. It is old but still fresh and full of emotions and memories. Selling cinema through emotions is the easiest and most relevant, as we can target all audiences. The old generation watches it to relive the experience again, and the new generation watches it to experience what they had missed and why all the sudden attention. This helps them target the audience largely.



## ARE REMAKES A PROBLEM, OR ARE WE?

In this always-evolving world of ours, new genres are emerging and storytelling techniques are shifting rapidly. As everyone knows, great stories are timeless; times pass, but some stories just live in our heads rent-free. Whether the genre is love, revenge, suspense, or friendship, some stories are just carried on by generations. Maybe they are the generational wealth, but is it stopping us from adapting to new things? Or is it that we are still not ready to accept the new content made? So, what is it that is stopping people's minds from appreciating a creation or its aspects?

Remakes serve as a bridge between the past stories and the new modern life. Seeing those characters evolve over time is a beautiful experience for all. At best remake can be called respectful evolution. They should be celebrated not by criticising new content but by their stories and their storytelling techniques. A retold story can also shine, if not better than originals, but as much as originals. And till the audiences are enjoying the remakes, remakes will still be an important part of cinema.

# Life Ke Lag Gaye Hai Ludo.

By Grishma Girish Kumar

I have watched many movies and I'm not one to be easily pleased. To be able to call this film the best movie ever made is high praise. Anyone who disagrees is, no offence, literally insane. The untrained eye could've easily ignored many tiny details in this film. But once you begin to understand these details, watching this film becomes all the more enjoyable. Writing this article just gave me an excuse to watch this film for the Nth time, so thank you, Mélange.

## Ludo and life

The game of Ludo is a great metaphor for how life really is. You don't even need to watch the film to understand how similar life and Ludo are. No one can be "good" at Ludo, just like how no one can be good at life. It is simply not possible. The only thing you can control in both Ludo and life is the option of taking over or killing your opponent. Now, you can't go on killing people in real life (ideally). But people often find ways to become a better version of themselves at the cost of others. This is pretty similar to how, while playing Ludo, you will do anything and everything to get all four of your tokens to the finishing point.

## Characters and colours

An original game of Ludo consists of 4 colours - red, yellow, blue and green. The film, like the game, has four major plot lines. There is also one character who acts as the catalyst for all four plots, thus making him the "die" of the movie. The protagonist of each plot line has a colour. The colours have been allotted to the characters, keeping in mind their personality and story:

Rahul Satyendra Tripathi, also known as Sattu Bhaiya (Pankaj Tripathi) is the leader of a major criminal gang. You will

often find this character wearing white clothes and the gun strap hidden under his dhoti is black. Which are the usual colours of a die. The gun, being a hidden entity of his outfit, is symbolic of how unpredictable the role of a die is in Ludo because a gun is volatile and is often used as an element of surprise throughout the movie.

Batukeshwar Tiwari 'Bittu' (Abhishek Bachchan) represented the colour red. Red is a very powerful colour and is often associated with love, anger, passion and many such strong emotions. In this film, this is accurately portrayed through Bittu. A former member of Sattu Bhaiya's gang, he abandoned his criminal ways for love and a new life with his

family. However, his past crept back up to him, and he was arrested for about six years.

Yellow is bright, happy, sunny, and light. Akash Chauhan (Aditya Roy Kapoor) is the living embodiment of the colour. A happy-go-lucky man with no set goals in life meets Sattu bhaiya to get a wrongly uploaded sex tape of him and his love interest removed from the internet.

Blue represents stability, peace and security. However, in this story, Rahul Awasthi (Rohit Saraf) is anything but stable, secure and peaceful. This man is a homeless, ill-treated employee at a super mall, but hits the jackpot when he accidentally becomes a witness to one of Sattu Bhaiya's murders and gets taken to his lair.

All the colours mentioned before - red, yellow and blue-



are primary colours. This means that they are the original three colours of the colour wheel and you can't mix any colour to create red, yellow or blue. The next colour, however, is Green, a secondary colour. A mixture of yellow and blue and our character, Alok 'Aallu' Pratap Gupta, much like the colour green, is not truly himself but rather combination of what his love interest would like him to be.

## Side characters, setting, and story.

The side characters and love interests in this film add just as much value to the movie as the protagonists. Bittu, who lost his child and wife to another man, befriends a 7-year-old

girl who would do just about anything to get her

workaholic parents' attention. Akash's love interest, Shruti (Sanya Malhotra), is on a hunt to find the perfect rich husband whilst having a casual relationship with Akash. Sheeja Thomas (Pearle Maaney), a Malayali nurse, aspires to have a wealthy life. She captures the opportunity to have such a life when she and Rahul find the cash-filled suitcase in the ambulance. Alok will go above and beyond for his unrequited love, Pinky, so much so that he is ready to break her husband out of jail. Sattu Bhaiya finds an unexpected love interest too at the hospital.

## Accurate South Indian representation

As a South Indian myself, it would bring a lot of viewers like me great pleasure in knowing that they hired an actual Malayali actress to play the role of Sheeja Thomas. The movie hasn't used any stereotypes to showcase this role. Kerala has a great population of nurses who have migrated to different cities of the country and Sheeja was one such character. Her role was massively empowering because, despite not knowing how to speak both English and Hindi, she used her wits and intelligence to seize the first opportunity for a better life.

## Colours colours colours

And finally, this movie has paid a lot of attention to colours. Through colours, we can see the various personalities of the characters from the film. For example, the colour green symbolises growth, harmony and sometimes even money and these themes are explored through Alok's storyline. He is found to be willing to go to unreachable heights to

reunite Pinky and her husband, so much so that he was ready to give her his life's savings. Pinky, on the other hand, has a very fiery and selfish personality. She often wears red sarees or dresses during pivotal

points of the film to show the contrast between Alok and Pinky. Such key attention to detail is very satisfying because the filmmakers are following the rules of a colour wheel. This makes it much easier for the viewers to understand the relationship between the protagonists and side characters from each plot.

Ludo is a film that I believe can be enjoyed by people from every strata of life. The characters in this film are complex and well-written. The attention to detail and colours are a visual treat and the audience would have great fun piecing all the four plots together.

# Shedding Lights,

By Hardik Bhatt

When you reach for that TV remote and choose a film to watch, every character you see on screen reflects a mindset. One that someone, somewhere, lives by. After all, all the possibilities in a character's life decisions and nature are driven by the inspiration of real-life figures.

Being a movie nerd that you are, you must've watched that one movie that you just can't get enough of watching. I'd like you to think of that one movie and its main character. What comes to your mind immediately about them? Their appearance, their personality, their past and upbringing...? What else?

One aspect that a regular watcher does not dig deeper into is the purpose of the character. Most importantly, their method of pursuing their purpose. You see, every functional being in society, real or fictional, has a certain approach to the meaning of life.

Every human being is an arbiter in a different manner that shapes their life decisions in reaction to the lack of meaning in life. Puzzled? No worries, as we're about to glance at the philosophical field of movies where these characters are crops that choose to grow, die, or overcome, depending on how they decide their fate.

Real life, or movies, there's always an autonomous approach towards the truth of the absence of meaning in life. In real life as well as movies, there are several. Here, we're going to glance through the two most prominent ones. Two that are very different from each other, yet somehow similar, concerning two very notable movie characters.

## 1. Existentialism

Existentialism is possibly the most optimistic way of reacting to the void of meaning. Any person with this philosophy wrapped around them will work their way to fill that void. They use the sense of freedom to their advantage and attempt to steadily reach new heights.

They might not have a ladder to do so, but they'll make efforts to build a ladder of their own and seek a meaning in life. A good example of this philosophy is Aditya Kashyap from the movie *Jab We Met*. In the aforementioned movie, we see how Aditya, through the course of the story, finds a reason to live in life. Which was borderline non-existent in the initial parts of the movie. This is a very fitting example of existentialism, where you tend to create your own path in the absence of one.

## 2. Absurdism

Absurdism is the belief that life doesn't come with built-in meaning. Absurdism occurs when there's a ceaseless battle between the chase for meaning in life and the inability to actually accomplish it. As a result, some people respond by rejecting structure altogether. Live without a list of rules or goals, and just strive to conquer what they lay their index finger on. By wits or by brute force. For them, the true essence of life is about claiming everything they wish to. This behaviour acts like a coping mechanism for such people. Kabir Singh fits right into this category, as it's clearly evident through his actions of utter domination and rough behaviour throughout the instalment.

# Camera, Action.

## Juxtaposition:

Despite having been played by the same actor, Aditya Kashyap and Kabir Singh are polar opposites. Not just in personalities, but in how they react to the emptiness of life. One turns inward and rebuilds. The other lashes out and dominates. Kabir Singh is an example of absurdism pushed to its extreme. He doesn't chase meaning. He consumes whatever comes his way. From football matches to the woman he claims is his, everything becomes a conquest. There was nothing he didn't try to make his own unless it was humanly out of his power. Most of his actions were seen as irrational, which is a pattern seen in an absurdist.

On the other hand, in *Jab We Met*, we see Aditya Kashyap rise from the shadows and work on his goal of reviving his late father's firm, as well as succeed with it. It might not be the ultimate meaning of his life, unlike his belief, but it works as a pseudo-purpose of life. It at least keeps the concerned person's thoughts in check and makes him/her believe there's more to life.

Basically, Aditya does it because it is his utmost priority and his goal, and Kabir does it just for the love of the game. Doing and achieving stuff in small things, regardless, gives an absurdist like Kabir validation. While people like Kashyap only focus on stability and rationality. Kabir's kind would only seek dopamine.

## Conclusion:

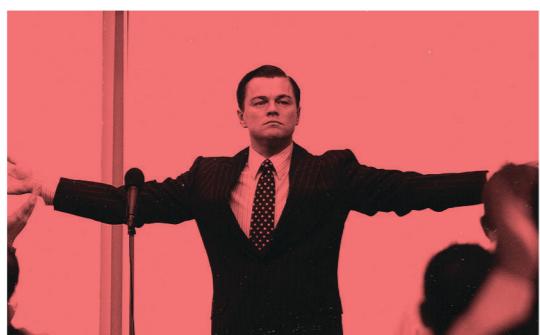
Existentialism and Absurdism are the artilleries that can both be used for a good and a bad cause; it just depends on whose hands it is in. However, absurdism is usually perceived as a fiend. But when it comes to building a living for yourself and recognition in society, there is no right or wrong manner to do so.

There are a plethora of such philosophies that shape Man in their most quintessential form possible, and they are for you to explore now. Consider this article as a key to that gate.

It's now time to drop the curtains with these lines quoted by Mewtwo, a movie character.

**"I see now that the circumstances of one's birth are irrelevant. It is what you do with the gift of life that determines who you are."**

# FRAMES OF



## AND FIRE

By Gorang Dogra



Biographical dramas, cinema's most intimate form of resurrection, exist in that miraculous liminal space between history and myth, fact and fantasy, the written obituary and the trembling heartbeat still echoing onscreen. As someone who breathes through movies and thinks in frames, I have always felt that biopics are not just stories we watch, they're stories we inherit. They allow us to reimagine the giants of time, not as statues in textbooks but as trembling, chaotic, often broken human beings who bled, cried, failed, and still somehow changed the world.

What follows is my cinematic pilgrimage through some of the finest and most fascinating biographical dramas ever made. They are grouped not by accident, but by an intuitive emotional hierarchy. Each category carries its own rhythm, its own sorrow, its own shade of glory. I don't merely list these films; I revisit them, reflect upon them, and sometimes quarrel with them. After all, truth, even in cinema, isn't a monologue; it is a duet between the storyteller and the witness.

### Curtains and Chaos: The Actor's Inner Apocalypse (Chaplin, Blonde, Sanju)

What happens when an actor plays an actor? A mirror faces another mirror, and the result is infinite distortion. Chaplin is where Robert Downey Jr. doesn't just perform, he becomes. The elegance, the mischief, the pathos behind the slapstick, it's all there, flickering like nitrate film, delicate and defiant. Then Blonde arrives, a fever dream soaked in sorrow. Ana de Armas haunts the frame as Marilyn Monroe, and the film, daringly, treats her less as an icon and more as a haunted house of trauma. Sanju, meanwhile, is a far louder affair. Ranbir Kapoor delivers mimicry with emotional precision, though the film often confuses rehabilitation with redemption. Yet in all three, the motif remains clear, actors suffer more in silence than in the spotlight. They're architects of illusion who often forget how to live in reality.

### Smoke and Mirrors: The Glamour of Guilt (The Wolf of Wall Street, Catch Me If You Can, Main Aur Charles)

There's something disturbingly beautiful about the conman biopic. We know these men are wrong, and yet we root for them. The Wolf of Wall Street is cocaine-laced capitalism at its most charismatic. DiCaprio doesn't act, he devours. Catch Me If You Can dances with deception, carried by Spielberg's light touch and a young Leonardo at his most agile. Then Main Aur Charles slithers into view, oozing suave menace. Randeep Hooda's Charles Sobhraj is terrifying precisely because he's magnetic. These films don't ask for our forgiveness; they beg for our complicity. They glamorise immorality while quietly showing its cost: loneliness, paranoia, and an empire built on sand.

### Melodies of Madness: When Music Becomes Destiny (Bohemian Rhapsody, Elvis, Maestro, Amar Singh Chamkila, A Complete Unknown)

To be a musician is to be both vessel and volcano. Bohemian Rhapsody resurrects Freddie Mercury with electrifying tenderness. Rami Malek gives a performance that feels like both elegy and resurrection. Elvis is another beast, a maximalist symphony of heartbreak. Austin Butler dissolves into Presley's glittering tragedy, while Baz Luhrmann's direction feels like an amphetamine rush of stardom's decay. Maestro is quieter, composed, and intellectual, but Bradley Cooper finds the tremor beneath Leonard Bernstein's genius. Amar Singh Chamkila arrives with rustic ferocity, a voice silenced too soon, now immortalised. And A Complete Unknown, Dylan's myth retold with poetic restraint, dances between silence and symbolism. These aren't just films about singers; they're operas about obsession, identity, and the destructive beauty of fame.

### Equations of Eternity: Brains Burdened by Brilliance (The Man Who Knew Infinity, Oppenheimer, A Beautiful Mind, Rocketry: The Nambi Effect)

Genius rarely comes gently. The Man Who Knew Infinity makes mathematics almost romantic, Dev Patel's Ramanujan a prodigy at war with cultural prejudice and divine inspiration. Oppenheimer, on the other hand, is a cinematic thunderclap. Nolan crafts a film that's less about a man than a reckoning. Cillian Murphy's face, hollow, brilliant, and damned, becomes the site of moral implosion. A Beautiful Mind brings schizophrenia into symmetry, with Russell Crowe's John Nash spiralling into invisible worlds. Rocketry tells a national wound stitched with dignity. R. Madhavan doesn't just play Nambi Narayanan, he honours him. All four films explore men too intelligent for peace, geniuses chased not just by numbers but by guilt, rejection, and isolation.

### Crown, Ash, and Oratory: When Leaders Become Myths (Lincoln, Gandhi, Napoleon, Thackeray, Main Atal Hoon)

Power ages the soul faster than time. Lincoln is a masterclass in restraint; Daniel Day-Lewis doesn't impersonate, he channels. Spielberg turns the political process into theatre, filled with quiet urgency. Gandhi, by contrast, is epic in both length and spirit. Ben Kingsley disappears into the Mahatma, and Attenborough treats him with almost divine reverence. Napoleon is more erratic but visually stunning. Joaquin Phoenix plays the French emperor as a man drunk on destiny. Thackeray is unapologetically dramatic, more political opera than history, and Nawazuddin roars in Marathi swagger. Main Atal Hoon offers a poetic alternative, a statesman's lyric over a firebrand's monologue. Together, these films paint the bittersweet loneliness of those who hold nations in their hands and history in their mouths.

### **Bloodlines of Betrayal : The Intimacy of Crime**

**(Donnie Brasco, Goodfellas, Public Enemies, Paan Singh Tomar, Haseena Parkar)**

Gangster biopics seduce with danger but mourn with realism. Donnie Brasco is a tragic bromance, Depp's loyalty splinters in slow motion under Pacino's aging mafioso. Goodfellas is pure kinetic chaos, Scorsese doesn't ask you to like these men, but you can't look away. Public Enemies romanticizes crime and punishment, while Depp's Dillinger dances with his own doom. Paan Singh Tomar, an Indian athlete betrayed by his country, turned into a bandit, is heartbreaking. Irfan Khan brings dignity to systemic failure. Haseena Parkar is more opaque, less cinematic, but attempts to bring the don's sister out of shadow. These films map out the fragile terrain between loyalty and lawlessness, where bullets echo louder when fired from within the family.

### **Empire in the Boardroom : Tycoons, Titans, and Turmoil**

**(The Social Network, Jobs, Blackberry, Guru)**

Innovation is rarely kind. The Social Network is acidic and cold, Zuckerberg becomes a myth of modern detachment. Sorkin's dialogue and Fincher's detachment create a new kind of villain, lonely, brilliant, and necessary. Jobs is more intense and poetic, Fassbender delivers his lines like sharp commandments. Blackberry is both tragedy and tech comedy, a cautionary tale about speed, ego, and market collapse. Guru is more operatic, Mani Ratnam crafting Ambani's arc into a rags to-riches symphony. These films revel in capitalist contradictions, genius tempered with greed, legacy born of lawsuits, and invention fuelled by impossible egos. Biopics about war survivors aren't just cinema; they're testimony. Schindler's List remains one of the most morally urgent films of all time. Liam Neeson plays Schindler not as a saint, but as a man slowly waking up to his own humanity. The Pianist is more internal, Adrien Brody becomes ghostlike, surviving genocide through music and despair. Sardar Udham is quietly devastating, Kaushal's silences scream louder than words. Sam Bahadur stands tall in military pride, offering India its cinematic Field Marshal with crisp humor and poise. Sarbjit is raw and jarring, but deeply felt, and Randeep Hooda's transformation is painful to watch. These aren't just films; they're elegies. They force us to remember that survival is not just a victory, it's often a life sentence.

### **Wings and Wreckage : The Sky as Scripture**

**(Neerja, United 93, Sully, Society of the Snow)**

Aviation biopics often begin with hope and end with horror. Neerja captures extraordinary courage in confined spaces. Sonam Kapoor is astonishingly honest, her Neerja doesn't perform bravery, she embodies it. United 93 is unbearably real, the panic is palpable and the humanity tragic. Sully is more introspective, Tom Hanks transforms the "Miracle on the Hudson" into a quiet meditation on doubt and responsibility. Society of the Snow is a freezing symphony of survival and surrender. These films remind us that sometimes, the sky is not an escape, it is a crucible. And those who navigate it often leave a piece of themselves in the clouds.

### **Of Sweat and Spirit : Athletes Who Became Allegories**

**(Raging Bull, Ali, Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, M.S. Dhoni : The Untold Story, Dangal, 83)**

Sports biopics are battle hymns of the flesh. Raging Bull is a boxing ballet of self-destruction, De Niro's performance is grotesque and genius. Ali is grander and more political, Will Smith channels The Greatest with surprising restraint. Bhaag Milkha Bhaag is a fever dream of trauma and triumph, Farhan Akhtar running not just for medals but from memory. M.S. Dhoni finds grace in stillness, Sushant Singh Rajput making quiet decisions feel monumental. Dangal and 83 are unapologetically celebratory, but technically excellent and soaked in national pride. These films don't just show victories; they honor the price paid for them.

### **The Solitary Quill : Writers and Their Restless Minds**

**(Mank, Manto)**

Writers are maddening protagonists, so internal and so unreachable. But Mank makes the process glamorous and gritty. Fincher dives into 1940s Hollywood excess with a caustic laugh, and Gary Oldman's Mankiewicz slurs brilliance. Manto is the opposite, poetic, pain-soaked, and political. Nawazuddin plays the Urdu writer like a living wound, bleeding prose and protest. Both films know this truth; writers are their own worst characters. But thank God they write, so we don't have to live without their chaos.

### **The Architect of Illusion : When Showmen Built Dreams**

**(The Aviator, Harishchandrachi Factory, The Greatest Showman, Aparajito, Ed Wood)**

The showman is not just a creator, he is creation itself. The Aviator is breathtaking, Scorsese's biopic on Howard Hughes becomes an operatic tale of invention, insanity, and sky-bound solitude. Harishchandrachi Factory is charmingly humble, telling the story of Indian cinema's birth with laughter and longing. The Greatest Showman sings, dances, and lies with flair,

but its emotional arcs are irresistibly earnest. Aparajito is an introspective jewel, weaving Satyajit Ray's coming-of-age into quiet poetry. And Ed Wood, a love letter to failure, gives Depp the chance to play the worst director of all time with such innocence, you root for every bad idea. These films celebrate those who dared to dream loudly, even when the world barely whispered back.

### **Finale the History in Motion Pictures and in Mirrors**

Biopics are not merely chronicles of what was, they are cinematic whispers of what could have been, what still lingers in the crevices of memory, and what truth looks like under the warm distortion of art. They do not simply document, they provoke. They ask us not just to remember, but to feel. They allow history to exhale, flawed, emotional, and ferociously human. In portraying the titans of our times, actors, rulers, criminals, warriors, thinkers, and dreamers, biographical dramas don't just tell stories, they unravel identities. They remind us that behind every textbook chapter is a trembling voice. That revolutionaries were once children, that legends once doubted themselves, and that immortality often costs everything. In a time obsessed with instant content and ephemeral storytelling, the biopic stands as a cinematic monument, a rebellion of depth in an age of brevity. And for that alone, it will always be the genre I return to, again and again, not for spectacle, but for soul.

### **Writer's Note**

As I revisited these films, each one opened a mirror to a different face of humanity, not just the ones portrayed, but my own. I've watched Schindler's List in silent reverence, The Aviator with heart thudding awe, and Sanju with amused frustration. I've argued with the morality of The Wolf of Wall Street, cried quietly through The Pianist, and stood, alone, staring at the credits of Dangal, letting the tears sting unashamed. What I've realized is this; biopics are not about agreeing with the choices of the real-life figures they depict. They're about understanding the conditions that created them, about empathy without erasure, critique without cruelty, reverence without worship. There's a strange comfort in seeing brilliance fail, in seeing courage cost someone their peace, in watching icons crumble under the weight of their own myth. Because in that crumbling, we recognize our own small triumphs, our private devastations, our longings to be more than just ordinary. Cinema has given me many things, but biographical dramas have given me something rare, intimacy with strangers, familiarity with giants. And above all, the reminder that our lives, however mundane they may seem, are made of the same trembling threads as those of the legends we worship. If even one of these films reminded you that greatness is forged in vulnerability, then it has done its job. And if this article reminded you of why these stories matter, then so have I.

### **Ashes and Echoes : Stories of War, Resistance, and Ruin**

**(Schindler's List, The Pianist, Sardar Udham, Sam Bahadur, Sarbjit)**

Biopics about war survivors aren't just cinema; they're testimony. Schindler's List remains one of the most morally urgent films of all time. Liam Neeson plays Schindler not as a saint, but as a man slowly waking up to his own humanity. The Pianist is more internal, Adrien Brody becomes ghostlike, surviving genocide through music and despair. Sardar Udham is quietly devastating, Kaushal's silences scream louder than words. Sam Bahadur stands tall in military pride, offering India its cinematic Field Marshal with crisp humor and poise. Sarbjit is raw and jarring, but deeply felt, and Randeep Hooda's transformation is painful to watch. These aren't just films; they're elegies. They force us to remember that survival is not just a victory, it's often a life sentence.

# Why I love Grief

By Yashvi Jain

I love grief. And that's an absurd statement to make. More absurd when I tell people that I find 'Manchester by the Sea' as my comfort film, if at all, the concept of 'comfort films' exists. But I always had my reason for this. An inexplicable reason for the weird stimulation that comes with watching haunting portrayals of Grief in films.

To me, grief is a highly personal experience. Though it has been part of us, it has never been accepted. Negative emotions, as they say, should be avoided. Perhaps that's why my family usually never takes my film recommendations. Why? Because they are too melancholic. Too sad. Very much capable of making one bawl their eyes out. And I would always wonder how one can run away from things that are such a huge part of human life?

...  
Confrontation has always been my ethics. I have never learnt to run away from anything in life. I have faced circumstances which were unlikely to occur in the life of a 15-year-old girl. And over my journey, I have never left the grip of watching films. They were never escapism to me. They were always about the alternate reality, which I may face some day. If not scene by scene, at least emotions by emotions. So, over time, I realised I felt gravitated towards melancholic or heavy narrative-based films because I found them cathartic. Eventually, I realised, cinema is the only cheap and accessible therapy available.

## So, how is it therapy?

Because films are escapism? Sure, sometimes. But films, first and foremost, are a form of connection that touches people. I remember the first time I watched films like October, Manchester by the Sea, Past Lives, and I Want to Talk. I felt as if someone had slit my throat. My eyes were red, and saying my eyes bawled out wouldn't even do justice to how much I actually cried. Why did I cry so much? asked myself. Now, I never had cancer, or lost my loved ones due to disease, or had a terrible mishap that broke the family apart. So, why do I resonate so deeply with such films? The answer to this is the reason why I call Cinema my therapy.

As I mentioned earlier that how grief is taken up as a negative emotion, I was always told to get away with it. Pass it. Bury it. Archive it. And little did I ever realise that this is how grief doesn't work. It could be channelised, but never short enough to get done with. And it doesn't end with some valiant heroic acts. It just stays, waiting for you. And one day you may feel you are doing fine. But then, on a random Tuesday, you feel numb, sad, and angry - all at once.

Grief is not linear. It's like seasons that keep coming and going. And how do you overcome it? Definitely not by doing meditation or yogic practices. You do not heal by hastily following mindfulness. You heal by understanding the idea of it. Not going with plain actions, but with the intent behind things.

Where do you think I have gained this perspective about Grief? Through experience? Surely, that's the first thing. But non-negotiably through Cinema. I have understood the realm of Grief by watching films. I have my fair share of sensing grief, loss and death through films. It's still fresh in my memory, the midnight when I saw Manchester by the Sea. The film was quiet. The kind of grief that is not loud but simply exists. No dramatic monologues. No high arc soundtrack. Just a story about a man, Lee, who, while throwing the trash out, is drowning in regret.

This understanding comes from loving October. With a definition of love that doesn't come with physical touch or expression. A form of love that comes when you care for people. When you want to be there for them. A form of love that is platonic. A human connection where grand gestures do not exist, but a simple life where affection becomes such a mode of connection that you don't know what to do with all the care you have when the person is gone forever.

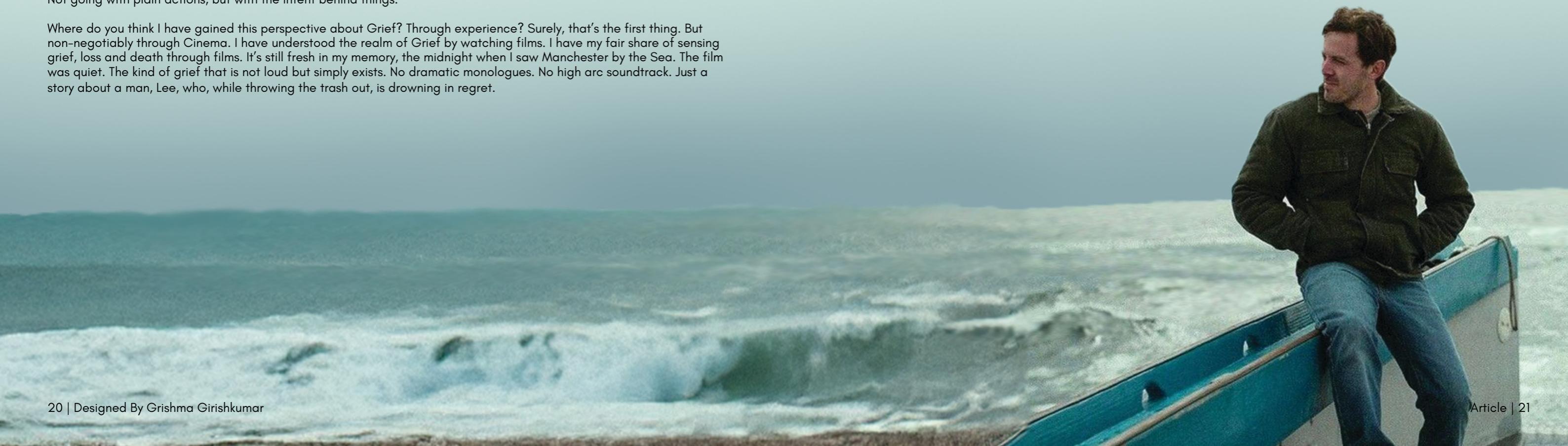
And that's the thing about hundreds of subtle films I have ever watched on Grief. Films which do not oversimplify Grief for you. Which doesn't show you how to heal. Films that let Grief be wild. To be devastatingly human.

**Pain is important,  
how we evade it  
how we deal with it  
how we transcend it**

~ Audre Lorde

Why do I love grief? Not for the pain it brings. But because I love what comes after it. I love it when it reminds me of the love I had. I love it when films help me to see people's grief and learn to carry it with grace. I love it because they remind me there is no deadline to get over things. I love it because they give me reason to evolve and keep growing. I love learning about Grief through films because it teaches me how to face it. To make tea with it. Write with it. I love it because sad films don't make me feel alone. It makes me feel alive. Alive enough to feel things.

**"To fear and still confront. To see heart aching and still let it ache. I would never not want to watch films that make me cry till my tears dry. For my love of Grief. For my love of Art. And for my love of Cinema, that shows my part of the story."**



# Screen to the Soul

By Harsh Modi

## The Super Fantastic month

A few weeks ago, while browsing YouTube, I stumbled upon a trailer of an upcoming Superman film. Moments later, I discovered that *Fantastic Four: The First Steps* was also set to release this July. That's when it struck me, this month was shaping up to be, quite literally, Super-Fantastic.

Whenever I think about movies, I feel a deep joy, as if I am entering another world altogether. For many, cinema is just a three-hour escape, a dark hall, a tub of popcorn and a big screen. But for me, it's something more. For me, it is not some other way of storytelling with visual and audio arts; it is an emotional connection. It teleports me to an abstract dimension where I step in and step out as a totally different being.

Watching cinema feels like stepping through an inter-dimensional portal. Into a bunch of infinite realms of stories and emotions. You explore some impossible futures through the sci-fi genre, re-live the glory of the past through biographies and have a session of bursting lungs and laughing in comedy movies. Romantic movies fill the heart with love and compassion; on the other hand, action and drama pump adrenaline all over the body, driving excitement and quite a tension towards the brain.

## The Beginning of the End

I don't remember my first day at college, but I clearly remember the day I saw that movie for the first time in the theatre. It was a hot day in the month of April, my friends came to my house and forcefully dragged me to the nearest cinema to watch *Avengers: Endgame*. Before entering the theatre, I didn't care about the story, visuals, characters, or the legacy of the studio. I just wanted to go home.

Then started the 3-hour masterpiece. Each of its scenes mesmerised me. The heroic moments, perfectly written story, those vivid visuals, grand music and the bold and morally determined characters. The climax of the movie, in my opinion, was the best part. When each character was walking out of a different portal. The audience erupted. Cheers echoed. The theatre turned into a live orchestra of claps, roars, and uncontrollable joy. All these factors glued me to my seat, and that was the day a cinema fan was born.

Gradually, I completed the whole Marvel franchise in 2 months. I know it is weird to begin at the end but perhaps that's why it stuck. Since then, I've devoured stories from every corner of the world.

## The realm of my Fantasy

For me, cinema isn't leisure. It's a quiet promise I make to myself. It's not an escape from reality; it is just another perception of the real world shown on screen. I admire cinema because it takes me to another realm, the realm of my imagination and fantasy.

It makes me experience the world I would love to live in and provides me with the hope to make one in reality. It also helps me to form or join the community of like-minded people around me who were just strangers to me before. But this was not an overnight effect. I have come to understand cinema to an extent of admiration for it. Perhaps it happened because of a lot of characters and movies that made my experiences memorable over time.



## Becoming me, one character at a time.

Over the period, I explored almost every genre. Some stuck with me, others didn't. I was attracted to some like a magnet. Out of all, the superhero genre is my favourite. In that each character is written very deeply and the story is always focusing on a bigger and glorious end.

The same goes for various other genres like action, sci-fi, biographies, drama and thriller. Different genre, different makers, different story and a variety of characters. These characters are one of the primary reasons which make the experience great and memorable. Even today, if I am feeling a bit low or bored, I will just tune in to watch *Phir Hera Pheri*. The legendary trio of Baburao, Shyam and Raju, along with Tiwari Seth and Pappu, lightens my mood.

Iconic characters like Bruce Wayne from *The Dark Knight* and Peter Parker from Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* trilogy are the ones I will respect till the end of time. They are the ones who taught me that all it takes is a good heart to become great, no superpower can overshadow the kindness of a man.

Movies like *Dunkirk* and *Schindler's List* gave me a hit on my history knowledge and through them I was able to figure out why the current world order is as it is today. Biographical movies, like *The Social Network*, made about Mark Zuckerberg, showed me the importance of keen observation and determination for one's objective.

## I can do this all day.

These films, characters, and moments didn't just entertain me. They shaped me. They helped construct who I am today and how I see myself within society. Now, don't think one needs to be a filmmaker to be shaped by films. Sometimes, all it takes is a seat in a theatre, a great story and an open heart. For me, cinema isn't just something I watch. It's something I live through.

# Sadda Haq, Aithe Rakh!

By Hardik Bhatt



**"Movies now aren't as good as they used to be before."**

**"They just make anything nowadays."**

**"Indian Cinema has lost its charm."**

These are some lines that would not catch you by surprise if said by anyone. And it is highly likely that you agree with these lines too. But why? What could possibly be the reason behind this sudden drop in the quality of films? Sure, bad movies have always existed, but the quantity of them has never been as dense as it is today.

Not many have ever questioned this eerie uprising of such kinds of movies. But this article is here to challenge this mystery. Through this article, we're about to find out why the Indian Cinema has been so unappealing lately and try to come up with a possible cure for the reasons.

## Socio-Economic Status and Escapism

The societal atmosphere around a person dictates to a person how to feel. And how a person feels prompts them to seek content that either resonates with them or provides them an escape. Usually, during adverse conditions, a person craves a break from their reality. And the current socio-economic and psychological state of the major population of our country reinforces this line.

As per studies, the average population of India is under-accomplished, unhappy, and economically unsatisfied. Hence, they'd rather watch a masala-packed movie over a thought-provoking or intellectual movie like Inception or Sherlock Holmes. This encourages Indian movie makers to create such electrifying movies rather than brain-tricking movies. Watching such movies is a form of escapism, which helps them catch a break from their real life.

Education level is not optimum, which reduces the number of people who'd be able to understand movies that demand a high level of intelligence.

## Taste

If the crowd bulldozes away the release of Interstellar for Pushpa 2, that shows a lot about the taste of the Indian audience. The first point we talked about slowly converts into their taste in movies. For them, movies that require wits are too nerdy and preachy.

One's taste in a movie means nothing but what their own definition of a movie is. Preference is subjective, but this taste seems to be growing universal now.

## Blind worship of stars

This is an audience behaviour that witnesses the line of irrationality being crossed. Blinely believing that an actor's entire

movie catalogue is flawless is a common theme seen among die-hard fans of film icons. This phenomenon of watching movies solely due to the presence of a certain actor is seen as a very viable reason.

Such people will defend the movie at all costs. They might even take offence when brought a criticism, nevertheless, a constructive one. Their loyalty towards their favourite star makes them turn a blind eye to the flaws of the movie.

Such cases are usually seen with commercial movies. Aka movies that are made to cater to the mainstream audience. The main goal of a commercial movie is to capitalise on this kind of audience that would watch a movie just for the cast, over the storyline or the theme.

## Numbers

Commercial movies are usually adept at filling the cinema halls and accumulating enormous numbers. Unfortunately, the general audience tries to bring the quality of a movie parallel to the numbers it managed to generate. Whether a movie is good or not is measured by the number of tickets it sold, which realistically holds next to no sense.

Wow! My favourite millionaire actor made another 100 million! Hurray!

Figures clearly don't translate the watchability level of a movie, since, as we discussed earlier, commercial movies are planned that way. They're made to cater to the herds of sheep. That does not indicate success at all, even if the on-paper generated revenue is bonkers.

## Lack of Questioning

All of the previous issues cluster into this concern. The audience does not question. We don't scrutinise movies enough and demand a theme change. Why do you think we have a fifth part of Housefull? Or think why we're probably getting another Singham edition shoved down our throats within the next 3 years.

It's because this audience has become comfortable and has adapted to this style of movie watching. On the brighter side, there has slowly been an uprising in criticism towards this kind of filmmaking. Thanks to the increase in education and a general awakening amongst the youth. However, it's still far from enough, which is why we're still being fed below-average movies.

And this part must've needed a separate segment, but I'll just segue this here. It seems like barely anyone has a problem with the overuse of patriotism in movies. One or two movies regarding a notable incident seems reasonable, but this just seems to get out of hand. At this point, it can only be understood that they're just abusing patriotism to capitalise off these "andhbhakts", and it seems to work beautifully. Name one patriotic movie that flopped. I'll be waiting. Making money off a tragic event seems very fishy, which nobody seems to question.

## THE AUDIENCE

"We have a fairly backwards audience here. I must say, in spite of the Film Society Movement and all that, if you consider the large audience, it's a backwards audience. An unsophisticated audience."

-Satyajit Ray

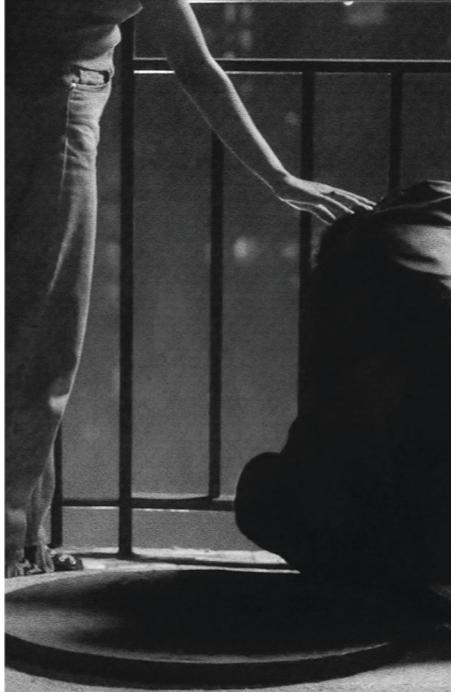
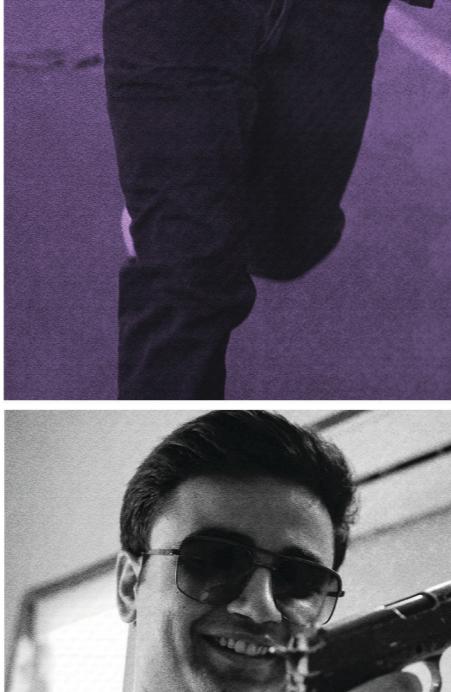
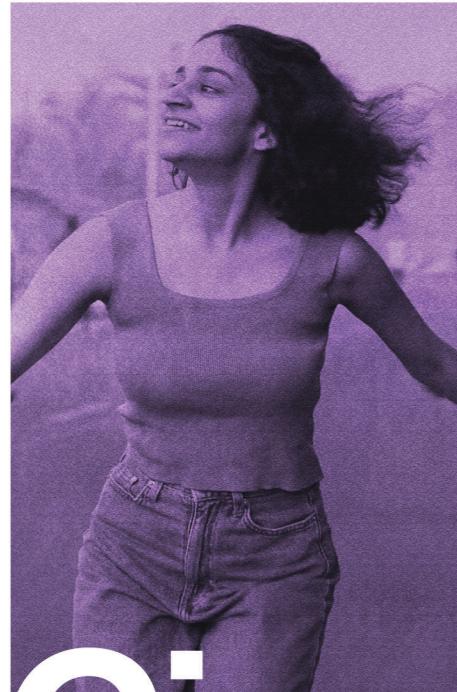
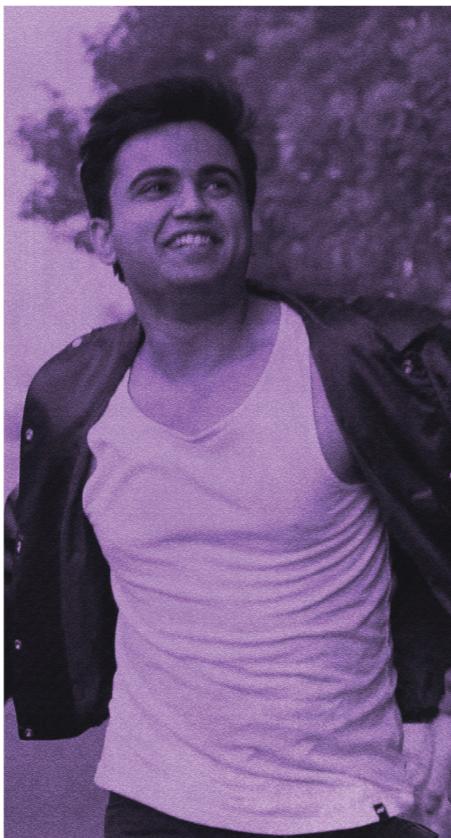
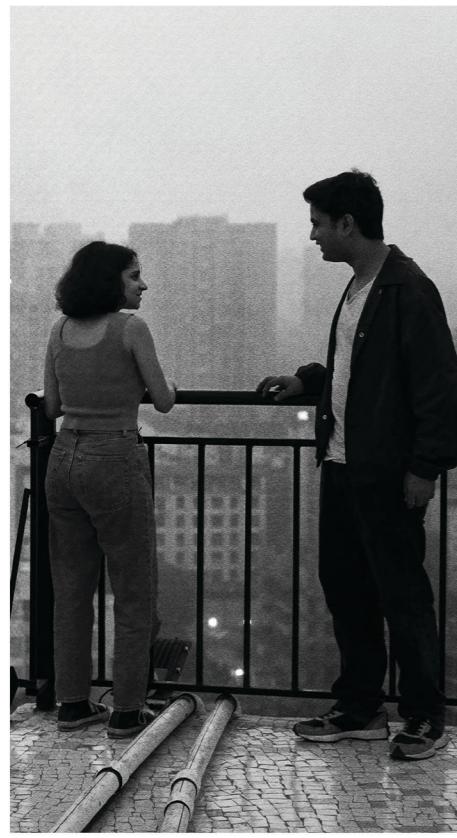
All of the aforementioned factors that lead to the mediocre movie problem are rooted in one big factor. It's the audience. It's us. We are responsible for what we're given. We, as an audience, have normalised praising bare minimum quality. Make no mistake, though, commercial movies do hold importance, as they push new pop culture trends and promote sales and engagement. But unfortunately, these movies have become the new face of our cinema, which is a matter of concern.

Instead of focusing on the box office collection or cast, we should give more importance to what we're learning from that movie. The essence of a movie lies underneath its various components, and these superficial entities are not one of them. There's so much more to appreciate about a movie than just who's playing what character, or whether the person playing a certain character is renowned or not.

However, it's not too late to realise that we're basically getting what we accept and consume. So if we demand non-bare minimum stuff, we're surely getting it. A provider has to cater to the needs of the consumers to thrive. The people who make such mediocre movies now are the same people who have made content of fine calibre in the past. They've been giving out the bare minimum simply because we have learned to live with it.

It's about time we all stand up and scream out

**"Sadda haq, aithe rakh!"**



# Cinema

## it Breathes in all Forms

When we view cinema as a whole, we cannot limit it to a particular idea, story, or narrative. It is so diverse, just like any other art form, that it contains life inside it. It's almost like it's alive and breathing, constantly changing & expressing through different forms, characters, stories, genres, etc.

Defining cinema would be limiting it, whereas it is limitless. It is sculpting in time, but what's being sculpted is filled with infinite possibilities. It's giving life to a character and making them move through life within life. We may provide them a temporary ending, but they live on, in interpretations and perceptions throughout the years, as different eyes see them differently.

Ever since I've fallen in love with cinema, it's been a natural instinct to touch different forms, shapes and possibilities of it. As an artist, or merely a human being, I'm constantly changing, learning and evolving. So, the art evolves too. It finds different forms to express itself through me. Whatever I'm experiencing and feeling through life, I express through cinema, and it happens naturally.

In the past 2 years, as I've moved through, the various forms of this single medium have attracted me. I've been forced to try and experiment with each form of it, whether it's through genres, characters, aspect ratios, or colors. The curiosity of what all this medium is capable of & how much can be done by altering it has made me create 4 short titles — Each with a different genre, aspect ratio and color scheme.

And what I've learnt is how Cinema breathes in all forms. Different shapes of frames can communicate different emotions, different colors can make one feel different feelings and different characters can make one experience different lives. The medium's ability to say, express and communicate anything through different ways makes it limitless, alive and infinite.

### Tears of Roses (2023)

Genres: Poetry, Melancholy, Drama

Aspect Ratio: 4:3

Dominant Colors: Red & Maroon



### Sightless Skins (2024)

Genres: Psychological & Philosophical Drama

Aspect Ratio: 2.39:1

Dominant Colors: Brown & Golden



### Rihaayi (2024)

Genres: Romance, Melancholy, Drama

Aspect Ratio: 1.85:1

Dominant Colors: Pink & Blue



### Lallu Gangster (2025)

Genres: Comedy, Satire, Drama

Aspect Ratio: 1.66:1

Dominant Colors: Purple & Wine





# The Last Applause

By Elvee

The theatre is shutting down today. The cloth banner flaps like it doesn't want to settle, as if the building itself is resisting the end. A boy fiddles with it, tentative, imprecise, like he's dressing the body of a stranger. I stand below the stairs, one hand on my walking stick. Not for balance, just for memory. The railing beside me still knows my hand. It's held the weight of a thousand mornings. This place was mine. Still is. Not for much longer.

A burial wrapped in celluloid. Madhu's voice cuts through the summer air. Sharp, firm, familiar.

"Thoda aur seedha karo... haan haan perfect. No, Mr. Joshi, not today. Nahi nahi demolition kaise? We're still on the good-bye part." One hand is on her phone, the other points upward, commanding, correcting.

But when she notices me hesitating mid-step, just a flicker in her peripheral vision, she reaches out instinctively, places her hand beneath my elbow. Doesn't pause the call, doesn't glance at me. But her fingers press in, like punctuation at the end of a sentence I never wrote aloud.

Four more steps. But they feel like four decades. Not because of my knees. Because every rise lifts me away from something I'll never return to. Each step is an elegy. Each breath, a reluctant translation of goodbye.

At the top, I pause. The board swings. As if the wind can't decide whether to let go.

## Kaagaz ke Phool - 6:30 PM - Final Show.

The words aren't printed.

They're etched. Into the day. Into me. Guru Dutt's hollow-eyed melancholy stares back at me through the rust-flecked ticket counter glass. A face made of sorrow and shadows. And yet, to me, it's not his face I see, it's Geeta's. That day, forty years ago. Her kohl was slightly smudged. Her bangles sounded like hesitant applause against the armrest. The corner seat in Balcony C was more intimate than any confession we ever made aloud. That was the day we watched this film together. I still remember the way her eyes welled up when Suresh Sinha sat alone in the director's chair, swallowed by light and loss. I had reached out in the dark, aiming for her hand. But I only caught her little finger. We didn't speak afterwards. Didn't need to. That night, the silence between us did more than any promise could.

Some love stories are told. Some are forgotten. And some, like that film, are only mourned later. As I look at the sign now, I don't just feel nostalgia. I feel something like guilt. I step inside. And the theatre breathes. It exhales into me with a smell that has no word in any language. A mixture of warm oil, stale popcorn, slightly burnt reels and dreams baked into wood. A scent that clings not to clothes, but to memory. It is, unmistakably, here.

The marigold garlands hang lazily across the cracked hallway walls. Some are fresh, their orange fierce and bright, but others have already wilted, petals curled inward like they're shielding themselves from what's to come. It's a half-hearted celebration for a full-hearted loss. The theatre doesn't know whether to smile or weep. Neither do I. I walk past the posters and they look at me like old lovers.

Mughal-e-Azam, still regal. Amar Prem, still tragic. They haven't changed. But I have. My body now walks like an echo. My bones mutter things my mouth doesn't. The stairs to the office creak beneath my feet but not in protest. In recognition. Like a house that remembers who you were before you built it.

Every morning for 36 years, I have climbed this staircase. I used to take them two at a time, whistling old tunes. Now I count each one by the breath it steals. When I reach the top, I pause. The bannister under my palm is smooth, not by design, but by devotion. Skin has memory, too. And mine still knows the grain of this wood like prayer beads. I push the door open.

My office smells like rust, receipts and stories no one ever paid for. The chair, my stubborn, aching, squeaky chair, greets me like an old dog that never left, even when you stopped feeding it. Madhu always said, "Baba, get a new one. You'll break your back in this antique."

But when the budget offered me only one choice, a new chair or a new popcorn machine, I chose the latter. Because the chair was for me. But the popcorn? The popcorn was for everyone.

Popcorn isn't a snack. It's the rustle before the hush. The taste of skipped school and first dates. It's not for comfort. It's a ritual. And rituals deserve better than comfort.

"Baba!" The door opens like a question I don't want to answer. Madhu walks in with a file in one hand, her phone still buzzing in the other. Her dupatta is always folded into her handbag, never worn and her forehead bears a faint sheen of sweat and responsibility. She drops the file on my desk with the same thud she used to drop her schoolbag, back when her worries were simpler.

"The filmmaker's coming at two. FTII. Final year documentary. You're the centrepiece." "Madhu, bas aaj toh chhad de," I say. "Let the walls and I mourn in peace."

She pinches the bridge of her nose. "Baba, this is not just about you. It's about history. Legacy. Preservation. They're documenting dying single screens across the country. You are, like it or not, one of the last of your kind."

I look at her. Really look. There's something heartbreaking about watching your child become more grown-up than you ever felt.

Her voice carries calendars. Deadlines. Percentages.

But her eyes still search for a father who can fix things. And maybe I can't anymore.

"Alright," I mutter. "But if they ask why it's shutting down... tell them I lost the plot." She smirks the kind of smirk that holds tears in its spine and leaves the door half open.

The girl arrives at 2:10, as promised. Young. Slightly breathless. Dressed in one of those frayed cotton kurtas that scream purpose over polish. She sets the mic down backwards, fumbles with the cable, and apologises. "Sorry, I've only ever done interviews with professors." Her camera dangles awkwardly across her chest, like a stethoscope she's still learning to use. She sets up with the quiet reverence of someone entering a shrine.



"Ready?" she asks. I nod. She hits record.

"What does this theatre mean to you?" I let the silence stretch, like old celluloid between fingers.

"It means... everything and nothing. Like raising a child who never says your name, but screams it when they're in pain." She doesn't flinch this time. She scribbles something in her notebook. And for the first time, I wonder if she knows what I mean.

"This place isn't made of bricks and velvet seats. It's made of lives paused mid-sentence. The man who cried when Rajesh Khanna whispered, Pushpa, I hate tears. The widow who brought her husband's photo to every Sunday matinee. The couple that met under the 'No Outside Food' sign."

Simran doesn't interrupt. She just listens, the rarest kind of direction. "I'll miss the pause," I say finally. "Right after a perfect scene, when the audience forgets to clap. That hush... that sacred hush. That's when you know the film has entered their bloodstream."

When she thanks me and packs up, I catch her eyes lingering on the poster of *Kaagaz Ke Phool*. She says softly, "I hope my first film finds a screen like this." I smile. "If your film has a soul, any wall will do. But this theatre gives soul a place to echo." She leaves. But her recorder leaves something behind. A weight. A timestamp. Proof that something mattered.

After lunch, I sit in the chair, but it won't stop squeaking. Nothing stays quiet anymore. I want to smash something. A reel can. The power box. My own silence. But I just sit. Like always. And that's what hurts the most.

The door creaks open again. I smell jasmine. Faint. Familiar. A second later, I see her. Geeta fumbles with the latch. Her bag catches the chair. She sighs. "I told them not to sweep the balcony." Not graceful. Not like the memory. Better. I raise an eyebrow.

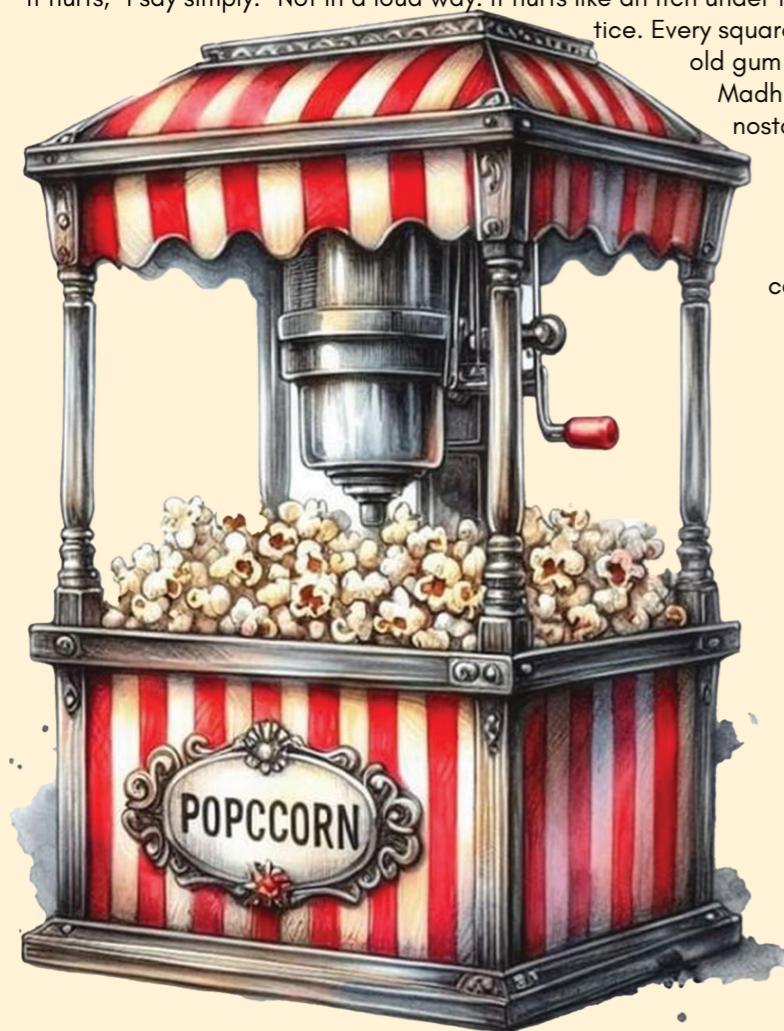
"Wanted to sit in the dust one last time. You know... just as it was." I laugh, a small, crumbling sound. "Still romanticising our allergies, are you?" She smiles, eyes glinting. "Only the ones we shared." A pause follows. One of those pauses where marriage lives long, unhurried, undemanding. Then she asks the question no one else dares to.

"How are you, really? With all this. With the end." I lean back. The chair groans like it knows the weight of the answer. "It hurts," I say simply. "Not in a loud way. It hurts like an itch under the skin where you can't reach, can't scratch, only notice. Every square foot of this place holds some story stuck to it like old gum under a seat." She nods. "If you want... I can talk to Madhu. We can still halt the sale. Push the paperwork. Plead nostalgia. We'll figure it out."

I look at her. God, she still believes the world listens to hearts. "You still think love can bargain with time," I whisper. She doesn't reply. "Geeta, this world counts square footage, not footfalls. It listens to interest rates, not intermissions. This theatre... It's a poem in a spreadsheet world."

Her voice breaks slightly. "So that's it? We just let it go?"

"No," I say, quietly but firmly. "We choose to let it go. That's the difference. Letting go isn't defeat. It's choreography. It's knowing when to bow out while the music still lingers."



Her eyes glisten not with tears, but with recognition. She reaches across the desk and places her hand over mine. Still the same warmth. Still the same grip. And just like that, in a moment without music, the old theatre forgives me for moving on.

At 6:30, we take our seats in Balcony Row C, the corner ones. Ours. Seat 5 still creaks the way it did when she first sat in it, nervously fixing her saree pallu. Seat 6 still leans slightly forward, like it's eager to watch. The lights dim. A soft cheer rises from the sparse crowd below. The projector stutters to life. *Kaagaz Ke Phool*. The film opens in monochrome melancholy.

Guru Dutt's silhouette fills the screen in all angles and ache. Rain drips onscreen, just like it did that first time. Only now, it feels like the rain is inside me. I don't look at Geeta. I don't need to. Her fingers find mine mid-scene, no effort, no drama. Like memory wearing skin. When Suresh Sinha stares at his ruined set and says, "Waqt ne kiya kya haseen sitam," the line lands deeper than it ever did. Maybe because this time, we are the set. When he lowers his gaze in the final shot, I turn to Geeta. We kiss. Not shy, not desperate. Just certain. Certain that some things survive the edits of time.

The screen goes dark. A pause. Then someone coughs. Someone claps. I don't. I just sit there, holding her hand like it's the only real thing left. "Let's go," she whispers. I don't move. Not yet. The reel has ended. But I still hear the film.

# The Last Time I Loved You

By Kiana Pavri

The most alive a person ever feels is when they fall in love. That reckless flutter in the chest, the stolen glances, the unspeakable ache, you don't forget it. I too loved twice. Once in innocence and once so deeply it stayed with me till the end. We all have that one person we loved, but could never be with. Mine was her. Every coin has two sides; this is mine.

Before I was a famous actor, I was a boy who came to Bombay with 30 rupees in his pocket and dreams in my eyes. In college, girls followed me with giggles and glances and I, embarrassingly, blushed like a boy unprepared for attention. Shyness be damned, I wanted to act and I wanted the world to know my name. I roamed around on the streets of Bombay in search of opportunities. After struggling for two years and changing three jobs, one day I ran into an old friend, another struggler in the city's storm. He told me a production house was looking for a new face. He urged me to try my luck.

As destiny would have it, I gave the audition and got the job. That day, my journey began. I worked in three to four films and then I was cast opposite the biggest singing star of that time- Suraiya. When I saw her, I forgot my lines. She wasn't just stunning, she was luminous. She was beautiful, bold and had eyes which spoke a language that was understood only by me.

One day, we were shooting a scene in which we had to row a boat. Suddenly, the boat turned upside down and she was drowning. I saved her life. When we came out of the lake, she said, "If you had not been there, then I would have died." I said, "If you had died, I too would not have

lived." I think she fell in love with me at that very moment. She started giving hints of love and I readily accepted them. This was the first stage of our love affair, that stage when our hands would touch each other, a current would pass through the body and the mind would lose its senses for a few seconds. At our age, money and love were the only important things in our lives; religion was never in the picture, even though we saw our country being divided on that basis. We just wanted to be together and lead the rest of our lives. Our love affair became hot news to be printed in magazines and the gossip columns of newspapers. We were not against it because most of the things written were true.

Ours was probably the first love story of Hindi Cinema after independence. But every story always has a twist, in this story Suraiya and I were the main leads and the part of the villain was played by her granny, her uncle and other suitors who belonged to the industry.

Suraiya was highly influenced by the women in her family and she came from a very protected environment. She was bound to the apron strings of her family. I was a regular visitor to her house.

I was never welcomed by her granny, but her mother every day, smoking her cigars as if she were a mafia queen. She always gave me a cold shoulder, I don't know why. Was it because I was courting her granddaughter,

or was it because I was a Hindu in love with a Muslim? This question came to my mind when I was not allowed to meet Suraiya after the shooting hours. Somehow, we did survive that, but then the work days were over. I was now restless, a Romeo without his Juliet. In such times, friends and family are of great help. My brothers gave me hope and reassurance every day that she and I would meet soon, but who has ever been able to convince the heart of a longing lover? The last resort was writing a note to her. I had a friend who was a good friend to her family.

One day, I gave him a note which said, "My love, it has been a long time since we have interacted. It seems that it has been years since I last met you. Please call whenever you can. Love, Dev."

This was a desperate note from a desperate lover in the most desperate times. My friend played his trick well and the note was delivered successfully to its rightful owner and I got the reply within, so the situation was the same at both ends. Her note said, "I have also been missing you, Dev. I want to meet you and spend my whole life with you. Call me at 7."

I was in seventh heaven. I called her at exactly seven. Like any normal lovers who were crazy in love, we had given each other nicknames, she called me Steve and I called her Nosey because she had a long nose. I called her at seven and she picked up the call. In a soft voice, she said, "Hello?"

"Nosey," I poured all my love in that one word. No sooner did she try to speak than her granny said, "HELLO, SHE IS NOT HOME. IF YOU CALL HER AGAIN, I WILL SUE YOU IN COURT!" Then she banged the phone.

I was shocked by this gesture, not that she never scolded me, but now this was a very bad one - a warning to take me to court. I was scared as I had never faced such a situation before. I spoke to my brothers about this and they told me not to give up on her so easily. They suggested that I should call again.

I gathered all my courage and I called again when I heard a soft 'Hello.' It was certainly not her granny or Suraiya. I guessed whether it was her mother. I said, "Mummy?"

"Yes, Dev", I heaved a sigh of relief.

"Can I speak to Suraiya?" She said, "She has been crying." I was emboldened. "Can I speak to her?" "I am afraid her granny is around."

"But I must meet her", I was desperate.

"She, too, wants to meet you. Call after an hour. I shall arrange a meeting." And she put the phone down. I called her in an hour. She said,

"Suraiya cannot speak to you now, but I can fix a meeting, but very late at night, a little after 11:30."

"11:30?" I reaffirmed.

"She will be there on the terrace. Take the stairs and go straight up." I waited for the clock to strike 11:30, not many can understand the emotions of a lover who has not seen his love for so many days. No sooner did it strike 11:30 than I ran 5-6 stories of stairs and reached the top.

I ran like a cat and was panting for breath. I stood at the doorway and waited for her. She was sitting by the water tank when she saw me. She threw her hand out to me. We hugged each other for a long time. The silence conveyed everything. I stroked her hair and she raised her lips up to me, ready for a kiss. The kiss lingered, quiet and trembling, as if time itself paused for us.

Then she wept, I wanted to protect her from all evil.

"Will you marry me?" I asked her.

She smiled and said, "Yes I will."

The tide was rising and my friend Tara was waiting to see whether I flashed the torch, but that never happened. I went to Zaveri Bazaar the next day and bought



the most expensive ring for Suraiya. It was now time for the delivery of the precious ring. My friend played his trick again. But this time it had become even more difficult to give her the ring. Her family had closed doors to their closest friends. But somehow he managed to get information about her and the ring through his secret sources.

One day, he came to my house and with a long face said, "Dev, she cherished the ring just like she cherished you. But her granny found out about the ring. Her grandmother threatened to take her own life if she didn't leave you. Love has become a weapon against her. Suraiya cried a lot; she was frustrated and angry with herself. In that anger, she saw the ring lovingly for the last time and threw the ring into the sea." I was shattered.

He philosophised and said, "Shakespeare would be reborn to write your story of Romeo and Juliet, which would live on even more than his own play." I was broken. I had lost my first love and I didn't know to whom.

I cried on my brother's shoulders. I cried, I sobbed and I forgot about it. She couldn't speak up for herself; maybe she was a little timid. The next day, I was a new person and went on romancing with life.

## Suraiya

Liked the story? Tragic, I know, but it's the truth. This all has happened. Dev was the only man I ever loved. When I saw him, he was a shy guy but an extremely handsome man who was a newcomer in the industry. I actually didn't feel that when I worked with him, he was really nice to me, not in a way to flatter me for no reason.

He had always been honest with me in all ways. When our love affair began, it was a garden of roses, and our romantic scenes on-screen were very natural and didn't require acting. But who knew that garden would become an arena of thorns someday? Yes, I was scared. Timid. But I had a family to answer to, every single day. With all due love and respect, Dev had left his father and come to

Bombay, and he later joined his brothers. He was not as close to them as I was to my family. They had raised me and guided me through the industry; how can I leave them behind? The way Dev played an important role in my life, so did my family. I had my reasons when I couldn't speak to him, I could not face him, maybe I loved him too much to talk to him. We never really broke up. We simply lost the battle of religion. But you know, Dev, he could just move on, but I couldn't and I didn't. I did not marry anyone for the rest of my life; I just loved Dev so much that I didn't care whether he loved me back or not. He moved on. Married. Laughed again. Lived again. I never did.

Maybe our relationship made that boy into a man who could not handle any pain which came his way. Dev achieved immense success and I always wished the best for him. This was my side of the coin.



# बारिश, तुम और मैं

Between the salt of the sea and the sweetness of the rain, there was a place where you existed only for me.

By Tejas Bainalwar



# Top 8 ASMR Films That Will Melt Your Soul

By Alifa Ansari, Tanushree Wadodkar and Elvee



**2** **La La Land (2016) – English**  
Directed by Damien Chazelle  
A colourful tribute to idealists, La La Land warms Los Angeles with music, colour and poignant nostalgia. Jazz melodies complement the murmur of urban life, and introspective piano solos resonate long after the credits roll. It indulges in both the beauty and vulnerability of pursuing something greater than yourself and the soundtrack becomes yours.



**4** **Roma (2018) Spanish**  
Directed by Alfonso Cuarón  
Shot in black and white, Roma envelops you in the warmth of remembrance. Everything counts: the ring of street vendors, the crash of waves, the reverberations of a busy household. Its lack of background score is a blessing; instead, ambient noises draw you in, making you feel like you are actually living within each delicate, fleeting day.



**1** **Amelie (2001) – French**  
Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet  
Abounding with colour and question, Amélie makes a feast of everyday delights. The shattering of a crème brûlée, the spinning of a coin on a table, the pulsating thrum of Paris streets, each is cause for delight. It leaves you lighter, and it reminds you that magic exists in the smallest of gestures.



**3** **Qala (2022) – Hindi**  
Directed by Anvita Dutt  
Both haunting and heartbreakingly lovely, Qala employs music as a language of emotion. Lullabies become echoes of sorrow, silences convey unspoken desire and each shot feels like an unstated confession. Its period setting and enveloping sound design tell not only a story but allow you to inhabit the quiet pain of a young artist's reality.



**5** **October (2018) Hindi**  
Directed by Shoojit Sircar  
A gentle reminder of how fleeting life can be, October finds poetry in stillness. Footsteps shuffling down hospital wings, soft beeps of machines and rustling of trees in the distance make the silences become heavy with significance. It tells you to stop and breathe, living the weight of every mundane moment. Every silence.



**7** **2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) – English**  
Directed by Stanley Kubrick  
Very few movies use sound and silence as intentionally as 2001: A Space Odyssey. From the silence of empty space to a breath contained within a helmet, every moment is colossal. Kubrick's masterful alliance of expansive imagery and evocative classical music makes the experience as awe-inducing as it is entrancing.



**8** **Tumbbad (2018) – Hindi**  
Directed by Rahi Anil Barve  
With rain and shadow steeped through it, Tumbbad creates an unstoppable atmosphere of fear. Creaking doors, whispers in the distance, and the incessant rain get their own character. Beneath the terror lies beauty. The film's textures and sounds draw you so deep into its mythic realm, compelling you to gaze.

I know it feels like time slipping through your hand, it feels like you don't know yourself, and you might be losing yourself. But let me tell you this if anything happens, I am right next to you.

I know some days feel like shadows slip in too quickly, life feels heavier than ever. I know the moment feels like stillness touching your face. Emptiness rolling down your cheeks, burning the edges of all the beautiful memories. Sometimes names play hide and seek, some time time flies just by look at the wall clock wishing to get the fog cleaned up but some days it's not that easy but you still own the world and you have people beside you who loves you.

You walked through every difficulties and storm with grace and, you have built life time of courage and love in people's life.

You are still you, you made our lives brighter and its not because of the memory you can hold but because of the love you have given , the kindness which flows within you. You are so much more than dates facts and remembering faces. Everything is smoother with you here. We all appreciate it.

You are made of heart. Of stories, of echoes when the world goes quite.

Even when your mind plays tricks, your presence is the relief, you voice is the melody which echoes in our ears, you face is our glory.

When you sit quietly the world leans in listening the calmness. My dearest Shailaja I want you to know that you are not alone in this, never have been, never will be. Even if you don't remember us we remember you, you have left a mark in our heart which can't be forgotten no time can erase that. You are surrounded by people who deeply loves you and always will.

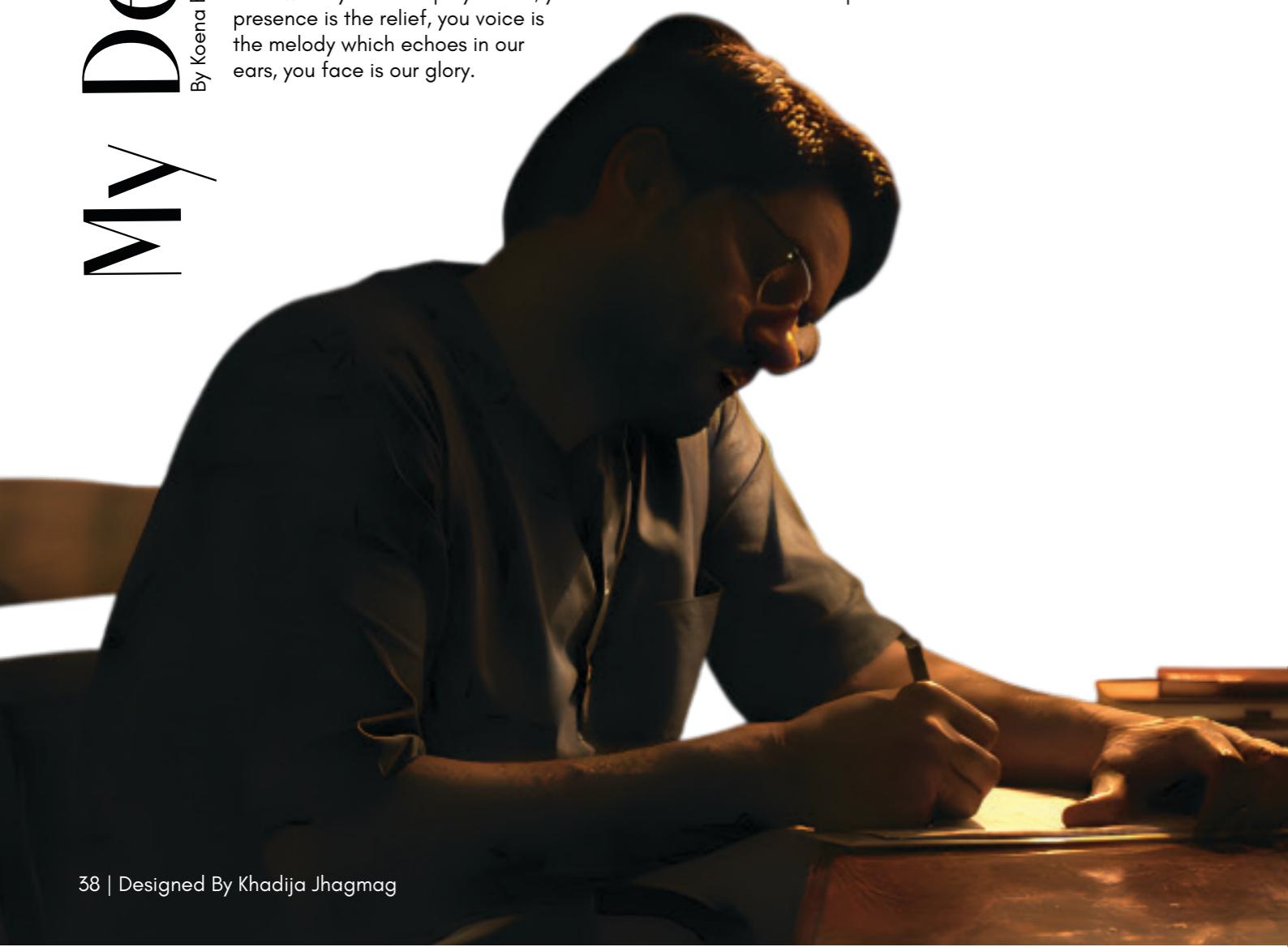
Even when you don't remember if you had lunch or where you left your pills but you always remember how to bring back smiles in people faces. The way you reach for someone's hand, the way you smile seeing a familiar face that's what matters.

So whenever the night feels cold and long hold this letter close and know that

You are brave  
You are worthy  
You are beautiful  
You are enough  
You are not your illness  
You are you.

I believe in you, in your strength and your courage. Whatever tomorrow brings you have already won the battle. Be strong even if you don't remember me, I will always look after you.

With all my love  
Your Pradeep.



# Father knows Best.

By Grishma Girish Kumar

## Dear Gamora,

Earth is an odd planet. I can never understand why these people would idolise those puny human beings who are nothing without their suits and hammers. But I am not going to let my confusion and utter disrespect for the people of this planet blind me from knowing what I'm doing is correct. Sure, go ahead and paint me as the villain, the bad guy, all I am trying to do is save a planet.

I have witnessed a similar fate and I am not going to let history repeat itself. Our Titan was a great planet, home to trillions, but what the leaders couldn't control was resource depletion. They tried numerous ways of implementing sustainability to the planet, but they were simply not ready to come into terms with the fact that THEY were the problem. OVERPOPULATION was the problem. When I suggested that we randomly eradicate half the population, the leaders were appalled and exiled me from the planet. It's really not that hard to understand, you know, resources are limited; however, people are unlimited. They don't seem to stop reproducing. And thus I believe that eradicating people will not harm because they will just multiply again. I don't hate people! I saw my people suffering from a lack of means to survive. It was painful. I believe that the worst thing that could be done by a being is knowing that suffering exists and continuing to stay ignorant, letting the suffering go on.

Although if there's anything I do hate, it would be the Avengers. I hate them with passion. Iron Man and I are very similar. We're driven, powerful, ambitious, and stubborn. I respect him. However, this team that he has set up to ruin me is funny, to say the least. Spider-Man, Ant-Man, Hammer Man, patriotic man, green colour man, "making circles in the air" man. I know their actual names, I just want to dig on them because they annoy me. It hurts me to know that you're a part of them. They're a distraction from my goal. They're now aware that I'm out to get the infinity stones. Gamora, I really don't care if the entire universe views me as this big evil creature. I just need you to know and believe that what I'm doing is the only way you and your little friends on earth will continue to live on. I'm going to keep you safe. You were supposed to be my successor. You were going to continue my reign, but here I am hearing some awful rumours about you. Who is Star-lord? And what is this man to you? I did a little bit of research myself and from what I know, he seems to be a native of Earth. Was he abducted or abandoned? I do not care for that, but my dear, dear daughter, that man-child is nowhere near good for you. You are the daughter of the conqueror of the universe and having relations with a man so far beneath is just pathetic. I know you deserve the greatest, the whole universe. I was ready to give your mother the universe, get yourself a man who would do that.

Now, I'm not writing this letter to question your choices. You should know that I am so proud of you, Gamora. I won't let anything happen to you if you join me on this quest to restore stability and balance in the universe. But if you continue to go against me, I can't make any promises, daughter.

## Your Father.



Designed By Grishma

# Still Waiting for the Magic to Return

By Jineeta Jain

To,  
Dear Indian Cinema,  
In Delulu Land,  
India.

Respected Indian Cinematic Industry,

We've spent a lot of time together, in dark theatres, on cramped sofas, on tiny phone screens under a blanket at 2 a.m. You were my escape, my window to bigger worlds, my first introduction to heartbreak, heroism, hilarity, and hope. You made me laugh till I choked on popcorn and cry when I didn't even know why I was crying.

But these days... I'm not sure we're still on the same page. You used to show me the world. Now you seem more interested in showing off. Let me begin, though, with love and gratitude.

Thank you for Piku, Shashi (English Vinglish), Vidya Bagchi (Kahaani), Gargi (Gargi), Mini (Sita Ramam), and Meenakshi (Meenakshi Sundareswar). These women weren't perfect, but were whole. Thank you for Dr. Vaseegaran (Enthiran), Thomas (Kumbalangi Nights), Vikram (Vikram Vedha), Gopi (The Great Indian Kitchen), and Faizi (Ustad Hotel). Men who felt, cooked, and broke the "macho" template. And thank you for those accessible, heartfelt stories that didn't rely on spectacle like Billu, Stanley Ka Dabba, Iqbal, Do Dooni Chaar, Harishchandrachi Factory, The Lunchbox, Photograph, Udaan, Killa, Lagaan, Sita Ramam, Masaan, Yashoda and Dear Zindagi.

With these elements, you made everyday lives feel extraordinary. But why are these stories so rare? Why is it so hard to find films where women are people and not just plot points?

Especially in mainstream Tollywood, where it feels like female characters are either crying, dancing, or disappearing after the second act. Sometimes all three, in that order. She's introduced with a slo-mo hair flip, says five lines, falls in love, and then becomes collateral damage. And the dialogues? Shallow and sexist, making women seem dumb, in movies like Businessman No. 1 and Attarintiki Daredi.

And it's not just women.

Why are Muslim characters always proving their patriotism, like in Baby or Sarfarosh?

Why are queer characters still sidekicks or clowns like in Student of the Year and Dostana?

Why are Dalit and tribal stories still told with either pity or pain, but never joy or agency?

Why is North East India either invisible or only shown when someone needs to portray "conflict"?

You taught me and my peers, through repetition, that stalking equates to romance, violence equates to masculinity, and "real men" never cry. That fair skin equates to beauty, size zero equates to love interest, and the louder the background score, the more emotional I should feel.

And let's talk about those films I wish I could erase from my memory. Liger, SOTY 2, Roohi, Coolie No. 1 (2020), Animal, Housefull 4, Heropanti 2, Radhe, Adipurush and Bad Newz.

They weren't just bad. They were baseless, bloated, and an awful waste of time. And what's worse? They thought they could get away with it. And sadly, most times, they did.

I also miss the magic of ensemble films, the ones that felt like family. Where are today's Hum Saath Saath Hain, Dil Chahta Hai, Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara, or even Amar Akbar Anthony?

Now everyone wants to be the star. Can't we go back to when multiple superstars shared the screen without fighting for the longest slow-mo walk? Where are the stories of genuine friendship, growing up, messing up and figuring life out together?

Now it feels like we're either spoon-fed "mass entertainment" or dry, soulless "message cinema." Why can't films be funny and thought-provoking? Educating and entertaining?

And then there's the trend of sequels. Ugh!! How many Housefulls and Golmaals do we really need before we admit the first or at least the second one was enough? Do we really need Heropanti 3? Or Rohit Shetty's Cop Universe? Are we making art, or collecting franchise points like PokéMon?

Here is the thing, Indian cinema, we love you. And because we love you, we expect more.

We know you're capable of brilliance. We've seen it in Sairat, Masaan, Oala, Malik, Gully Boy, Bulbbul, Jhund, 96, Article 15, Asuran, Nayakan, Saani Kaayidham, Tumbbad, Malikappuram, stories that struck a chord, not just a box office record.

We see hope in the work of Shoojit Sircar, Zoya Akhtar, Sudha Kongara, Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, Mahesh Narayanan, Devashish Makhija, Reema Kagti, Geetu Mohandas, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, Nitin Kakkar, Amit Masurkar, Gulzar, Shyam Benegal, Vishal Bhardwaj, Rituparno Ghosh, Aparna Sen, Adoor Gopalakrishnan; artists who treat their audience with respect, not as data points on a weekend report.

Choose the better ones.

So this isn't a breakup letter.

It's a love letter with boundaries.

Give us more and better movies

Make us laugh, not just with slapstick, but with wit.

Make us think, not by preaching, but by showing us ourselves.

# Dear Cinema

By Samiksha Kadam



It's my turn to speak to you now, hear me out.

I met you when I was little, when I didn't know that 'Mannat' was Shah Rukh Khan's house, not his wife. When I thought reel life was real life, and that people actually danced on top of hills in chiffon sarees. I met you on Antenna TV, where I sat beside my Grandma, wondering how these people are speaking from a box which is colourful.

As I grew up, I met you in different avatars, through CDs, Doordarshan, DVDs, and Netflix.

With my eyes fixed on the animated Mickey, it taught me joy, not in words, but in rhythm. You became the background music to my after-school evenings. I got to know you - little by little. You were the friend to me who never needed to speak, just needed to play. Even without the voices, you were a silent wave to my eyes.

Even when I didn't understand words, you were a wave of expression, silent, but stirring. You taught me how emotion could exist beyond language. You helped me know what it feels like to be surrounded by our people and laughing, having food, giggling, and spending time or making time out of a busy schedule for them.

To laugh till the stomach aches, to cry while pretending not to, to eat together from one plate, to steal glances across a crowded room. You made me romanticise the late-night maggie bowl, the chaos of mornings and even the awkward silence between two people who once had everything to say. You gave it meaning; you gave it background music.

You changed the way I looked at the world. Suddenly, rainy days weren't just wet. A train platform wasn't just a place of departure; it became a climax waiting to happen. You taught me to look for background music in silence, to find slow motion at a glance, and to believe that a single dialogue could change everything.

How do you manage to stitch all the emotions together so well???

You made us know the love between lovers and even taught us hatred. The silence, the revenge and this list can go on and on with every innovative essence of yours, by emerging emotions together or tearing each of them apart.

The pain in revenge, the weight of silences, the power in goodbyes. In every heartbreak scene, someone cried because they remembered their moments. In every climax, someone found the courage to walk away or walk toward someone.

You didn't just play stories; you made me feel them. Some days, I was Geet, talking non-stop to hide the noise inside. Some days, I was Bunny, chasing dreams, unsure of what I left behind. And on the hardest days, I was just the background character. Watching others live the story, I didn't know how to begin.

But you never judged. You just let me be in the frame, even if out of focus. Back then, I didn't care if the acting was realistic or the plot made sense. All I saw was magic. A hero who could fight ten men without a scratch. A song that could transport people from a Mumbai street to a mountain in seconds. You didn't have to be real to be relatable. And you always were relatable. You made me understand people I never knew. You made me cry for a mother I'd never met, smile at a child who didn't speak my language, and ache for a heartbreak that wasn't mine.

You taught me that emotion has no subtitles; it just finds its way. Years passed, and so did stories. You never left. But the emotion? That stayed constant.

You remained the friend who waited, always ready, always there.

As I grew up, I realised you were more than just weekend entertainment. You were therapy in motion. You were laughter when I felt too tired to smile. You were in rebellion when I needed to speak up. You were hope when life felt like a dead end. And now, when I sit back, I find myself doing what you always did. Experiencing, creating memories, framing them, and making others cherish them.

If I ever learned how to describe a feeling, it was because of you. If I ever imagined a world beyond mine, it was because of you. And if today I write something that moves someone to tears, know that it's not just me. It's the shadow of every film, every frame, every moment you gifted me.

Maybe now, it's my turn. To write a line that makes someone pause. To frame a moment in such a way that it feels like a scene. To give space for others to express what they couldn't say out loud. To take the chaos of college life, tea breaks, unfinished conversations and turn them into memories.

Somewhere between article edits and layout plans, it feels like you handed me the pen and whispered, "Now it's your turn." I carry that responsibility with love. Because you weren't just Cinema. You were a feeling. You taught me that storytelling is not about perfect characters, but about honest ones.

Not always about happy endings, but endings that stay. So thank you, Cinema.

For being there when I didn't even know I needed you. For holding my hand through joy and ache, through fantasy and truth, through popcorn and pain.

Thank you... for every scene, every emotion, every action.

**Forever indebted,  
Yours, Samiksha.**

# The Whispers of Melancholia

By Gorang Dogra



Baazi



Aar Paar



Sahib Bibi  
Aur Ghulam



Kaagaz Ke  
Phool



Mr. &  
Mrs. '55



Pyaasa



## A Century of Guru Dutt's Cinematic Lament

In the cathedral of Indian cinema, where stories flutter like prayer flags and images shimmer like divine murals, some names simply exist. Then some names echo softly, sorrowfully, eternally. Guru Dutt Sahaab was not a name in the credits; he was the cinematic soul itself. He was not a filmmaker who narrated tales; he was a wounded poet who bled his ache onto celluloid. His films were confessions. They illuminated. They questioned, wept and endured. As we commemorate his 100th birth anniversary, what rises is not just a celebration, but a shiver, a stillness, the feeling of being watched by a ghost who once understood us more than we understand ourselves.

Guru Dutt's legacy is not confined to reels and awards; it is sewn into the very air of Indian artistry. He was a conjurer of melancholy, a cartographer of emotional wastelands, and a sculptor of silence. And if cinema is truly a mirror to the soul, then Guru Dutt's mirror was cracked, but endlessly beautiful.

### A Universe in Three Minutes

Born as Vasantha Kumar Shivashankar Padukone in Bangalore in 1925, the man who would become Guru Dutt was destined not for ordinariness, but for something haunting, something half-lit. He was shaped by art and yearning. The deep, unspoken yearning that would define his life and work. He emerged into cinema as a seer, someone who understood that cinema was less about telling stories and more about revealing truths too fragile to articulate.

His debut as a director, Baazi (1951), blended crime and sensuality with a noirish texture that was rare for its time. It was stylish, but beneath its stylish veneer lay a restless moral ambiguity. In Jaal (1952), betrayal twisted through the frames like smoke. Meanwhile, Aar-Paar (1954) was sparkled with wit and rhythm. Its frames bustling with streetwise romance and sly politics. These were not just genre films; they were preludes to a much deeper plunge. Each of them revealed a filmmaker who wasn't interested in spectacle alone. He sought the soul.

His cinema never leaned on feeling. Every shadow he painted was deliberate. Every silence had a pulse. His camera was a confession, and the screen his altar.

### When the Frame Became Flesh

In time, Guru Dutt could no longer stay behind the lens; he stepped into the light and became one with it. His presence on screen was not theatrical. He never screamed to be seen, yet his silences screamed louder than most dialogues. In Baaz (1953), his swashbuckling hero hinted at a simmering complexity. Mr. & Mrs. '55 (1955), a sparkling satire on modernity and marriage, was playful on the surface, but heartbreakingly aware of a world losing its innocence. Beneath the humour lay a sobering critique of emotional erosion, and in his eyes danced the quiet despair of a romantic born into an age of cynics. But it was in Pyaasa (1957) that the divide between actor and auteur completely collapsed. Guru Dutt did not just portray Vijay, he embodied a poet alienated by a society that no longer recognised the value of dreams. The film felt like a requiem. Each sequence dripped with existential dread and quiet rebellion.

"Jinhe Naaz Hai Hind Par Woh Kahan Hain" felt like a national indictment, delivered with disappointment. "Jaane Woh Kaise Log The" carried the ache of a lover and the exhaustion of a seeker. And when he walked through applause in "Yeh Duniya Agar Mil Bhi Jaaye Toh Kya Hai," dead-eyed and unsaved, it felt as though God himself had turned his back on the world. Very few moments in the cinema sting like that one, because it is not just a character giving up, it is the dreamer in all of us retreating into shadows.

### A Mirror Too Honest

Two years later, Kaagaz Ke Phool (1959) arrived like a sob. It was India's first film in Cinemascope, but its grandeur only heightened its ache. The film was not merely a reflection of a man losing control; it was a prophecy. Guru Dutt as Suresh Sinha, a once-revered filmmaker slipping into irrelevance, was not acting. He was predicting his own fall. Empty studios, echoing applause, backstage shadows, everything in Kaagaz Ke Phool was a meditation on mortality and forgotten greatness.

"Waqt Ne Kiya Kya Haseen Sitam" is the whisper of time itself. The spotlight at the end, dimming slowly into blackness, is a requiem for relevance. It is one of cinema's most painful metaphors. The film was a box office failure, and its rejection wounded Guru Dutt deeply.

### The Gaze in Absence

Though his directorial ventures were few, his impact radiated far beyond what he helmed. As an actor in Sone Ki Chidiya and 12 O'Clock, he performed with a stillness that rarely made itself felt in Bollywood then. He never sought to overwhelm a scene. His performance, always tempered, always internal, drew the viewer in like a confession.

Chaudhvin Ka Chand (1960), which he produced and starred in, was drenched in classical lyricism. The beauty of its visuals and emotions carried the imprint of his sensitivity. And in Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam (1962), though directed by his trusted associate Abrar Alvi, his presence is in every corner of the decaying haveli. As Bhootnath, he watches the disintegration of Chhoti Bahu, as a witness to a dying culture, to femininity crushed under tradition, to love that arrives too late. His gaze, even in absence, remained. He began Baharen Phir Bhi Aayengi (1966) but was gone before it could be completed.



## Songs as Souls

No other filmmaker in India used music the way Guru Dutt did. For him, songs were pivotal, poetic revelations. He didn't use music to sell a film; he used it to undress his characters. His collaborations with Sahir Ludhianvi, Kaifi Azmi, Geeta Dutt, Hemant Kumar, O.P. Nayyar, and S.D. Burman gave rise to some of the most piercing compositions in cinematic history. "Hum Aapki Aankhon Mein Is Dil Ko Basa Dein" was a longing to dissolve, to disappear into the beloved, to be seen entirely or not at all. His romanticism carried the weight of surrender, of wanting not possession, but annihilation in another. Each song was a soliloquy. Each lyric is a psychological map. He staged them like prayers and like prayers, they never really ended; they lingered, unanswered but unforgettable.

## Behind the Curtain of Collapse

Guru Dutt's personal life bore the same intensity as his films. His marriage to Geeta Dutt, though steeped in creative magic, was fraught with emotional disconnect. The man who gave us cinema's most articulate grief could not find words to bridge his own domestic silences. She sang his pain, but he couldn't soothe hers.

On October 10, 1964, he was found dead. Alcohol and sleeping pills had claimed him. Whether it was deliberate or accidental, the world lost a flame too fragile to sustain itself. He was only 39, but he had lived a hundred lives through his characters, and offered the world a century's worth of pain, poetry, and transcendence.

And yet, he left behind no ruins. He left temples. Shrines where sorrow is sacred, and silence is not empty, but holy.

## A Legacy Lit by Shadows

Today, as we mark the centenary of his birth, Guru Dutt returns in flickers, in half-lit hallways, in monsoon-soaked balconies, in the final notes of a fading ghazal. He returns whenever we look at suffering without turning away. He returns whenever art dares to be more than escape.

His cinema was never about resolution. It was about resonance and endurance. They revealed the bruises we carry, betrayals we bury, and the dreams we no longer admit to dreaming.

Guru Dutt Sahaab remains the patron saint of the lonely, the unclaimed, the idealists gasping in pragmatic times.

### Writer's Note:

To write about Guru Dutt Sahaab is to wander through a mirror that reflects not just the artist, but the ache of those who dared to feel deeply. His cinema asked for introspection. It didn't just demand your gaze; it demanded your vulnerability.

I remember watching Pyaasa in a quiet room, the light fading, the world outside muffled. As "Yeh Duniya Agar Mil Bhi Jaaye" played, something inside me broke with recognition. I had never seen despair look so dignified.

His death was not an ending. It was an unfinished sentence that millions of hearts have tried to complete in the decades since. He gave us films that ferment. They deepen with each viewing, becoming relevant, painful and necessary.

In Guru Dutt's world, silence was presence, distilled. Love was prayer. Failure was truth unveiled.

Thank you, Guru Dutt Sahaab, for giving us that truth, wrapped in shadows, poetry and light. Thank you for making cinema a sanctuary for those of us who love too deeply, cry too quietly and hope too foolishly.



# कभी न जाओ छोड़ कर

By Mansi Singh

26 सितम्बर था और साल था 1923 का,  
जन्म हुआ “India’s most charismatic actor” देव आनंद का।

देव साहब का जन्म हुआ एक पंजाबी हिंदू परिवार में,  
जहाँ माँ रहती थीं अक्सर बीमार और पिताजी बड़े खेलते थे।

अपनी माँ को बीमार देखकर वो हमेशा उदास रहते थे,  
पर पिता से दिल की बात कहने से बो बड़ा डरते थे।

इसी तनाव के बीच कोई उन्हें पुकार रही थी,  
अगले ही दिन उन्होंने पहली टिकट बॉक्स की ली।

बॉक्स ने भले ही उन्हें पुकारा,  
पर ना था उनके पास छत, ना दो रोटी का सहारा।

किसी ने उनसे कहा, “अच्छे तो दिखते हो, क्यों नहीं अपनाते एकिंग को?”  
कॉन्फिंडेंस तो बचपन से था उनके अंदर,  
पर पहले ही ऑडिशन में रिजेक्ट कर दिया, कहकर

“अपने टूटे दाँत को तो सुधारो, उभरते सिकंदर।”

~ “मैं तो बनूँगा superstar, अपने टूटे हुए दाँत से।”  
पहुँच गए, P.L. Studio, ठान कर, “Role लेकर ही रहूँगा हाथ में।”

~ “21 साल का नौजवान हूँ, confident हूँ, अभिनेता में और किस चीज़ की तलाश है?”  
P.L. साहब को देव साहब इतने पसंद आए कि “Hum Ek Hain” से debut हुई, और अब सब इतिहास है।

ना पहली, ना दूसरी, तीसरी फिल्म “Ziddi” ने बना दिया उन्हें superhit,  
थिएटर्स हुए हाउसफुल, और देव साहब थे एव्री गलर्स’ हार्टबीट।

“Baazi, Taxi Driver और CID” से Dev Sahab बन गए हर लोगों की पहली पसंद,  
कभी कोई रांझा बना तो कभी फिसले कोई हीर,

जब-जब आते थे वो लेकर अपना ब्लैक सूट,  
गुरुत्वास्त्रों वाली मुस्कराहट कर देते थे सभी को अपना आशिक, हर दिल को चीर।

“Guide” से तो उन्होंने जीत लिया पूरे हिंदुस्तान का दिल,  
इसलिए, अब भी दिल देव साहब को पुकार, और वहीं है सभी की मंज़िल।

काम के साथ-साथ ज़िन्दगी के कई तनावों ने उन्हें कई रातों तक जगाया,  
ना मुकम्मल होने वाले प्यार ने भी बड़े दर्द से सताया।

कभी याद आती थी “माँ”, कभी सालों तक वो एक “लड़की” हर इंटरव्यू में उन्होंने बताया,  
किसने रोका देव साहब की धड़कनों को?  
किसने की ये रुसवाई?  
तब नाम “Suraiya” जुबान पे आया।

दोनों पागलों की हद तक चाहते थे एक-दूसरे को,  
पर एक था हिंदू और एक मुस्लिम, तो कैसे ये शादी लोगों को रजामंद हो!

बिछड़ गए जिन्होंने साथ निभाने की कसमें खाई थीं,  
पर देव साहब ने भी कभी पीछे ना मुड़ने की कसम ली।

वो ज़िन्दगी का साथ निभाते चले गए,  
तभी कल्पना जी से “Baazi” के सेट पर हुई उनकी मुलाकात।  
और शादी के बंधन में बंध गए हमारे देव साहब।

पर शादी के बाद भी कभी जीनत अमन, कभी हेमा ने छेड़े उनके दिल के तार,  
पर अब उनका लक्ष्य था लाना एक नए दौर का सिनेमा, और तोड़ना वो पुरानी माँ-बेटे वाली दीवार।

Hare Krishna Hare Rama से लेकर Johnny Mera Naam,  
उन्होंने खुद तो सिनेमा बदला ही, पर दिए कई नई फेसेस को इंडस्ट्री में काम।

वक्त गुज़रा, दौर बदला, पर देव साहब कभी नहीं रुकते थे,  
फ्लॉप के बाद भी उस दौर के आगे वाली स्क्रिप्ट खुद बैठकर लिखते थे।

उनका कहना था, “भले ही फिल्म flop हो;  
मैं audience को एक नई चीज़ देंगा,  
भले ही वो अब ना समझें;  
पर आगे की Generation के लिए अपनी स्क्रिप्ट लिखूँगा।”

इसलिए आप अक्सर देखेंगे, लोग उनकी डायलाग डिलीवरी और लुक्स पर तो मरते थे,  
पर उनके फिल्म की चर्चा बहुत कम करते थे।

उनका कहना था, “ज़िन्दगी रुकती नहीं, और ना ही मैं रुकूँगा,  
जब तक camera चल रहा है, मैं ज़िंदा रहूँगा।”

और देखो... वो सही थे, 2011 में वो दुनिया छोड़ गए,  
पर दिल से उनके नामे और वो कभी नहीं गए।

आज भी जब कोई स्कार्फ लेकर ब्लैक कोट में नज़र आए,  
या कोई “Abhi Na Jao Chhod Kar” गुनगुनाए,  
तो हम सभी को एक बार फिर देव साहब मुस्कुराते, याद आए।

# परदे के पीछे की परछाई बन गए।

By Sanskruti Jadhav

सुंदर सा एक महल दिखता है,  
हजारों करोड़ों में वह बिकता है,  
उस महल में किरदार है कई,  
हर किरदार की एक कहानी नयी।

महल के अंदर है एक बड़ा सा पर्दा,  
चौबीसों घंटे घमे जैसे हो चरखा।  
उस पर्दे के आगे कोई,  
कोई पीछे खड़ा रहता है।

पर्दे पर जैसे पड़ी रोशनी,  
कई चकाचौंधी हो गए और बाकी बचे  
उसी पर्दे के पीछे की परछाई बन गए।

सामने चमकता हुआ एक सितारा बन गया,  
कस्सों का, मेहमानों का पटारा बन गया।  
लेकिन कभी किसी ने उनसे न पूछा,  
जो पर्दे के पीछे की परछाई बन गए।

कैसी दिखती है वो रोशनी,  
उस पर्दे के पीछे से?

जवाब आया,  
“ऊँचा होकर भी, ऊँचाई दिखती है,  
किसी के पैरों के नीचे से,  
बस हाथ में कुछ सामान लिए,  
यहाँ-वहाँ भटकना पड़ता है  
और जहाँ कही वो सितारे मुड़े,  
वहां को मुड़ना पड़ता है।”

खुद का ना कोई सवाल है,  
फिर भी जवाब ढूँढ़ते रहते।  
उस महल के पर्दे के पीछे,  
चुपचाप कितना कुछ सहते।  
कभी कोई कुछ बोल दे,  
कभी कोई डाँट दे  
लेकिन कहानी पर्दे पर उतरती है,  
जब ये सारे साथ दे।

पर्दे के पीछे रहकर भी,  
कितना बड़ा किरदार निभाया  
और इनकी मेहनत का  
कैसे यकाया जाए कोई किराया?  
सितारों की चमक को इन्होंने संभाला,  
अपनी चमक को दूर रखकर

और पर्दे के पीछे से  
वही रोशनी को, चुपचाप ये ताकते,  
सवाल तो कई सारे हैं, इल्जाम भी कई है।  
बस सोचना बाकी है  
कि पर्दे की कहानी इनकी ज्ञाँकी है।



# I AM AN ACTOR

By Kiana Pavri

I am an actor,  
Every day I have a new name,  
Each moment is a different game.

I am an actor,  
I speak what the writers tell me,  
But my heart is like a rock in the midst of a stormy sea.

Every day I am someone else,  
I continuously break and build myself,  
This is the life I chose for myself,  
This is what I am destined to do.

The world is my stage,  
And I don't have a retirement age,  
I live on in the hearts of people,  
And on the doors of the cupboards,  
You see me even on billboards,  
No one knows what I truly feel.

Believe me, my heart is not made of steel,  
Sometimes I, too, crave a normal meal,  
To lead the life everyone leads.

# The Joke Is On Us

By Twisha Vora

Patched, uneven bricks form narrow lanes,  
Smoke flows from wooden planks to makeshift chimneys.  
Distant honks, dogs bark, a train rumbles through.

A place squished by people,  
Yet somehow... entertaining.

Music upbeat, rhythm, a scale,  
Voices too cranky; make our day.  
Sharp pointed nose, ratios too bad,  
Distorted perspective, colors too sad.

A cube perfectly pieced,  
To show what we try to hide.  
The camera captures all,  
Yet shows only the curated side.  
We mistake the gloss for truth,  
Deceived by how long it took to prepare.

Their problems seem distant,  
The world shown in an arc.  
I might have same issues,  
But this makes my thoughts vain.

A power to create so much,  
To create a new realm with no fuss.  
But the hands sometimes show us,  
What we truly don't touch.

In a rigged life they show a scene of distress,  
But looking at which,  
Why doesn't it evoke that?  
I ask myself:  
Why do I laugh at their pain?  
Isn't this a warning, a mirror, a check?  
But my mind folds it as comedy,  
Like the screen trained it to.

Too many problems, too many ways to show them,  
But why doesn't this one sting,  
Like the thorn of a rose?  
A metaphor of humanity,  
Mirrors us on the screen of life.

This animated verse that told so deep,  
Shows the dark side in a funny spotlight.  
It tried to carry weight,  
But was boxed into humor.  
A punchline delivered,  
Where a scream was meant.



Behind every polished cover lies a world of candid pauses, the quiet adjustments, shared glances, and unplanned laughter that may not claim the cover, but still find their place in the story we print.



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