

INDIA'S LIVING GODDESSES

THE WOMEN IN BOLLYWOOD



12-28 MAY 2017

CINEMATEKET (COPENHAGEN)

ØST FOR PARADIS (AARHUS)

IN COLLABORATION WITH EMBASSY OF INDIA





The Role



Queen

FILMS, FEMININITY AND FINITUDE

From Fatma Begum, India's first formidable female film producer-director-actor, who launched her own production house Fatma Films and directed the silent film 'Bulbul-e-Paristan' in 1926 to Leena Yadav, the producer-director of 'Parched' in 2015, is a fascinating cinematographic journey that India has negotiated through colonial and post-colonial times. And by now, it is almost a century-old story.

The post-independent India had its first official census in 1951 which recorded the overall literacy rate at 18 percent of which the male-female ratio was glaringly uneven – 27 to 8. And even though the literacy rate in 2011 rose substantially to 74 %, the gender gap still remained glaring. During this period the economic parameters have also undergone a substantial change with the phenomenal rise of the middle-classes – and yet disparities remain and paradoxes persist!

In the field of filmmaking, more women have entered – as directors, cinematographers, editors, art directors and other branches, besides of course acting. Over the years,

the process of urbanization has picked up rapidly and widely and all these factors went on to impact the nature and character of Indian cinema. Digital technology went on democratizing filmmaking, turning it easier as well as more economical. More women entered the filmmaking arena, making short films, documentaries and animation films of their choices and commitments.

The present film program, in some ways, has this curatorial imagination in mind – to reflect the changes in the screen persona of the woman and to see how even popular Indian cinema does that. Bollywood is a kind of generic banyan tree, having its sobriquetorial branches all over the world – wood, wood, wood!

On timeline, the present program spans over almost four decades – between 1977 and 2015; between the veteran and world-renowned director Shyam Benegal's seminal film 'The Role'/'Bhumika' to much younger Leena Yadav's 'Parched'. Of the 12 films, two are documentaries: 'Original Copy' and 'The Cinema Travellers', both 2016. The ten

regular feature films have a fascinating variety of female persona, broadly defying the conventional stereotypes. They wield refreshing verve, vigor and vivacity.

Only two, 'The Role' and 'Mirch Masala', adapt literary works. 'The Role' is an autobiography of an actress while 'Mirch Masala' is based on a short story, both coming from different regions of India, Maharashtra and Gujarat, and both imbued with universal ethos.

The rest of the feature films are fairly recent and they show the new face of the Indian woman and womanhood; they are not veiled, not subservient, they are self-willed and desirous of fulfilling their feminine aspirations on their own, whether from a city or from a village. This is the cinema of new awakening and yet there are miles to go before we sleep – under the banyan...

Amrit Gangar
Film historian-curator



FRI 12/5 18:30 (OPENING) + WED 17/5 19:00

PARCHED

Leena Yadav, 2015 / eng subs / 116 min.

In a desert village in Rajasthan, plagued by age-old social evils and burdened by traditions and practices of patriarchy, lives four women. Desiring freedom, they unite and in the process navigate their way through personal and cultural roadblocks. "A drama about female subjugation and liberation that plays first like a horror story, then like a rosy fantasy" (Variety). Meet the director Leena Yadav on the 12th of May, with Bollywood dance and Indian refreshments after the film.

SUN 14/5 16:00

THE ROLE

Shyam Benegal, 1977 / eng subs / 144 min.



Usha is taught music by her grandmother. She tries to become a film actress as a child and eventually becomes a star in adulthood, a trajectory inflected by the four men she meets at various points in her life: a husband, a narcissistic male co-star, an effete filmmaker with whom she makes an unsuccessful suicide pact, and the landowner whose second wife she becomes. Many aspects of the story allow the question of women's oppression to be raised.

SAT 13/5 16:15

MIRCH MASALA

Ketan Mehta, 1987 / eng subs / 128 min.

Despotic tax collector Subedar imposes his rule on a village. He dresses in a way that evokes British 19th century catchpenny prints and Daumier's cartoons. All the villagers try to satisfy his whim, except for the protesting schoolteacher. The drama starts when the beautiful Sonbai is to be surrendered to the lecherous Subedar. She takes refuge in the courtyard of a spice factory run entirely by women.

THU 18/5 19:00 + FRI 19/5 18:30 (AARHUS)

KAHAANI

Sujoy Ghosh / eng subs / 122 min.



'Kahaani' explores the themes of feminism and motherhood in a male-dominated Indian society. A poison gas attack on a Kolkata Metro Rail compartment kills many passengers on board. Two years later Vidya, a pregnant software engineer, arrives in Kolkata during the Durga puja festivities in search of her missing husband. A police officer offers to help her but in the process gets attracted towards her. The story gets more entangled...



English Vinglish

SUN 28/5 19:00

ENGLISH VINGLISH*Gauri Shinde, 2012 / eng subs / 133 min.*

In middle-class India, money, fame and knowledge of the English language are the three factors that play a major role in how society judges an individual. The film narrates a story of a woman who does not know English and is made to feel insecure by her family and society at large. She gets determined to overcome her linguistic handicap and is able to teach the world a lesson and prove how self-assured and confident woman she is.

SAT 20/5 16:15 + SUN 21/5 19:00 (AARHUS)

MARY KOM*Omung Kumar, 2014 / eng subs / 122 min.*

Queen

The film is a chronicle of the life of Mangte Chunge-neijang Marykom, better known as M.C., an Indian female boxer, who went through several hardships before audaciously accomplishing her ultimate dream. A hopeful and young fighter Mary Kom approaches an ageing, grizzled trainer, who declines to take on the newcomer. But eventually he does and she becomes renowned.

SAT 20/5 17:00 (AARHUS) + SUN 21/5 16:30

QUEEN*Vikas Bahl, 2014 / eng subs / 146 min.*

At its core, the film 'Queen' is about growing up. Rani is a Delhi girl from a conservative family who is ditched by her fiancé just before their wedding. Shocked by this, she decides to set out on the planned honeymoon alone. As she travels the world and meets new people, she keeps on gaining new experiences and in the process discovers her own identity.



NH10

SAT 20/05 19:00

NH10*Navdeep Singh, 2015 / eng subs / 115 min.*

Working in Gurgaon (near Delhi), Meera and Arjun are happily married. One night when both of them are partying, Meera is called in for some emergency work and she drives to her destination alone. On the way she is mugged. Later, she obtains a licensed gun as a means of protecting herself. This is when Arjun tries to ease things off by planning to celebrate Meera's birthday in a private villa on National Highway (NH) 10.



THU 25/5 18:30

NEERJA

Ram Madhvani, 2016 / eng subs / 122 min.

'Neerja' is a biopic of the courageous 23-year-old flight purser Neerja Bhanot. It narrates this real-life story around a terrorist organization's hijacking of PanAm Flight 73 in Karachi on September 5th 1986. At the risk of her life, the young Neerja fought bravely with the terrorists and was able to save 359 of the 379 passengers and crew on board. An extraordinary story of an extraordinary young Indian woman.

FRI 26/5 19:15

THE CINEMA TRAVELLERS

Shirley Abraham, Amit Madheshiya, 2016 / eng subs / 96 min.

Showmen riding cinema lorries have brought the wonder of the movies to faraway villages in India once every year. Now their cinema projectors crumble, film reels become scarce and their patrons are lured by slick digital technology. The magic of watching films on the big, fluttering canvas is brought to life in this beautiful and lively documentary about India's travelling cinemas.



SAT 27/5 16:45

ORIGINAL COPY

Florian Heinzen-Ziob, Georg Heinzen, 2015 / eng subs / 95 min.

Bollywood stars shine larger than life in the one-of-a-kind hand painted Indian cinema posters. In the heart of Mumbai lives Sheikh Rehman, the city's last painter of film posters. His studio is run in the old master's style – behind the screen of 'Alfred Talkies', an old Hindi-Film cinema. Rehman is both artist and guru, comedian and philosopher and reflects in this beautiful documentary on his supposedly obsolete profession.





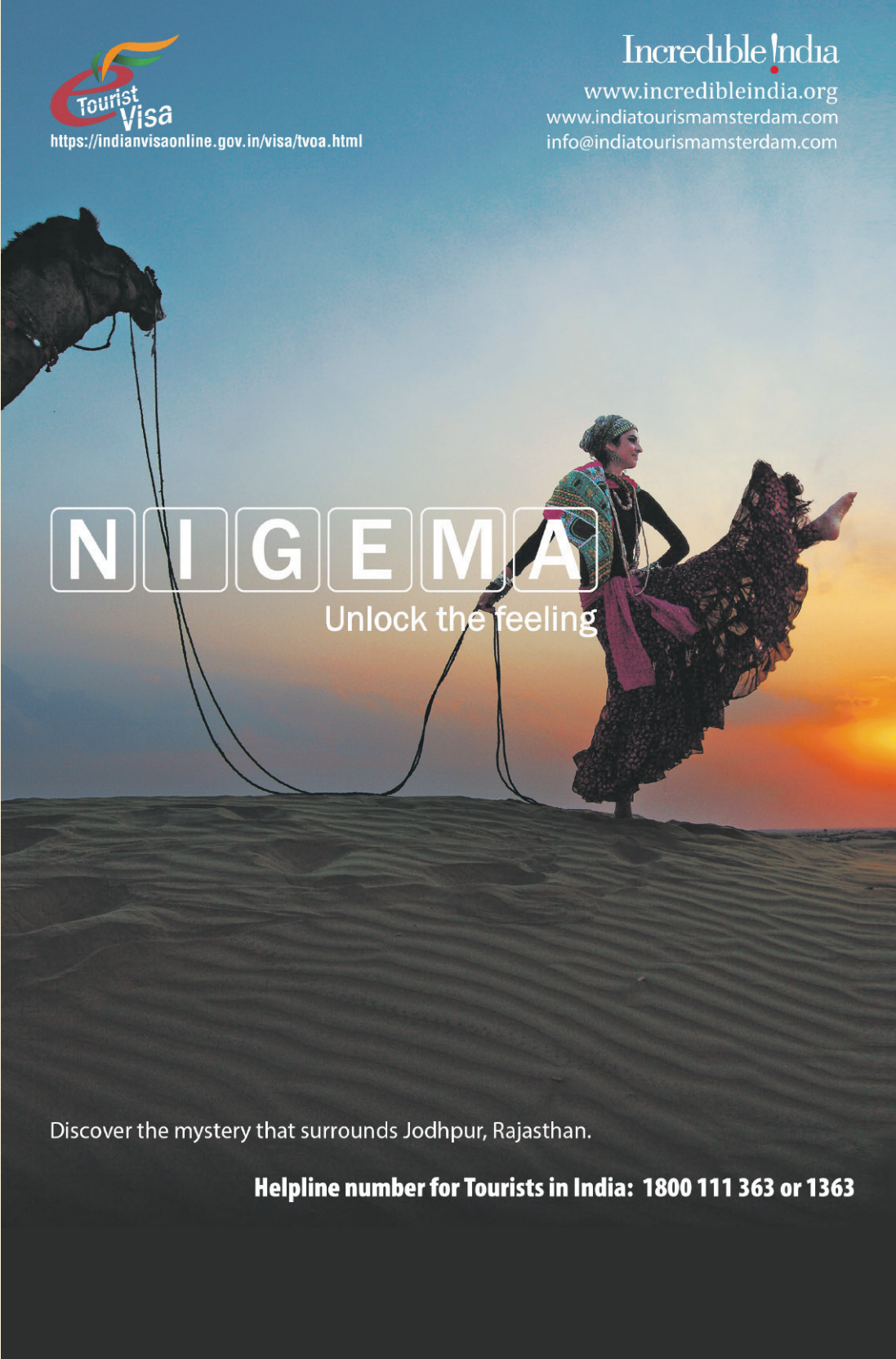
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PARCHED

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SUN 14/05 16:00

THE ROLE

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SUN 21/05 19:00

MARY KOM



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