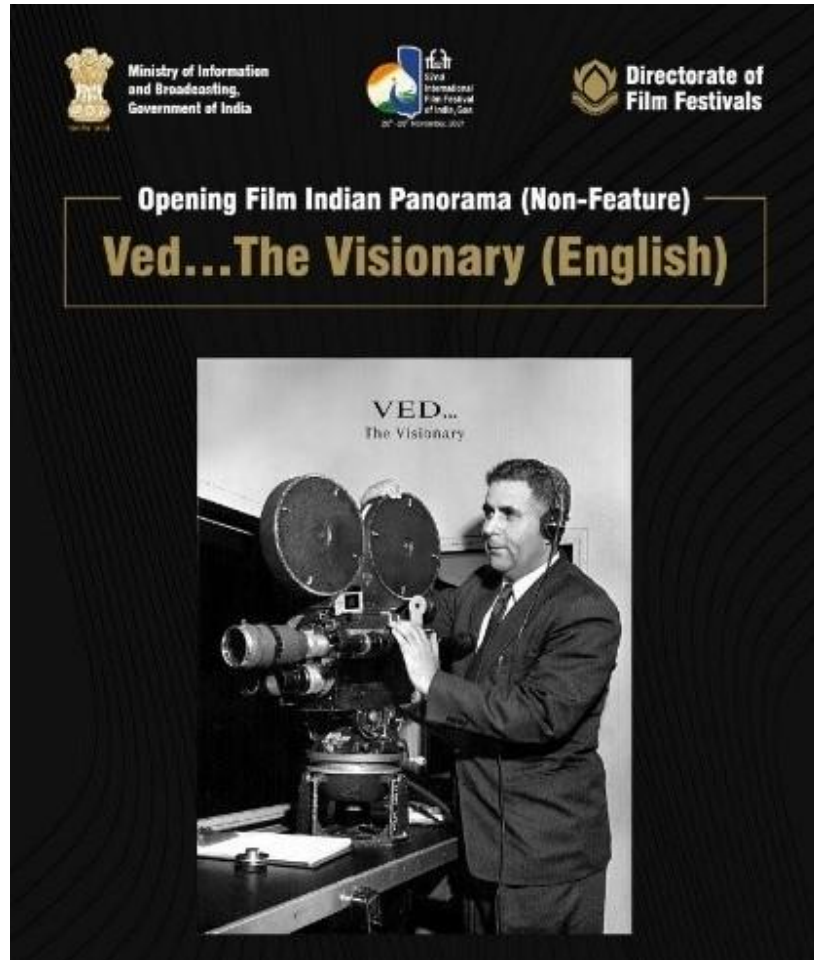


Jury Review

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Indian Panorama 2021: Non-Feature Films



We all know that Indian Panorama is a flagship component of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), under which the best films of contemporary Indian cinema are selected for the promotion of film art. As a member of the Non-Feature Film Jury for the Indian Panorama of 52nd International Film Festival of India, we watched 203 films during October 10-20, 2021. In this category, we found four types of films – documentary, docu-fiction, short fiction, and animated films. We also found various types of documentary films such as biographical, ethnographic/anthropological, art and culture, social issues, environment, exploration, and adventure. Some biographical documentary films were outstanding.

Rajiv Parkash's directorial venture *Ved- The Visionary* is a well-researched, well-documented film with great cinematic narration. This film tells the wonderful journey of an internationally acclaimed news cameraman Ved Parkash. He beautifully covered lots of historically important moments of pre-Independence and post-Independence India. Ved Parkash's extraordinary works included the news coverage of Mahatma Gandhi's funeral, which was nominated for the British Academy Awards in 1949; the change of power when India became independent; the tragedy that followed India's partition, etc. These rare clippings of the past are beautifully projected in the film. In short, this film is a great model of historical documentation, while it portrays with much

sensitivity Ved Parkash as a human being. This film was the opening film of the Indian Panorama 2021.

Haobam Paban Kumar's biographical documentary film *Pabung Syam* is based on the life of the pioneer of Manipuri Cinema Aribam Syam Sharma. As a director, singer, music composer, Aribam's contribution to Manipuri Cinema is unparalleled. Excellent narratives styles along with evocative visualization of the life and works of Aribam make this film a good piece of Art. Ashoke Viswanathan's biographical documentary *Badal Sircar & Alternative Theatre* presents the journey of Badal Sircar as playwright and director. The film explores the relevance and impact of Alternative Theatre in the global context. It features debate among the experts on the theory and practice of Alternative Theatre or the Third Theatre. It is a thought-provoking and well-documented polemical documentary.

Among the women-centric and inspirational docu-fiction, we liked the Assamese film *Veerangana*. It is based on India's first female commando force. This film portrays the impactful activities of the female commando force and their role in effectively dealing with crime against women. The well-scripted narrative is a significant aspect of this film. Satish Pande's English documentary *Surmounting Challenges* is based on the engineering and socio-political challenges that were encountered during the construction of the Delhi metro corridors. Its sincere documentation of some important socio-technological issues are highly appreciable. The graphics works of this film are outstanding. Lipika Singh Daria's Oriya film *Backstage* is based on the tradition and transition of the puppetry art form of Odisha. The film explores the life and times of three veteran puppeteers who have contributed to the growth and survival of the forms. One of them after 25 years of silence wants to rebuild a troupe. Now, he starts traveling and performing searching for a new audience. It is an informative, thought-provoking, and well-documented film.

The content of Chetan Bhakuni's *Jugalbandi* is purely abstract. The content signifies that peace and satisfaction can be acquired through the involvement with pure art and the Guru of that art. An intimate

portrayal of Indian classical music along with a beautiful image of Bhimsen Joshi makes the film worth watching. Sohil Vaidya's Marathi film *Murmurs of the Jungle* reflects the spiritual relationship of human and nature. In this film, the filmmaker personified the "Jungle". It makes the film interesting. The film is also marked by evocative visualization of nature. The story of Bharat, values of Indian culture and Yoga have been beautifully shown with some archaeological, historical, and textual testimonies in Dr. Deepika Kothari's directorial venture *Bharat-Prakriti Ka Balak*. In the end, the film asks- having lost the culture to communicate with nature, have we truly progressed?

Jai Prakash's *Ganga-Putra* has also been an outstanding film. The film documents the life of social worker Rajaram Tiwari who helmed the "Khoya Paya Sibir" (Lost & Found Camp) at Prayagraj in 1946. He worked in 5 Maha Kumbha Mela, 7 Ardhha Kumbha Mela and 54 Magh Melas. Through the Bengali short film *Naad-The Sound*, the filmmaker tries to say whatever shape we give the children in their early growing days, they eventually grow up to take that shape and acquire the habits. The cinematic narration of the film is also noteworthy.

Santali language short fiction *Witch* explores the theme of witch-hunting. An artistic exploration of the theme makes this film special for us. Gujarati language short fiction *The Spell of Purple* mesmerized us for its excellent cinematic aesthetics and women-centric content. The content of Subhas Sahoo's *Teen Adhyay* symbolizes the ancient Indian philosophy of existence and its deeper meaning. Rahul Rawat's directorial venture *Sunpat* has been made in the Garhwali language. The story of the film beautifully reveals the struggles of villages in the mountains.

Tamil language short fiction *Sweet Biriyani* deals with the pain of an educated food delivery boy. Contemporary content with the humanistic approach of the filmmaker makes this film worth watching. The content of Abhijeet Sarathi's *Bablu Babylon Se* signifies some serious socio-environmental issues. We liked it for the sensitivity and feel for the subject expressed in its effective cinematic style. Loneliness is the main theme of Ananta Narayan Mahadevan's

The Knocker. The director aesthetically presents how loneliness and isolation affect human psychology. Sanghamitra Chaudhuri's *Sainbari to Sandeshkhali* is a well-researched Bengali film where the filmmaker speaks about political killings in West Bengal in the last 50 years. Hindi short fiction *Gajra*, directed by Vineet Sharma is a story of aristocrat Mr. Agarwal and his humble chauffer Ramakant. The filmmaker presents two different lives. Presenting binary opposition, the director makes the content of the film very attractive.

As per the DFF guideline, out of 203 films, we selected these 20 films. Indeed, it was a tough job. Apart from these selected 20 films, there are lots of good films in the non-feature film category. For example, Mohiuddin Mirza's film *Jhelum-The Restless Bard*. It attracted me for its lyrical quality and serenity. Filmmaker, Critic, Curator Aruna Vasudev's outstanding contribution to Asian Cinema is effectively portrayed in Supriya Suri's *Aruna Vasudev- Mother of Asian Cinema*. She created serious local film critics along with the readers through her magazine "Cinemaya". It is one of her great contributions towards the development of the tradition of the culture of writings on cinema. Engaging Cinematic narrative is one of the positive aspects of the film.

Vivek Tewani's *Hatti-we exist* is a very impressive film for effectively portraying the life, society, culture, and struggle of "Hatti" -a tribal community of Himachal Pradesh. English film *Uru-The space* is a thought-provoking film. The filmmaker tries to say that our outer, measurable, physical space of action influences our inner and psychological space of thought. Engaging narrative style with effective graphics makes the film very special for me. The theme of the short, animated film *Megha* is child abasement. The brilliant use of

metaphor and cinematic techniques makes this film a good piece of art.

A girl's selflessness, humanistic attitude, courage to accept the challenge, sacrifices has been beautifully portrayed in Amit Sharma's *Pooja Didi-Facebook*. The theme of the film advocates women's empowerment. Effects of Covid-19 along with woman empowerment are the main themes of Marathi language short fiction *Vaarasa*. Marathi language short fiction *Panadya* reflects upon the spiritual relationship between humans and nature through a nine-year-old boy. Engaging storytelling is the positive aspect of this film.

As a juror, I noticed that Indian Panorama regulations assert that a feature's running time is above 70 minutes. But I found lots of above 70 minutes fiction films are available in the non-feature film screening schedule. For example, P.N. Ramchandra's Kannada film *R for Roshan's Childhood*. The regulation says short fiction will be considered in the non-feature category. But, according to regulation, 77 minutes' film cannot be short fiction. We know the notion of how long a feature film/non-feature film should be, has varied according to time and place. For example, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science, American Film Institute, and British Film Institute consider a film feature which duration is more than 40 minutes. On the other hand, Screen Actors Guild advocates that a feature film's duration is 75 minutes or longer. However, at the valedictory session, we recommended three points- 1) Films selected under Indian Panorama, and National Film Awards should be telecast on DD National. The government of India should reintroduce this provision. 2) Films selected under Indian Panorama, and National Film Awards should be mandatory for cinema halls/multiplexes across India to be showcased. 3) Government of India may launch a TV channel only for non-feature films.

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