

Interview with I. Shanmughadas

**G.P. Ramachandran**

**Cinema: Inside and Out**



*G P Ramachandran speaks to I. Shanmughadas, the renowned film critic who has won the second Satyajit Ray award for the wholesome contribution to film criticism instituted by Fipresci India.*

I. Shanmughadas is an eminent critic who has made a name for himself in the field of Malayalam film criticism and has won national and state film awards, apart from the Kerala Sahitya Akademi award. Having served as an English lecturer in various

government colleges, he became a full-time film critic after retirement. His works include ‘Malakalil manjupeyunnu’, ‘Cinemayude Vazhiyil’, ‘Sanchariyude Veedu’, ‘Aaraanu Budhanallathathu’, ‘Godard: Cola-kkum Marxinum Naduvil’, ‘P Ramadas-

*Vidhyarthiyude Vazhi*, *'Cinemayum chila Samvidhayakarum'*, *'Shareeram Nadhi Nakshathram'*.

**G.P. Ramachandran:** Have you ever felt that the general public does not take film criticism seriously enough?

**I. Shanmughadas:** Film criticism does not seem to be facing any such disapproval. A few years ago, poet D.Vinayachandran wrote in a weekly edition that the problem among us is that people do not see Shanmughadas, who writes on Malayalam cinema, or CR Rajagopalan, who writes on folk knowledge, as critics. However, I think there has been a lot of change from thereon. One of the reasons for this may be the place given to film writing and the special status it receives along with the national and state-level film awards. In Kerala, maybe as a part of film society activities, a significant shift happened when the articles and books about cinema were added to the syllabi. Though it started at Jadavpur University, here in Kerala, we have discussions about cinema from the school level. Also, the inclusion of post-graduate courses in film studies at Malayalam University, Tirur, can be considered a significant achievement.

**G.P:** Sunny Joseph, renowned cinematographer, once said that film studies had been taught in schools and colleges in China and Iran. Now Kerala, too, is on that path. What do you feel?

**Shanmughadas:** We must have reached this stage in Kerala as part of the work of the Film Societies and advancement in the study of literature. In Iran, many talented filmmakers have made films as if they were children's

films, with the idea of evading government censorship. Kiarostami and Majid Majidi have adopted such ways. The influence of the neorealist movement is evident in Iranian cinema. It is said that the Iranian new wave started with the film Dauriesh Mehrooji's 'Cow' (Gow). It's about a person's relationship with a cow. The influence of Indian cinema is also present in Iranian cinema. Hollywood's influence was evident during Shah's rule. So, the general opposition to the cinema in Iran then was part of the opposition to the United States. It can be said that there is another resistance to Hollywood in parallel cinema. Many subtle elements can be seen in Iranian cinema with great care. While celebrating the centenary of cinema around the world in the nineties, Mohsen Makhmalbaf is making a film called 'Salam Cinema', with Iranian people's connection to cinema as its central theme. Makhmalbaf made a notice to recruit actors for a film where thousands gathered in front of his office. The movie 'Actor' also came out at that time.

**G.P:** What else is unique about Iranian cinema?

**Shanmughadas:** Godard says that the best film blends the currents of documentary cinema with the style of storytelling. This style can be clearly seen in the movies of Abbas Kiarostami. In other words, Iranian cinema has proven to be one of the best among modern films. Godard says that the film begins with Griffith and ends with Kiarostami.

**G.P:** There are many types of writing in Malayalam, such as film review, criticism,

studies and research. What category do you think your writing belongs to?

**Shanmughadas:** My writing lies somewhere between film criticism and academia. My writing started way before many types of research in academic spaces and cinema writing and its criteria set by universities. My reading made my writing. At the same time, there were very few opportunities to watch movies that we wanted to during that time. The only way is to attend film festivals. Then I started getting cassettes of some movies, which will cost about 100 rupees even to copy it. Now things are much more accessible. Everyone has a collection of hundreds; some even have thousands of movies. The video cassettes were brought when friends came from Singapore or Dubai. Sarath (C Sarath Chandran), who worked for the British Embassy in Saudi Arabia, brought films from London. Mohammed Arakkal, an activist of the *Chathuram*(Square) Film Society, brought a new cassette of 'Rhapsody in August' (Akira Kurosawa / Japan). When I put it in the player for display at a screening in some college, it got stuck and damaged, which was a great embarrassment for me. I didn't know what to say to Muhammad. When I received the National Award in 2000, I received a cassette player as a gift from a close relative. It did not last long. After six months or so, CDs came into existence; I bought a CD player immediately. That, too, could not be used for long. Many changes happened so quickly.

**G.P:** There are times when your writings delve into some subtle elements of cinema unto its essence. Can you talk a bit about this?

**Shanmughadas:** It seems that such subtleties were noticed while watching films from the theatre. So I have seen some films in the theatre, written about them, and went again to watch them. Nowadays, it's different in this digital era of cinema viewing. When you take a break while watching a film, its intensity is lost, I suppose. Also, the size of the screen, the sound, and the darkness are all lost. We have laptops and mobile screens nowadays to watch a movie, which I don't find a right way of viewing experience as far as cinema is considered, the word cinema itself resembles the word halls. While travelling by train, I often hear young people going from Ernakulum to Thrissur and saying they have watched a movie.

**G.P:** CS Venkateshwaran says that as the screen gets smaller and closer, it's making aspect changes, even in the lighting and framing.

**Shanmughadas:** There should be a need to make changes in the sound and visuals when filming in the future. Because even if thousands of people watch a movie on the big screen, millions will watch it on the smaller screen; this should also be kept in mind. KG George says that details are the essence of the film. More attention will have to be paid to such details. People are still filming for the big screen, which is about to change.

**G.P:** In his book 'Cinema Sandharbhanga' by PK Rajasekharan, he quotes Barthes: whenever I hear the word 'cinema', instead of 'film', I think of cinema halls as phenomena and reality. Could you share some of your theatrical experiences in light of this statement?



**Shanmughadas:**

I have heard that the film 'Veyil' by Vasanthabalan captures light in countless frames, as its name suggests. I have seen the song 'Uruguthe maruguthe', written by Na Muthukumar, from the film where the colours of the visuals are as bright as the sun. The lovers in the song start their love inside a theatre projection hall, where film reels are used way before the digital era. My nostalgic memories reside in those projection rooms, as my father was the manager of Lakshmi Picture Palace, a theatre in Ottappalam. I have been accustomed to the projection process, reels, and reel box as I used to watch many movies from the projection room as a school student. I always wanted to write about the film 'Aadum Koothu' by T.V. Chandran as it primarily deals with projection and film reels. My father was a theatre actor. He often stages his play at Jos Theatre, Thrissur. I think, in a play called 'yachaki', there is a scene where the hero enters the stage with a leg injury, which was presented as real as we can imagine. Seeing this, my father's mother began to cry without realising it was a staged performance. My father then went to Madras (Chennai) to act in films, but that didn't happen because of objections from his mother. But he later came into the cinema.

EP Madhavan Nair, the owner of a matchbox company, started a theatre called Lakshmi Picture Palace at Ottappalam in 1955. My father worked there as a manager for twenty years. Just beside the theatre was a narrow road, like the bypass to Cherpulassery, known as Sengupta road, where I was born in a rented house. Some evenings, I would get an opportunity to go to the theatre. That's how I started to watch movies through the square

slits of the operator room. At that time, I have certain reminiscences of watching movies, that too once in six months or so. I remember the scenes in the songs 'Pavamannippu' and 'Paalum Pazhavum', where Shivaji Ganeshan was the hero. I had a hobby of collecting books and posters of cinema, and that's when my curiosity about cinema and its artefacts started.

Another Theatre experience I remember was when I reached Bombay in 1977; I asked my Brother-in-law about the screening of the movie 'The Kid'. He started laughing as it was screening at Alexandra Theatre in Kamathipura, a place renowned for prostitution. But I went to watch the movie. In 2002, I was on the selection committee panel for a documentary festival in Mumbai. I was staying at Hotel Balwas. I walked through the streets and saw the posters of the film, Basic Instincts, which was playing at Alexandra theatre at that time.

**G.P:** About film society activities in Mumbai...

**Shanmughadas:** I was the founding president of the film society 'Screen Unit' in Mumbai. Manilal Gala was the secretary at that time, then Amrit Gangar. At the time when Godard was awarded Lifetime Achievement in IFFK, my article in Deshabhimani was presented as 'About Godard, I heard from Manilal Gala'. I was so happy to see that and even called Manilal to send him a picture of the cover page. Amrit Gangar made Screen Unit one of the greatest film societies in India. I had watched more films in two and a half years than the ones I saw from Kerala in the '70s. On days when there was no cinema, we would go to see

plays and watch Marathi, Gujarati, and Hindi plays. The NCPA National Center for the Performing Arts regularly hosts plays and film screenings. The Film Society of Philosophy Professor Suresh Chabria, who later visited the Film Archive, used to screen films there.

**G.P:** Did you used to write before you went to Bombay in 1977?

**Shanmughadas:** I used to write back in my school and college days. I studied at St.Thomas College, Thrissur, where I was the student editor, the only seat for SFI at that time in my college. I remember the magazine cover design, where a raised fist was the cover image. At those times, minimalism was the theme always followed by the left. 'To raise artistic enthusiasm' was the tagline of that magazine. I also used to write for a magazine called 'Rasana' during that time.

**GP:** Do you watch mainstream movies? I haven't seen you writing anything about the same?

**Shanmughadas:** Watching such movies was less of a chore after I started writing about cinema. But then, after my wedding, I watched mainstream film of the 80s, along with my wife. Yet my writings used to be contemporary, art-based ones. That was more of my interest and a habit as well. Also, the readings, language and tools of my writing served the same. Enjoying both of them has different methods. I used to watch Gulzar's movies. I still clearly remember 'Gaman' of Muzaffar Ali. The song 'Ek akela iss shahar mein' from 'Gharaonda' is something I recall even now. Amol Palekar and Zarina Wahab acted in it, and it has both love and different

shards of life. Yet there is no house to live in, which is one of the burning issues of Bombay, city life of another disturbed youth, a manifestation of author Anand's Aalkkootam. The basic socio-economic-political reasons of the same were mentioned in Anand Patwardhan's documentary 'Hamara Shahar' as well. I then watched Patwardhan's debut film 'Prisoners of Conscience', from a theatre next to the TV station. It is an amazing document of India's conscience against emergency. I don't remember the exact year, it was somewhere before the 80s. Patwardhan was there for the screening. It was neither in the capitol theatre (opposite the station) nor the Sterling near Azad Maidan, but New Excelsior or New Empire. Metro theatre is near St.Xavier's college. I must say I have been to college for a year, doing an evening course for journalism. Theatres like Kala Goda, Regal, and Eros (near the gateway of India) are still afresh in my mind, the leftovers of my Bombay life.

**GP:** Metro was started by MGM Studio of Hollywood...

**Shanmughadas:** That is something which I didn't know. The International Film Festival 1995 was held in Bombay, and I watched 'Three Colours- Blue' of Kieslowski from Metro then. Blue from Three Colours stays still in my mind for the music than the visuals. I also remember the last words from the Holy Bible - faith, hope & charity. The title of my article was 'Senhathinte Niram Neela' (Blue is the colour of love). Tarkovsky's 'The Sacrifice' also tries to point to these three Christian traits, and I have explained the same in an article I wrote related to this. I watched

Sacrifice from a festival at Delhi's Upahar theatre of Green Park. It later got burnt, which was quite a big scandal. When I was working in Brennan, I heard about 'Sacrifice' from M T, amidst his speech at Kozhikode Alakapuri. I am always grateful to him for introducing The Sacrifice and 'Girl with a Pearl Earring' (Peter Weber). Later I got the movie from Nadam video shop of Chelakkottukara, and I also used to show the movie in my classes. The movie is about the creation of Johannes Vermeer's painting of the same name and is based on Tracy Chevalier's novel.

The movie speaks about lighting, which I recalled while watching 'Veyil' as well. The movie has adapted the lighting and colour scheme from the original painting, and Scarlett Johansson handled the titular role. Upahar had a late-night show for Sacrifice with a very little crowd. It was winter, the theatre also would be so cold, and I might have slept at times. I don't think it is a mistake. There is an observation by Abbas Kiarostami which states that sleeping while watching a movie does not reflect on the movie's appreciation.

**GP:** Your articles often journey to Satyajit Ray, Godard and Adoor. Which other filmmakers do you prefer to travel to?

**Shanmughadas:** I wrote a book about the movies of Satyajit Ray with the theme of 'the path of a traveller'. He passed away in 1992, and I wrote a few articles at the moment, which were later developed as a book. The publishers also asked me for something similar about Adoor. I had written about three of his films before '85- Anantharam, Elippathayam and three others. There would be about seven to nine articles, including an

unfinished interview. But I finished Godard, titled 'Colaykkum Marxinum Naduvil' (Between Cola and Marx). It was completed after IFFK 2005, which had a Godard retrospective. My debut 'Malakalil Manju Peyyunnu' (Snow falling in Hills) was not written as a book, but as a collection of a few selected articles, I wrote before. 'Cinemayum Chila Samvidhayakarum' (Cinema and some directors) was also a collection. I check the mutual relation of the articles included even while publishing such collections.

I had written a book about Kieslowski, which got drowned in a flood. A book on Werner Herzog also had a similar fate. I might be able to read and rewrite them, but I don't think anyone else could do that. Kieslowski's book has all his films and documentaries explained in it. I got attracted to his works after watching three colours together, the importance of colours, their inner depth, and the active presence of music make it evergreen. Kieslowski lived during the Communist reign in Poland. Even though he had an opposite opinion to the government, his movies hardly reflected the same. He didn't portray his politics directly like Andrzej Wajda. His films are unlike 'Man of Iron' or 'Man of Marble'. He focuses on the character. More than political values, he was guided by moral conflicts, similar to Dostoevsky. Navachithra film society's Ramesh (he is no more) commented the same about my writings: I explicate movies, periods and people based on moral principles rather than politics. The comment arises at the same time when some others opinionated my works to be aesthetic-oriented. C S Venkateshwaran had once said my reviews

are more elegant based. I believe art has a moral or elegant dimension as well as political, which should be identified.

**GP:** I have felt that you are someone who walks away from the existing religious system and the spirit of God. Are you an atheist? If so, how is your quest for the spiritual-moral elements?

**Shanmughadas:** I am a rationalist in broad sense. But I don't find myself fitting into any pieces of atheism. I don't believe in God, but I always think about the culture of faith developed by people. My quest is about why people have faith in God.

**GP:** In this context, how do you consider Kieslowski?

**Shanmughadas:** Kieslowski doesn't bring faith directly into his films. At the same time, it also has inner elements of faith and religion. For instance, take the popular series Decalogue; it is based on the 10 Commandments, which include commands against prostitution and killing. A man commits a murder, and when he is being hanged after a death sentence, there occurs another murder. Kieslowski questions this notion. He asks the government and the judiciary if they have the right to kill someone, and he develops the themes inside the 10 Commandments into a larger perspective. I love Dostoevsky and Tolstoy among novelists. I read Anna Karenina in 1985. It has a cinematic soundtrack and gives importance to the train. I like Steiner and have read 'After Babel'.

**GP:** How does your extended reading connect with your writings?

**Shanmughadas:** My readings reflect my writings, but I rarely mention the titles. My readings always surface subconsciousness while writing. The article about 'Elippathayam' is titled 'Yaadharthyathinte Bhramaathmakamaaya Mugham' (The illusion of Reality), which is influenced by my political readings, Lukacs in particular. We don't have to see the side that writers choose; instead, check if they are honest. We got to check the history and period in their works. Engels opines that one can study the period from Balsak's works. Regardless of their politics, the writer portrays the crucial conflicts of the era while writing about society. As P N Gopeekrishnan says, a poet retrieves the joy of the world while he is writing in loneliness. For a fact, talented writers will be honest. They can explain the dynamics or conflicts of their era as they could travel into the depths. Kieslowski represents the helplessness of humans, and melancholy is the central theme of his works. He relies on melancholy more than hope. Blue ends on Paulose's poetic note, which reads, 'love forgives; love is kind; love has no jealousy; at the same time mentioning the dynamics of love too'. Kieslowski lived as a Roman Catholic till his death. He was never dogmatic. Communists and Catholics were against his movies, as women who appeared in their underwear in 'Life of Veronica' had provoked much religious outrage. He has adapted the three themes of the French Revolution in Three Colours; liberty, equality and fraternity, and has explained the same. Rather than adopting these to political life, he contained the same in a person's life.



**GP:** It is said that Kieslowski's documentaries have touched you deeply.

**Shanmughadas:** Yes. Kieslowski's debut camera movie is 'Camera Buff'. The movie's protagonist is a documentary director, which is so rare. It ends with how the documentary director turns into a feature filmmaker. Rather than portraying the outer sights of society, Kieslowski focuses on humans' insights and inner conflicts. The protagonist in Camera Buff buys a camera to record his to-be-born child. But the institution where he works asks him to record the daily chores of the place. He, who has fallen in love with the camera, takes the film rolls and throws them away. Ultimately, his wife leaves him, he loses everything, and the film drops its curtain when he turns the camera to the audience and then to his face. Kieslowski might have switched from documentaries the same way. One of his documentaries is titled 'Railway Station', which is in black and white, and was shot at Krakov station. The crowd of the platform was the frame. There is a surveillance camera in there, which is rotating. In between this, a man kills someone, cuts into pieces and leaves it in the cloakroom. The footage is not used in the movie. Though the police asked Kielowski for the footage, he didn't give it. Maybe the moral decision he took there would have made his path to feature films from documentaries. One of his films, 'Hospital,' represents a delivery, and 'Blind Chance' is another essential movie from him, like Three Colours and Decalogue. Blind Chance has been adapted to different languages as well. It narrates a story from three different angles. A man came to the railway station to board the train but couldn't. In the following report, he

catches the train from there at the same time. In the third one, he meets his lover though he couldn't catch the train.

'Run Lola Run' (Tom Tweaker) is the most prominent remake of the movie, which is addressed as a post-modern remake. Alphons Puthren's 'Neram' is also based on this. Other movies, such as 'French Lieutenant's Woman', represent two endings. When Kieslowski switched to feature, he made Dekolog, a 10-episode series. Europe was taken away by it, and two of the episodes were later developed into features; 'A Short Film About Killing' and 'A Short Film About Love'. Kieslowski doesn't decide anything at the film's end, and many see this as a disadvantage. But I see it as a peculiarity of his art.

**GP:** French researcher Mondain has defined a thesis as an effort toward truth. Your theses prove the same. Jean Renoir has said movies are made to seek the realities, and you recite the same. The Titles of your books line up to be 'Cinemayude Vazhiyil'(In the path of cinema), 'Sanchariyude Veedu'(The house of a traveller), 'Vidhyarthiyude Vazhi'(The path of a student), and so on. The journeys through cinema leading to the journeys of your writing, seeking different paths and path breaks. How do you explain yourself?

**Shanmughadas:** I have the same exposure to literature and cinema as the normal ones from the 70s in Kerala. I also had a passion for travelling a lot. After my permanent placement in college, I travelled on summer vacations. I went to Kudajadri once and reached Kollur after trekking the mountain and walking 20km. Travelling by foot was my mode those days. During the 80s, I went on a



trip to platforms. Boarded general compartments of trains, slept over in different platforms, boarded the next train, and went on. I stayed over at my friends' place sometimes. Altogether, a small-scale all-India trip. 'Drishyakala' magazine published a special edition on Pather Panchali's silver jubilee sometime then. I reached Kolkata at that time and was staying at Howrah station. I went to Jadavpur University and watched 'Neem Annapurna' from Tollygunge. I also watched Utpal Dutt's play during the trip. Drishyakala has also been publishing a theatre edition, and I got to interview Utpal Dutt from Tollygunge; I also talked with Bhudhadeb on the background of Neem Annapurna. I also met Malini Bhattacharya, who defeated Mamtha Banerjee in the Jadavpur seat for the Lok Sabha election. She gave an article for Drishyakala's Satyajit Ray edition. The article and Bhudhadeb's interview helped me to explain the background of Bengali cinema in my writing. Besides that, Malini's husband, Mihir Bhattacharya, also gave an article for the theatre edition. Somewhere around '85, I went on a sudden trip with no money but a towel and a few books. I asked for lifts from roads and travelled to the North till Srinagar and completed my trip in 13 days. A friend gave me Eight Hundred rupees from Bombay, which I accepted as charity. I gave half of it to Pavithran sir from Kannur, who joined me from Valapattanam. I couldn't afford food on some days, and I remember eating a mango that someone had given me. I think travelling was a way to overcome much uneasiness of that age.

I loved walking but can't do it now because of diabetes. It was during 2018 or 19 I had a session at an appreciation camp

conducted by the Ottapalam Dialogue Film Society. I walked from the station to Mayilumpuram, a village where the class was held, 7-8km away. The class was at 2 pm noon. Even though I had an umbrella, I reached the class completely sweating. I want to know more about a place while visiting them. To see the lake, one must get down to the water. Likewise, if I had boarded an auto, I wouldn't have known the pathways of the place. There is also a bit of existentialism; the path is more important than the destination. Cinema is a continuation of this. If asked to choose a cinema symbol, I would pick the train and the track. A train is an elongated form of joining something to the other. Cinema was the same in the film era; a film frame would be connected to the next one and the next one. Likewise, the track exists in life and movies like a symbol. Horses in western movies wouldn't have a path to travel but the grounds of Arizona. Apart from that, the train is the central element of the movie. The first movie is about a train reaching the station (Lumiere brothers). Then the short film 'The Trip to the Moon' by George Melies, the famous 'Great Train Robbery, and so on. The history of cinema would repeat the visual of the train and the railway station more often.

Ballad of a Soldier of the Soviet period also has the train as its background. The train appears as a sound initially in 'Pather Panchali'. There is also a small movie, 'Station' of Bhudhadeb Dasgupta, available on YouTube. Martin Scorsese's 'Hugo' is the perfect one to learn about the history of cinema. It has Ben Kingsley playing Gandhi, George Melies (the French director who made a hundred movies and is the father of narrative cinema), and many more. The movie starts

with the arrival of the train. When Melies watched the film, he asked Lumiere if he was selling the machine. As he was not selling, Melies made the machine on his own. In another scene, people are watching a movie somewhere in New York, and when the train appears on the screen, people move back in fear. The path is a very important background of cinema; it is an idea and a theme. I have tried to mention it in my book 'Cinemayude Vazhi'.

**GP:** Isn't writing a journey towards and inside cinema?

**Shanmughadas:** Going to the cinema or a film festival was a journey made after many preparations during the old times. But it is different today, as cinema is available in hand now. A cinema lover of the ancient era would also have a cinema heritage. People used to face difficulties joyfully by watching a movie then. But now the cinema comes to your hand and calls you, and there is an excess of cinema. It has affected the viewing habits, and I won't say the quality has declined. Earlier, we used to watch a movie weekly or monthly, which would stay in mind for longer. But now we watch three or four films a day. Even though my father was a movie theatre manager, I hesitated to ask his permission to watch a movie.

**GP:** You have observed that Godard has presented many movies on the backdrop of renewing old movies. The mainstream, the commercial and normal conscience think that the movies have only a temporary significance. On the contrary, who is responsible for cinema archiving, repeatedly

watching, and watching step by step and its contextualisation?

**Shanmughadas:** We, says Godard, are the children of cinematheque. Cinema is a temporal art. So is music. As Arnold De Hauser said, cinema turns a place into a period and the period into a place. Activities' including archiving, are a collective responsibility; it is the responsibility of critics, academies and everyone who works in cinema institutions. But the audience is free from it; for them, cinema is a factor of super amusement and entertainment, as M T said. But cinema moves forward as we study it. The chances of the same have been enhanced today; we can now watch movies by pausing and playing. But a movie should be watched at a stretch for the first time, which is its appreciation. Perhaps a critic would be the one who enjoys the film to its fullest. Knowledge gives you joy, which is why I yearn to study. The human race wouldn't have reached here if knowledge didn't provide joy. Watching a movie is a process, which provides happiness to one's conscience, and writing is a continuation of it. Cinema, in basic, is not only visual art but an audio-visual art. I heard it first from the appreciation class of Pune National Film Archive during the 80s. I was allowed to attend the classes without enrolling officially as he considered me on the background of being a film society worker and as someone who takes cinema seriously. P K Nair conducted the class. I remember someone from the class saying that the cinema was never silent. Either it was followed by music or conversations. If at all, there will at least be the sound of the projector in it. When cinema was a hundred years old in 1995, there came out a noticeable movie titled

‘Lumiere & Company’. Many directors have made movies a minute long, and any had the sound of projectors in them. In my writings, I care to write about the depth of sound in cinema. While writing about Adoor or Lenin Rajendran, I have widely explained the presentation of sound. As the visual of a fist in the final scene of ‘Utharaayanam’, the sound of motorcycle racing in ‘Vachanam’ is very prominent. Sound director Krishnanunni said there is a montage of sound in the last bit of ‘Piravi’. Note the use of sound when Premji reaches Thiruvananthapuram, the one where he climbs stairs. Sound is as important as the visual in cinema. Jean Claude Laureux, who was the sound designer of Kieslowski's

last three movies, has said that cinema, basically, is audio-visual. Tarkovsky’s Sacrifice has a visual of a table shaking as a train passes nearby. It is said that art gives us a sensational experience, and cinema also provides the experience of movements alongside the visual and audio. But cinema is also thought-provoking, which differentiates it from other visual-audio arts. I think the role of sound is essential in making a shaking experience in theatre. While watching movies from Kozhikode Crown theatre before its renovation, the hall used to shake when a train passed through the nearby track.

*Photo Credit: Deshabhimani weekly.*

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