

ELECTION DIARIES

2024



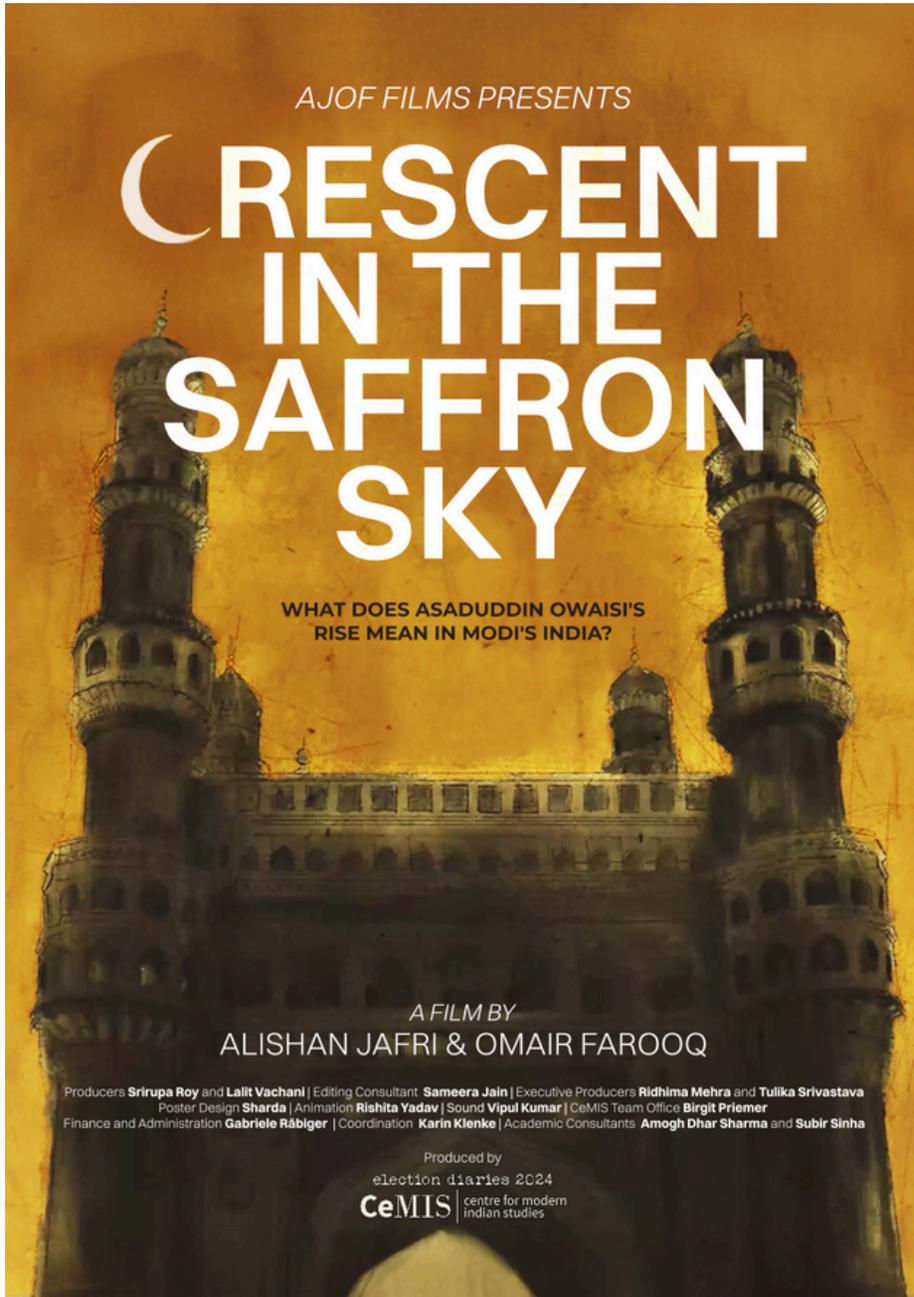
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indian studies



Concept Note

The high-stakes Indian elections of 2024 were fought on a deeply unequal playing field. The incumbent party, the Hindu nationalist BJP had access to staggering financial resources and controlled all state institutions. The pollsters, the media and the BJP itself were confident of winning a sweeping majority of 400 seats, that would allow them to change the Indian constitution and usher in their Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation). From the second phase of the elections, the BJP campaign turned increasingly virulent and communal, foreshadowing the majoritarian future that lay ahead. But the eventual results reflected if not a defeat of the communal forces or a victory for secularism, a prioritization of bread-and-butter issues. Social welfare, employment, education and public health appeared to have mattered more than religious polarization and the politics of disinformation and hate. The BJP was reduced to 240 seats and had to ally with smaller secular parties as coalition partners in order to govern for a third successive term. The 2024 elections tripped up Hindutva's onward march, if only for a brief moment... these election results would provide an interregnum, a respite, a calm before the eventual storm.

The Election Diaries produced by **CeMIS (the Centre for Modern Indian Studies)**, comprise nine documentary films that tell the story of the 2024 Indian elections for different stakeholders, encompassing different issues over diverse locations, linguistic regions and states. From the possibility and potential of queer representation in electoral politics, to the contestation and appropriation of cultural symbols and caste politics in Tamil Nadu; from the survival of Muslim identity politics in Hyderabad to the ethnocentrism of son-of-the-soil versus outsider politics in Meghalaya; from the awakening of a social movement in Karnataka that combats Hindu majoritarianism to the aspirations and frustrations of political activists and local youth in small town Uttar Pradesh; from an analysis of the election manifesto of a visionary Leftist leader in Kerala, to a story of redemption and political survival in West Bengal, to a stirring grass roots campaign in Bihar, **Election Diaries 2024** is a reflection of the anxieties brought about by the seemingly inexorable march of Hindu majoritarianism, as also the fierce, and oftentimes heroic struggles of oppositional parties, movements, and individuals in the battle for a continuing democratic future for India.



Alishan Jafri and Omair Farooq

Crescent in the Saffron Sky

(53 min)

As Hindu nationalism sweeps India and pushes Muslims to the wall, Asaduddin Owaisi, a prominent Muslim leader, sees an opportunity to expand his political ambitions. But does his politics have a future? This documentary dives deeper than the headlines that routinely demonize Owaisi, offering a nuanced portrait of the leader and the challenges faced by smaller parties like the AIMIM who engage in identity politics.

Location: Hyderabad, Telengana



[Trailer Link](#)

Alishan Jafri is a journalist and documentary filmmaker based out of Delhi. His work has been featured in various national and international media including DW, PBS, BBC, ABC, Al Jazeera and Codastory. Jafri's undercover reportage from some of India's most hostile conflict spaces, has received international acclaim including the International Press Institute award. Since graduating from the Jamia Millia Islamia University, where he majored in Mass communication, Jafri has focused on broadcast and documentaries.



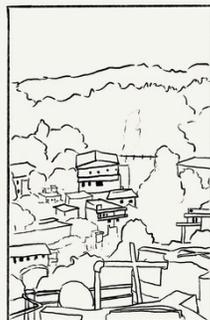
Omais Farooq is a director, cinematographer and editor with experience in documentary and fiction storytelling. He specializes in socio-political and environmental themes, with a strong focus on marginalized communities. Omais has worked with media organizations such as Deutsche Welle, BBC, PBS, ABC, Confluence Media, Article 14 and The Wire. His photography has been featured in LensMagazine and his films have been screened at several film festivals across India.



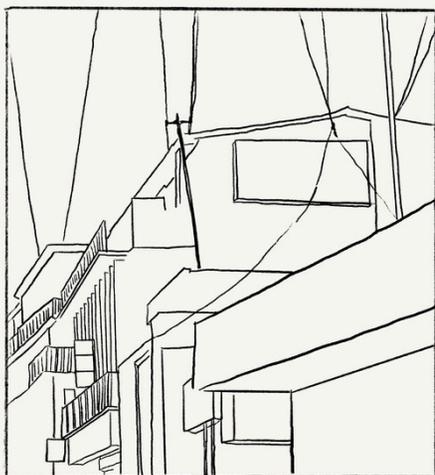
Crescent in the Saffron Sky

election diaries 2024
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inside



out



57 mins | Khasi/English | HD | India/Germany | 2025

IN THE FILM MAZEL AMPAREEN LYNGDOH | RICKY A J SYNGKON CAMERA | EDITING | SOUND DESIGN AMIT MAHANTI
LOCATION SOUND JULIUS L. BASAIWMOIT RESEARCH & PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE NIDAPHI HYNNIEWTA
SOUND MIXING ASHEESH PANDYA TRANSLATIONS PRINCE THANGKIEW | NIDAPHI HYNNIEWTA
SCRIPT CONSULTANT RUCHIKA NEGI GRAPHICS & DESIGN GURLEEN GREWAL SCRIPT & DIRECTION AMIT MAHANTI

PRODUCED BY Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS), University of Göttingen

Amit Mahanti

Inside Out

(57 min)

The 2024 Indian Parliamentary election in Shillong – the capital city of the northeastern state of Meghalaya and the parliamentary constituency for the Khasi and Jaintia Hills – was a contest between two main regional parties in the state – the ruling National People's Party and the nascent Voice of the People Party, a party that stood for 'clean' politics and the interests of the 'jaidbynriew'.

Jaidbynriew – an often-used word in the campaigns across parties in the 2024 elections – loosely translated as the Khasi/Jaintia race or tribe, the pride and essence of being. The filmmaker – an insider-outsider in the Shillong of today – explores this tussle between parties and ideas of identity, to examine his own relationship with the place and ideas of belonging and otherness.

Location: Shillong, Meghalaya

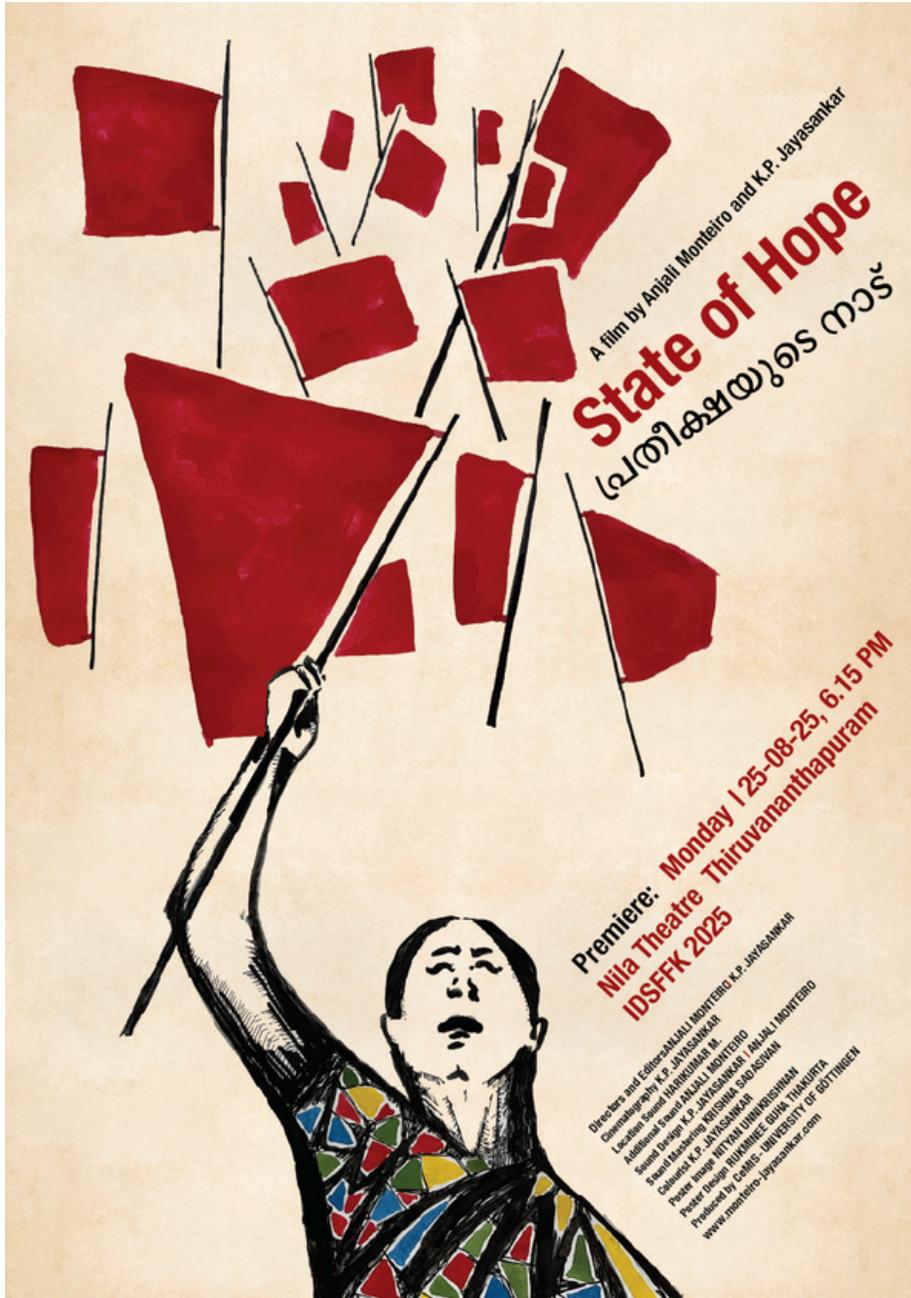


[Trailer Link](#)

Amit Mahanti is a filmmaker, cinematographer and editor who lives between New Delhi and Shillong. He has worked on films and video installations that explore questions of ecological transformation, culture and politics. His films include *Every Time You Tell A Story*, *Scratches On Stone* and *Two Autumns in Wyszogród*. He has been selected for numerous art and film residency programs, and his work has been exhibited at various film festivals and art platforms, most recently at the Humboldt Forum, Berlin (2022-25) and the Kochi Muziris Biennale (2022-23). Amit was a recipient of the Charles Wallace India Trust Short-term Fellowship, 2016.



Inside Out



Anjali Monteiro and K.P. Jayasankar

State Of Hope

(65 min)

State of Hope follows the 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign of Dr. T.M. Thomas Isaac, the Left Democratic Front candidate in Pathanamthitta, Kerala. Dr. Isaac has been working in Pathanamthitta since 2021, after two terms as the Finance Minister of Kerala. The film explores his election manifesto which focuses on employment generation, organic farming, women's enterprise, waste management, palliative care and other initiatives for people's empowerment. Through his campaign, the film also addresses the contemporary political scenario in India, such as Centre-state relations, and the political participation of marginalised communities in an era of rising inequality. The film portrays the uniqueness of Kerala as a state, given its history of social movements and civil society organisations.

Location: Pathanamthitta, Kerala



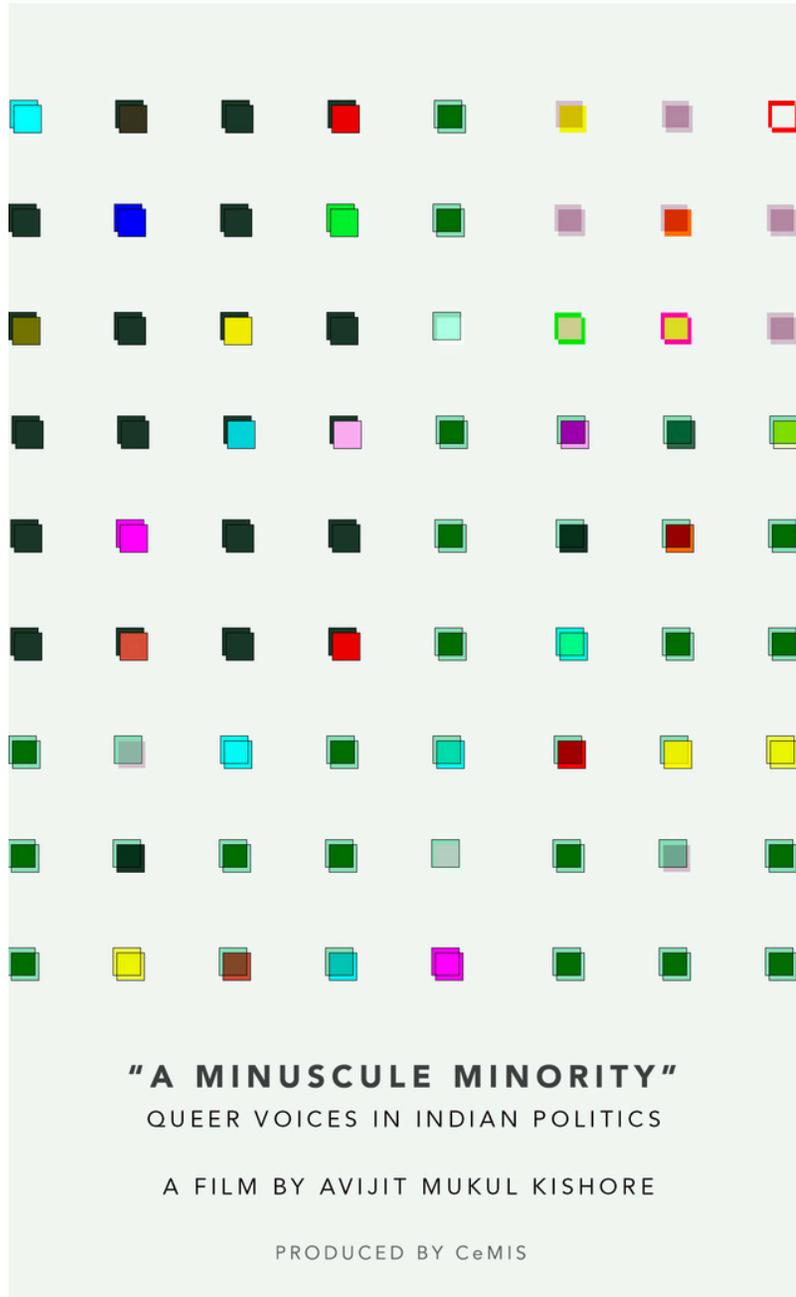
[Trailer Link](#)

Anjali Monteiro and **K.P. Jayasankar** retired as Professors from the School of Media and Cultural Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, in 2020. They have played a key role in setting up the School of Media and Cultural Studies, TISS and the MA and Ph.D. programmes in Media and Cultural Studies, which is a unique blend of theory and practice. They have been commissioning editors and mentors for over 100 documentaries by students and early career filmmakers and continue to teach and mentor young people. They were awarded the Satish Bahadur Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Film Education, by the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad in 2022. Their documentary films, which have been screened across the world, have won 33 national and international awards They were participating artists in the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, 2018, with their installation based on their film *Saacha* (The Loom, 2001).

They write in the broad areas of censorship, documentary film and media and cultural studies. Their book *A Fly in the Curry* (Sage, 2016), on independent Indian documentary, won a Special Mention for the best book on cinema at the National Film Awards, 2016. They have been visiting faculty and fellows at several leading media and design institutions and lectured at universities across the world. More about their work at <http://www.monteiro-jayasankar.com>.



State Of Hope



Avijit Mukul Kishore

"A Minuscule Minority"

(74 min)

It was the 77th year of India's independence. The general elections for the 18th Lok Sabha were held from April and June, 2024, and queer rights were not on any political party's agenda. A handful of parties made a token mention of queer rights on their manifestos, but none campaigned for them. "A Minuscule Minority" documents a crucial evolution in India's queer rights movement. It features conversations with young, second and third-generation activists, and looks at the shift from solely relying on petitioning the judiciary for equality, as the movement did in the first three decades, to engaging directly with political parties to integrate queer rights into the mainstream.

Location: Various cities

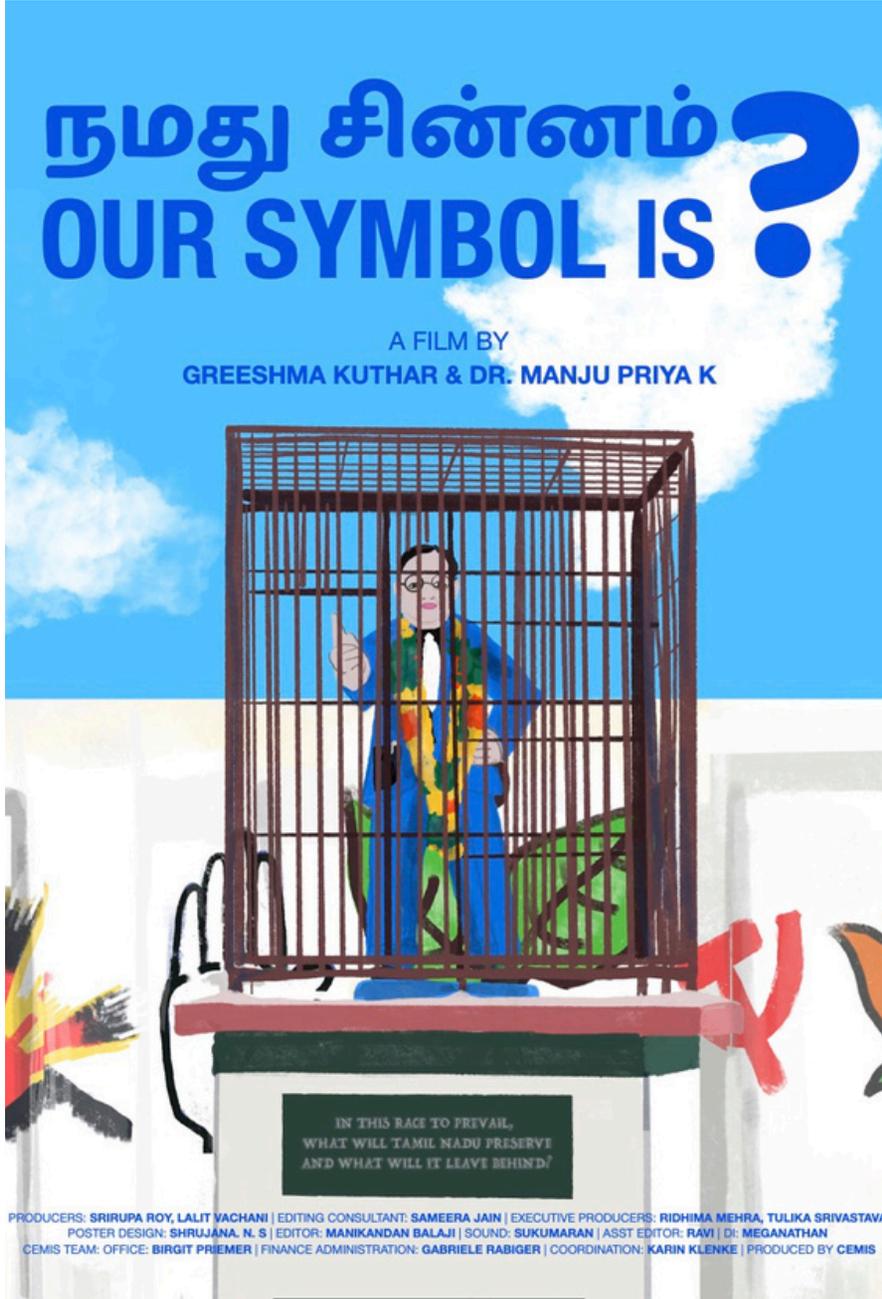


[Trailer Link](#)

Avijit Mukul Kishore, a Mumbai-based filmmaker, specialises in documentary and interdisciplinary moving-image practices. An alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India (Cinematography) and Hindu College, University of Delhi (History), he frequently collaborates with artists, architects, and academics. He also contributes to film education as a lecturer, writer, and curator. His work has been featured globally at prestigious venues such as Chicago Architecture Biennial, Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Pinakothek-Moderne Munich, Kochi-Muziris Biennale and Dhaka Art Summit in addition to film festivals including CPH Dox, Sheffield Docfest, Dok-Leipzig, Documenta Madrid, Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen, IDSFFK, Film South Asia, Open Frame Festival, MIFF, among others.



"A Minuscule Minority"



Greeshma Kuthar and Dr. Manju Priya K

Our Symbol is?

(51 min)

As Hindu nationalism and other dominant ideologies seep into Tamil Nadu's political context, a cultural battleground takes shape where identity is contested, symbols are repurposed, and tradition is strategically redefined. Political parties compete to control narratives through appropriation, even as caste capital and social hierarchies remain firmly rooted.

"Our Symbol is?" explores a state at a turning point: who defines its symbols, who benefits from their meaning, and in this struggle for power and identity, what will Tamil Nadu preserve and what will it leave behind?

Location: Various locations in Tamil Nadu



[Trailer Link](#)

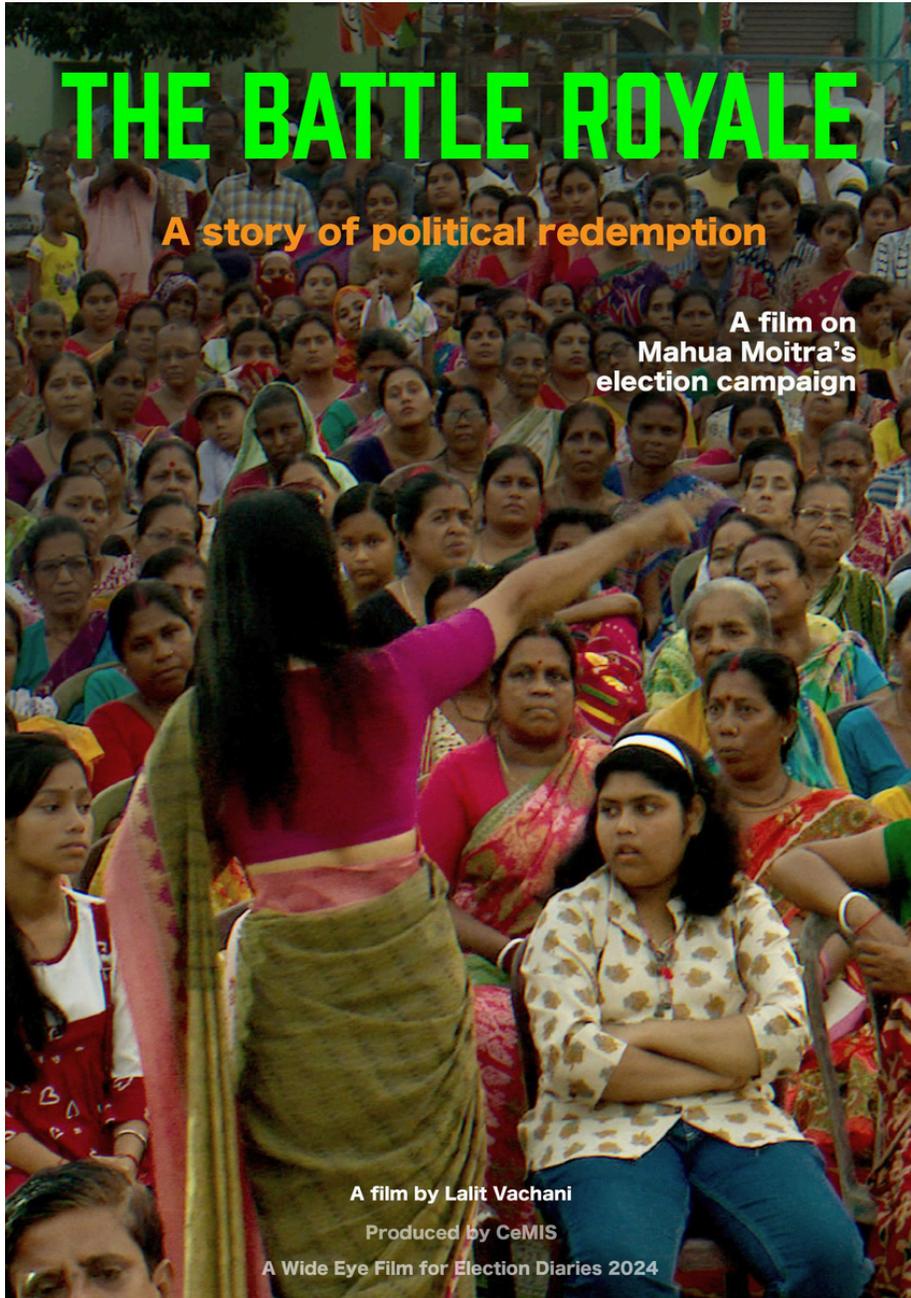
Greeshma Kuthar is an award-winning independent journalist and trained lawyer from Tamil Nadu, known for her deeply reported stories from India's most politically complex and underreported regions. Her journalism focuses on power structures, marginalisation, and the changing dynamics of identity politics across the country. With a sharp investigative approach, she has consistently explored how political ideologies and regional aspirations shape the lived realities of communities, especially in areas witnessing socio-political transitions.



Manju Priya is an academician and researcher whose work intersects cinema, caste, gender, and political ideology. Having completed her PhD on Tamil film production, social identity and regional/cultural capital, she continues her research on marginalized communities in India. Her academic practice combines ethnographic fieldwork, visual analysis, and critical theory, with a focus on popular culture, symbolic power, and the politics of representation.



Our Symbol is?



Lalit Vachani

The Battle Royale

(87 min)

On 8 December 2023, the TMC (All India Trinamool Congress) MP, Mahua Moitra was unceremoniously removed from Indian Parliament. It was alleged without evidence that she had accepted “cash for query,” or financial inducements to raise questions in parliament against Gautam Adani, a billionaire businessman considered to be close to Narendra Modi and the ruling BJP.

The Battle Royale tracks Mahua Moitra's re-election campaign in the high stakes battleground constituency of Krishnanagar, West Bengal, as she fights for her political survival and for redemption and retribution. Pitted against her in a close three – cornered contest are the CPI(M)/INC candidate, S.M. Sadi, and the Rajmata (royal mother) of Krishnanagar, Amrita Roy, who is supported by the mighty BJP.

Location: Krishnanagar, West Bengal



[Trailer Link](#)

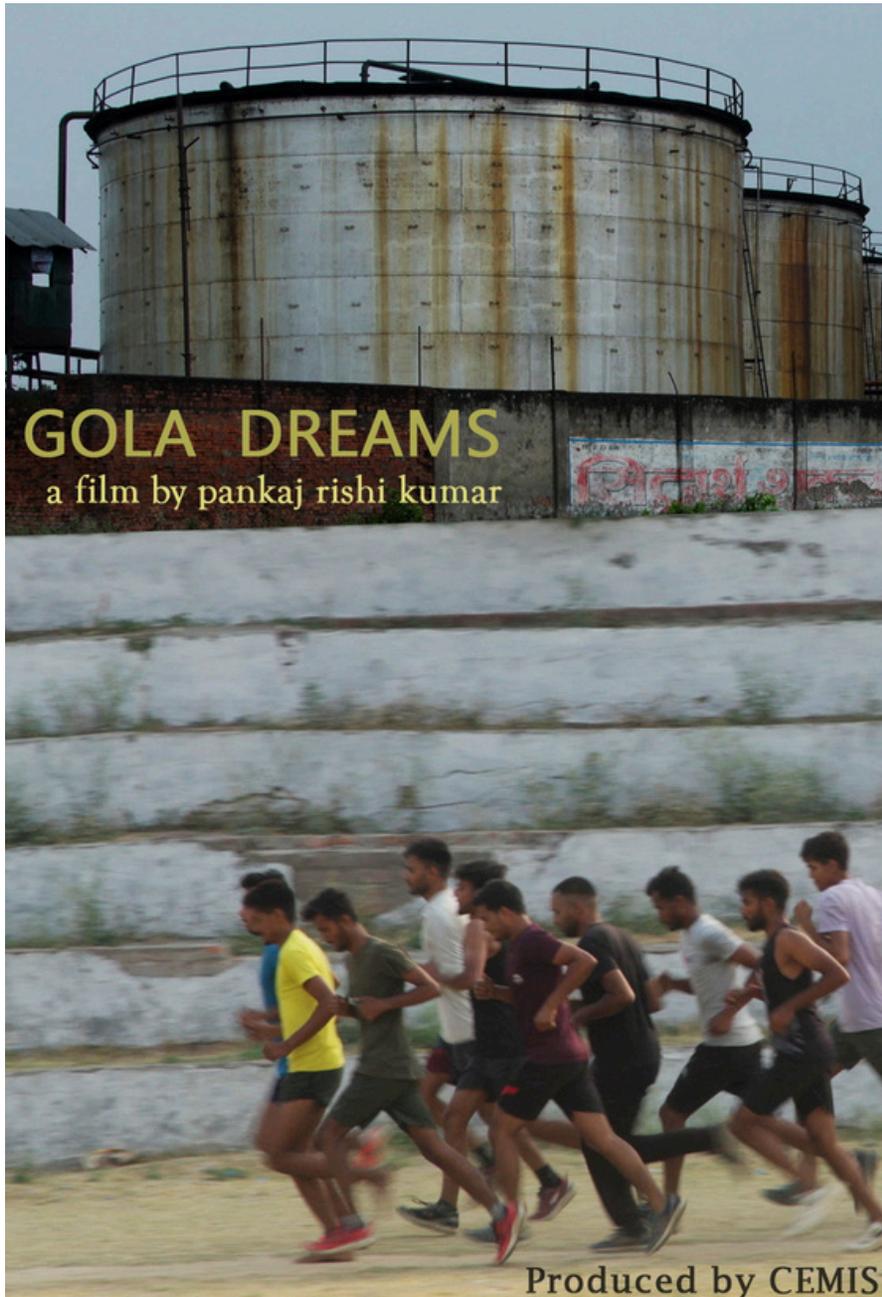
Lalit Vachani's films include *The Boy in the Branch* (1993) and *The Men in the Tree* (2002) on the RSS and Hindu nationalism; *The Salt Stories* (2009) follows the trail of Gandhi's salt march in Gujarat; *An Ordinary Election* (2015) is an in-depth study of an Indian election campaign, and *Prisoner No. 626710 is Present* (2024) is about citizenship, student protests and the imprisonment of Umar Khalid. In 2007, Vachani directed *In Search of Gandhi* as one of ten international filmmakers commissioned by the 'Why Democracy?' global television series broadcast across 35 international television channels.

<https://lalitvachani.com/films.html>

Vachani has received grant awards from India Foundation for the Arts, Bard College, Jan Vrijman Fund and the Sundance Documentary Fund. His work is extensively used by academic institutions for research and teaching. Other screening venues include World Social Forum (Mumbai), Oberhausen Short Film Festival, DOK-Leipzig, Kino-Arsenal (Berlin), IDFA (Amsterdam), FID Marseille, One World Prague, IFFR (Rotterdam), IDSFFK (Kerala), and the Asian Social Forum (Hyderabad). In 2021, he curated the online film festival series, *Crossings*, with support from DAAD. He is the co-producer of *Election Diaries* — a series of photo-essays and documentaries covering the Indian national elections of 2019 and 2024. Vachani teaches courses on media and politics, and documentary theory and production at the University of Göttingen, Germany.



The Battle Royale



Pankaj Rishi Kumar

Gola Dreams

(51 min)

Gola Dreams journeys into the heart of Gola Gokarannath, a “Choti Kashi” in Uttar Pradesh, during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Through the lives of Surendra, a Dalit reporter with a near-invisible YouTube channel; Imran, an idealistic auto driver; and the town’s young army aspirants, the film uncovers stories of disenchantment, resilience, and hope. Against a backdrop of rallies, a defunct sugar mill, and a carnival-like mela, the film reveals a democracy both vibrant and broken. As rain floods polling day, *Gola Dreams* becomes a lyrical meditation on aspiration, marginalisation, and the fragile promises of India’s electoral theatre.

Location: Gola, Uttar Pradesh

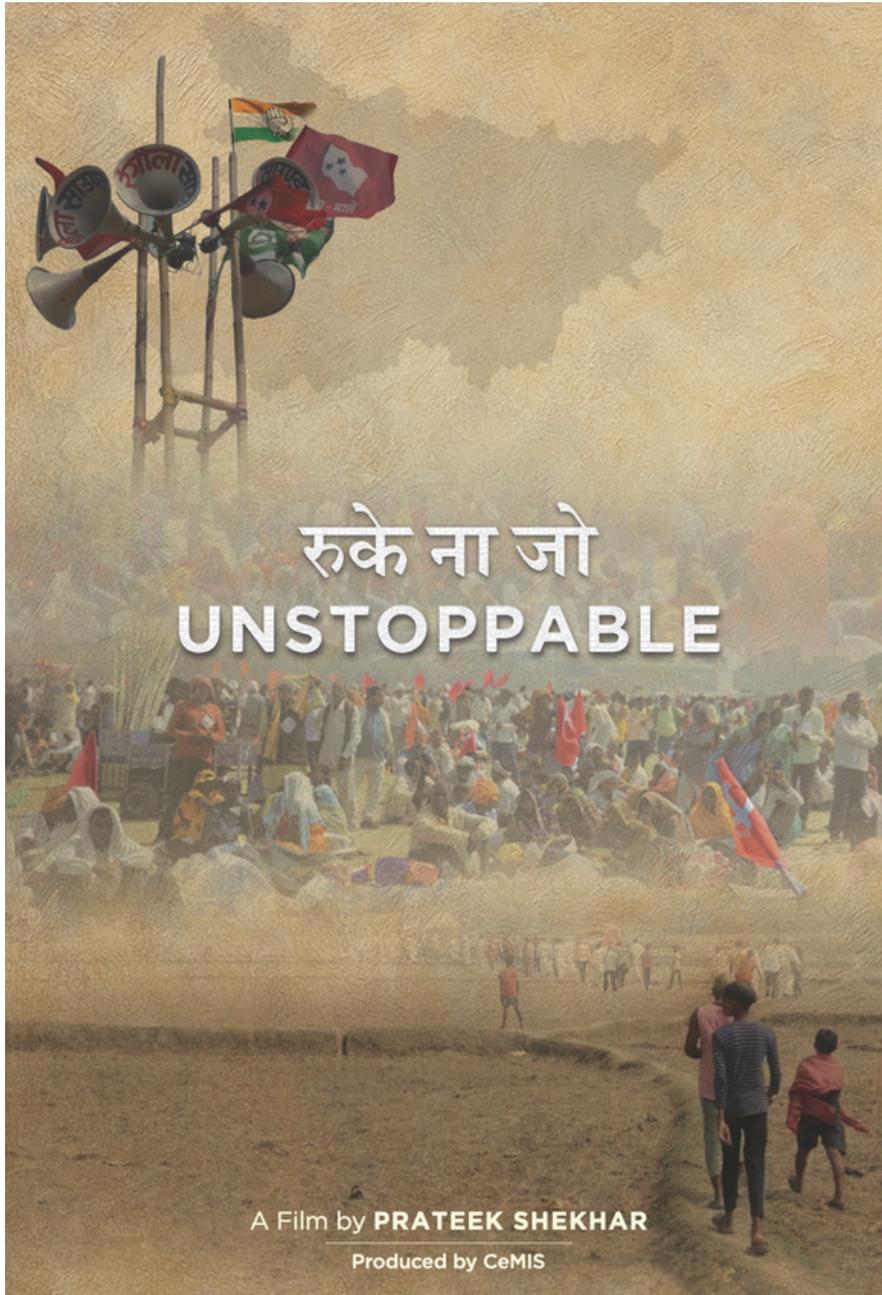


[Trailer Link](#)

Pankaj graduated from FTII Pune (1992). His first film was *'Kumar Talkies'* (1998). Subsequently, Pankaj has become a one-man crew. (*Pather Chujaeri, The Vote, 3 Men and a Bulb, Punches n Ponytails, Seeds of Dissent, In God's Land*). Since 2012, he has been actively documenting in Pondicherry (a former French colony). *'Two Flags'* (2019), *Janani's Juliet* (India's official entry to Oscars) and *'To Die a Frenchman'* are 3 films based out of Pondicherry. The films engage with the Tamil French community, its people and reflect on the historical past. His films have been screened at film festivals all over the world. (Berlin, Rotterdam, Yamagata, Busan, Visions Du Reel, Margaret Mead). He has won grants from Hubert Bals, IFA, Jan Vrijman, AND/DMZ (Korea), Banff, Majlis, Sarai and Pad.ma. Pankaj was awarded an Asia Society fellowship at Harvard Asia Centre (2003). He is an alumnus of Asian Film Academy (Busan) and Berlin Talents. Pankaj also curates and teaches.



Gola Dreams



Prateek Shekhar

Ruke Na Jo (Unstoppable)

(72 min)

Deep-dive into the 2024 electoral struggle in Bihar, where Sandeep Saurav, a 37-year-old leader from the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) [CPI ML], spearheads a rigorous campaign in Bihar's Nalanda as part of the INDIA alliance with Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD) and Congress. His campaign advocates for key issues like employment, inflation, and the preservation of democratic values.

With limited resources but unshakable resolve, he challenges entrenched powers, offering an intimate portrayal of grassroots political activism. His spirited efforts inspire hope and serve as a testament that elections are not just a means to attain power but a battle for democracy itself - a platform for struggle.

Location: Nalanda, Various locations in Bihar

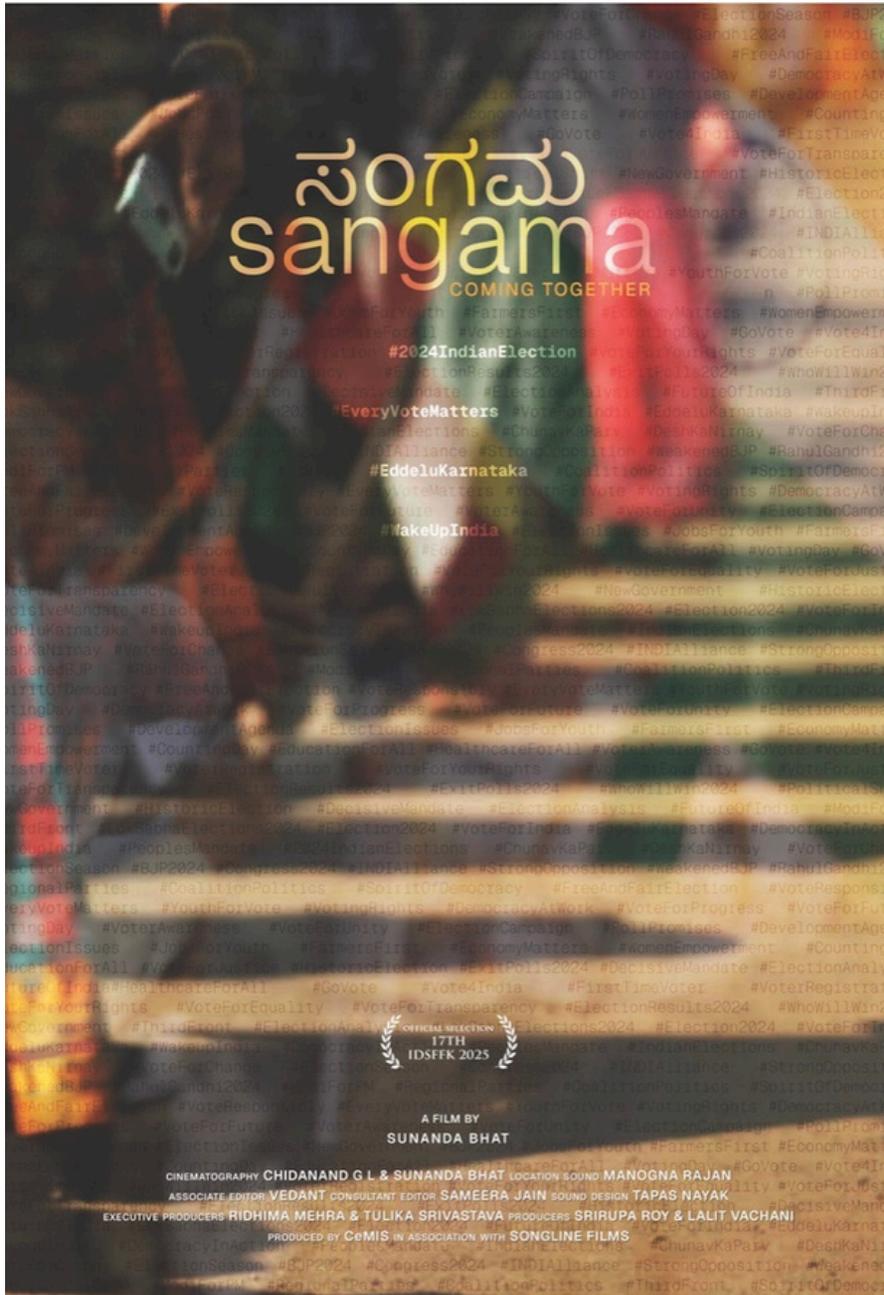


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After completing his Bachelors in Sociology from Delhi University, **Prateek Shekhar** did his Masters in Media and Cultural Studies from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. His documentary film *Chai Darbari* (2019) won the Best Short Documentary award at the 12th International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala (IDSFFK), India and was screened at numerous film festivals. His debut feature length documentary film *Chardi Kala – An Ode to Resilience* (2023) premiered and won Second Best Long Documentary Award at the 15th IDSFFK, India; Best Feature Documentary, South Asian Film Festival Montreal 2024, Canada and Jury Award, Film Southasia 2024, Kathmandu, Nepal.



Ruke Na Jo (Unstoppable)



Sunanda Bhat

SANGAMA / coming together

(67 min)

A behind-the-scenes look at how a popular people's movement against hate and divisive politics takes on the might of an authoritarian right-wing party in the recent Indian General Elections 2024. With a large band of volunteers on the ground, Eddelu Karnataka ('Wake-Up Karnataka') teams with citizens' groups across the country, to dramatically shift the conversation from 'mandir' (temple) to 'mudda' (issues), making this a closely fought election.

Location: Bengaluru, Various locations in Karnataka



[Trailer Link](#)

Sunanda is a documentary filmmaker and founder of Songline Films. She takes a patient, unhurried approach to making films, allowing stories to unfold in layers that reveal the resilience of people and the subtle transformation of their environment.

Her documentaries have screened at several international and Indian film festivals and won awards, prominent ones being - 'Monde en Regards' at the Jean Rouch International Film Festival, Paris; Planet in Focus Film Festival, Toronto, Golden Conch for Best Documentary at the Mumbai International Film Festival, John Abraham National Award for Best Documentary. Her film 'NINGAL ARANAYE KANDO?' | 'HAVE YOU SEEN THE ARANA?' featured at Musée de l'homme in Paris and was part of the 'India Film Week' at Metropolis Kino, an art-house cinema theatre, in Hamburg, Germany.

She was an artist-in-residence at the Pepper House Residency hosted by Kochi-Muziris Biennale and is an active member of Vikalp Bengaluru, a collective of filmmakers that holds monthly screenings of the best in non-fiction cinema in the city.



SANGAMA | coming together

Election Diaries 2024

Produced by CeMIS

Films by

Alishan Jafri and Omair Farooq
Amit Mahanti
Anjali Monteiro and K.P. Jayasankar
Avijit Mukul Kishore
Greeshma Kuthar and Manju Priya K.
Lalit Vachani
Pankaj Rishi Kumar
Prateek Shekhar
Sunanda Bhat



Institutions interested in purchasing copies or arranging a one-time screening of the ***Election Diaries 2024*** films are invited to contact electiondiaries@gmail.com

CREDITS

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