

celebrating the body in a way that affirms feminine empowerment and a rejection of male-centred discourse. Her novel on dalit is forthcoming. She was awarded 'Kavignar Devamagal Virudu' in 2005

S.Theodore Baskaran is the author of *Message Bearers: The Nationalist Politics and the Entertainment Media in South India 1880-1945* (1981). His second book *The Eye of the Serpent: An introduction to Tamil Cinema* won the Swarnakamal award from the President of India. He was on the Jury panel for the National film awards in 2003.

M. Velusamy is a lecturer in Social Science, Alagappa University, Karaikudy. He writes extensively in Tamil. *Periyar Arkku Periyar, Dalit, Periyar and Dravidian Politics* and *Special Component Plan* are his books in Tamil. He completed PhD from Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai. He is a promising Dalit scholar.

S. Venkatesan has his Master's in Fine Arts Degree from Gulbarga University. He has 15 years of experience in the field of painting which portrays fractured, fragmented and multiple dimensions. The logo of the film festival was designed by him.



Courtesy :

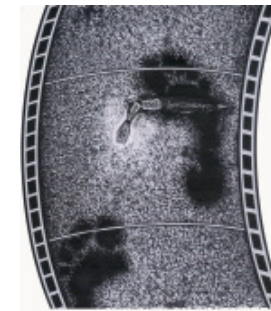
- Artist Venkatesan, Lalit Kala Academy, Chennai
- Vibjyor International Film Festival Book 2008, Trichur
- Thirunelveli International Documentary Film Festival

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Malcolm Adiseshiah Centenary Celebration



Imaging Dalit Reality: Politics of Visual Representation

Documentary Film Festival
& Painting Exhibition

January 25-27, 2010

Organised by


Madras Institute of Development Studies

79 Second Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Adyar, Chennai 600 020

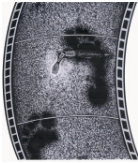
&

Dalit Intellectual Collective (DIC)

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Vikas Adhyayan Kendra
D-1, Shivdham, 62 Link Road,
Malad West, Mumbai 400 064


Prakriti
Foundation
Chennai



CONCEPT NOTE

"...Television [visual media] can produce an effect close to what you'd have from fifty thousand protesters in the streets."

— Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television: 1998*.

The selfhood and self respect of a people is closely linked to their distinctive cultural identity. It shapes the nature of the relationship amongst human beings and between human beings and the natural world. It does not exist independent of everyday material condition and life practices. Dalit cultural practices and identity have come under attack in the past few decades. Their cultural space is increasingly squeezed out. The inherent 'civilizing' mission of the elite and utter disregard for Dalit worldviews has pushed Dalits into a state of cultural marginalization and crisis of identity. This is at a time when they are subject to renewed assaults by forces of economic globalism, the destruction of their lifestyles and cultural specificities under the onslaught of 'cultural assimilation and mainstreaming'. Cultural annihilation of a people is the first step towards their annihilation as a distinct people. Thus, the question of cultural production is part and parcel of general life activities, designed to hold existence together and impart meaning to it.

Images play an important role in redefining social education, power and hierarchies as well as building up a counter-culture 'praxis' and space for the recovery and revitalization of the emancipatory potential for an alternative cultural hegemony. Films as a creative cultural artifact can play an immense role in the portrayal of Dalit reality. They address the subconscious world of spectators and these cultural constructs are the construction of the subconscious. Thereby, they function as a potent tool through which the notions of superiority and inferiority are restructured to exert control in the external spheres of life. Pictures which were displayed on the calendars had played a major role in raising nationalist and social aspirations and organizing mass mobilization during the pre-independence days. We hope that the paintings created by the new generation of Dalit artists that portray the submerged reality of Dalit lives—their experiences of pain, misery, hopes and aspirations—will awaken them for the creation of a new world which is free of oppression.

The Objectives

- DIC believes that visual medium has great potential to communicate through images the everyday social existence of Dalits, Adivasis and the victims of cultural annihilation.
- The Film festival, seminar and painting exhibition seek to explore and develop cultural critique of the prevailing cultural space dominated by the brahmanical cultural hegemony and aims at creating alternative cultural subjectivity to redefine the agenda of contemporary cultural discourses as well as to revitalise the Dalit cultural consciousness for social transformation.
- To bring together Dalit documentary film makers and script writers from South India to create a platform for sharing and learning from each other's experiences. It also addresses the dilemmas and problems faced by Dalit Documentary Films makers.
- Along with the film screening, a Dalit Painting exhibition will be organised. The exhibition aims at providing space for Dalit artists in the public domain. The Dalit artists will attend the seminar and share the importance of visual representation.

This documentary film festival is a part of the ongoing Malcolm S. Adiseshiah Centenary Celebration. It is a tribute for his humanitarian vision and concern towards the marginalized sections of the society. In continuation of his legacy, this event attempts to establish the values like equity, justice and fairness through documentary films at the academic level. There is a genuine quest among the subordinated people to revitalize their cultural forms and use them as an effective tool in their struggle for social justice. Manifestation of this dynamic process assumes great significance not only in the emerging vast literature on gender and identity politics, but in the artistic forms as well.

K A Shaji has MA in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations and Post Graduate Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communications, he has started his career in The New Indian Express in 2000. Currently he is a special correspondent with the *Open Magazine*. Previously he was senior correspondent of Tehelka. He was awarded with a media fellowship by New Delhi-based National Foundation for India on the topic 'Unheard Voices'. Shaji is keen in reflecting issues concerning the poor and marginalized in the mainstream media. He is now completing the Malayalam translation of Anand Teltumbde's book—*Kairlanji: Strange and Bitter Corp*.

Sreebala K. Menon is a Columnist and Short Story Writer in Malayalam, Sreebala began her career as Programme Producer and Content writer for C-dit, Trivandrum. For the past five years she is working in Commercial Malayalam films as associate director. She has won the Sahitya Akademy Award for Best humour writing in 2005 for her book titled -*19, Canal Road*. Her documentary film is on *Akkama Cheriyan*, a woman freedom fighter of the yester years in the Eminent Personality Series produced by Public Relations Department, Kerala.

P. Sreenivas is an Assistant Professor of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, English and Foreign Language University. He has directed two short films on Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh. He was a media professional fellow for Dalit foundation 2007-08.

R.R. Srinivasan is a film maker, photographer, writer involved in the promotion of film appreciation movement in South India through the film society movement and alternative film journals. He emerged from Kanchanai film society in Thirunelveli, which took serious cinema to a non-metropolitan audience. He guest lectures on film, literature and photography in universities and colleges. He has been exploring the possibilities of visual anthropology.

Sukirtharani is a school teacher and well known dalit feminist poet. Her poetry collections are *Kaipatri Yen Kanavukal* 2002, *Iravu Mirugam* 2004, *Avalai Mozhi Peyarthal* 2006. She writes of desire and longing,

S. Samuel Asir Raj has a doctorate in Sociology from JNU, and is working as Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. He had been associated with two documentary films production. *Green Lies Our Unity* a film on Ecodevelopment in the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve. (2001) funded by World Bank through Tamil Nadu Forest Department and *Death of a River*- a film on Human Rights. (1999). He has widely travelled across the countries and his research had been supported by World Bank and other international organisations.

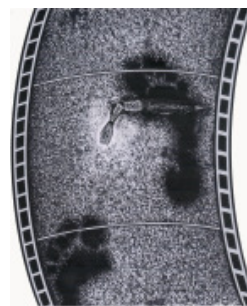
Santha has been working in the development sector for the past 14 years. After an M.A in Political Science, she did an M. Phil., from JNU. Watching films and making documentaries is one of her passions. Apart from this documentary on the *Melavalavu* killings, Santha has directed a 45 minutes documentary on the *Memories during the Emergency*. She is presently working on a documentary on the empowerment experience among Tribal women; this is based on her interactions with them for the past three years.

C. Sarat Chandran is based in Kerala, he has made more than five documentaries on various subjects and people's various movement in Kerala. All of these films have been screened in many international film festivals and won awards. He has put up a traveling film festival and screened documentaries for more than a decade in Kerala.

Sareen. Chatla has an M. A. in Media & Communication and M. Phil., in English literature (Cultural Studies) from EFL- University, Hyderabad. He did his M. Phil., dissertation on "Media Coverage of Dalit Issues: Khairlangi Massacre a Case Study". Currently, he works as Assistant Professor in Visual Media and Communication, EFL-University. He has diverse work experiences related to journalism, NGO and research.

K. P. Sasi born in Kerala and based in Bangalore, has made more than 20 documentaries and three feature films in Malayalam and Hindi. He started his career as a cartoonist in Free Press Journal, Bombay and turned to film making in the early eighties.

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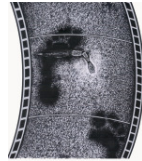
JANUARY 25, 2010 MONDAY • SESSION - I • 9:30 - 10:45 AM

INAUGURAL

Welcome	Prof. Maria Saleth Director, MIDS
Chair	Mr. Theodore Baskaran Film Historian and Critic
Thematic Introduction	Dr. C. Lakshmanan Faculty, MIDS
Brief on DIC Activities	Mr. N. Karkare National Coordinator, DIC
Inaugural Address	Prof. Madhava Prasad English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad
Vote of Thanks	Mr. Ajit Muricken Director, VAK, Mumbai



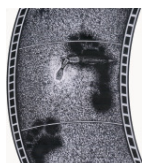
JANUARY 25, 2010 MONDAY
Session 2 10:45 am - 1:30 pm



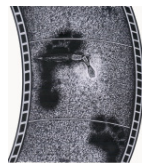
Film **Mahadiga (2004)** Telugu (42 min.)
 Theme Madiga community's objective conditions
 Director(s)/Producer Lelle Suresh, Chindu
 Discussants Fr. A. Packiyathan
 Screening Schedule 10:45 - 11:30

Film **The Untouchable Country (2001)**
 Tamil with subtitle (31 min.)
 Theme Caste campaign for Durban conference
 Director(s)/Producer R R Srinivasan
 Discussants Azhakiya Periyavan
 Screening Schedule 11:35 - 12:05

Film **Breaking Long Silence (2008)**
 Malayalam with subtitle (37 min.)
 Theme Document about Dalit painting workshop
 Director(s)/Producer Mustafa Desmangalam/VAK/DIC
 Discussants Azeez Tharuvana
 Screening Schedule 12:10 - 12:45



JANUARY 25, 2010 MONDAY
Session 3 01:30 - 7:00 pm



Film **Of Inhuman Bandage (2005)** English (30 min.)
 Theme Plight of manual scavenging
 Director(s)/Producer Gopal Menon
 Discussants Deepti Sukumar
 Screening Schedule 2:30 - 3:00

group among Christians and non Christians. He has widely traveled across various countries.

R. Pavanathi Vembulu holds a Ph.D. in European Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He was also Research Fellow at National Film Archive, Pune. His interest varies from performing arts to social exclusion. Currently he is working as Assistant Professor, Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

Preetha is a practicing lawyer in Kerala High Court and dalit feminist activist. She has actively participated in many seminars and programme, which often reflects current politics and culture in the literary magazines.

Prema Revathy is an associate director in many commercial Tamil Films. She is a feminist activist and runs a school for children of Tsunami victims in Nagapattinam'. She often reflects on cinema and cultural politics in literary magazines.

Ramanujam with engineering background was associated with Tamil theatre *Aadukalam* and has directed 5 plays. He has also translated the works of *Saadat Hasan Manto* in Tamil. He has written a small book on the "Body politics of Gandhi". His collection of articles is due to be published soon.

Salma is a Chair Person of Tamil Nadu social Welfare Board. She hails from Thuvankurichi, Trichy, Tamil Nadu. She is a celebrated feminist poet in the contemporary literature. She has published a few significant poetry collections - *Oru Maalaiyum Innoru Maalaiyum* 2000, *Paccait teevatai* 2003 and novel *Erandam Jaamaangaling Kathai* 2004. She was selected as a team member of National Book Turst, which participated in the Frankfurt Book Fair. In 2007, University of Chicago organized a seminar on her writings.

Sadananda Menon is an adjunct faculty in the Asian College of Journalism. He is a cultural commentator.

Her poems are *Angel We Are Not, Breast, Greybeard* and *I have brought this summer just for you*. Her essays are *Wearing the body with words* and *welcome to the Indian Poetry*. Kutty Ravathy received the *Sigram 15: Faces of Future* award for literature from India Today. Kutty Revathy published three books and she is the editor of *Panikkudam* – A Literary Quarterly for Women’s writing.

Lelle Suresh popularly known as *Lelle Suresh*, hails from Khammam District, Andhra Pradesh. Suresh is a rare combination of a poet, writer, journalist, composer, musician and dancer. He travelled and performed “*Dappu*’ (Dalit Drum) all over the world. He is a director of many documentary films.

M. Madhava Prasad is Professor of Cultural Studies at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. He is the author of *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (OUP, 1998). He reflects on a range of topics including film, literature, caste politics, democracy and language. His book on the film star politicians of south India is forthcoming shortly.

R. Mallika is a professor of Tamil Literature in Ethiraj College for women. She is a dalit feminist writer and poet, who constantly reflects dalit women problems in both visual and print media. She has six books to her credit: *Tamil literature and Feminism* 2002, *The Vibration of Feminist Tone and the Body Politics of Dalit women* 2002, *Neer Kizhikum Meen: 2007* collection of poem, *Pennin Vellium Eruppum* 2009, *Dalit Peniniya Azhkiyal: 2009*. She has won many awards for her works.

Mustafa Desamangalam is a young filmmaker based in Kerala. He has made three documentaries so far and associated with many feature and documentary films of many film directors in Kerala and outside.

Fr. A. Packiyathan is currently pursuing his doctorate in Dalit folk arts and music at the university of oxford, London. He composes music for songs of social awakening and campaigning. As of now he has released eight audio cassettes. He started a progressive youth

Film	Nadantha Kathai (2009) Short Film Tamil with subtitle (30 min.)
Theme	Struggle for wearing footwear in the rural Tamil Nadu
Director(s)/Producer	Pon Sudha/Friends combines
Discussants	Aadhavan Theetchanya
Screening Schedule	3:00 - 3:30

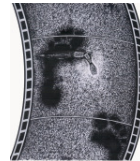
Film	Resisting Coastal Invasion (2007) English (54 min.)
Theme	CRZ and struggle of fishing community
Director(s)/Producer	K.P. Sasi Visual Search
Discussants	Prema Revathy
Screening Schedule	3:30 - 4:30

Film	Note from a Crematorium (2005) Tamil with subtitle (35 min.)
Theme	Struggles of the graveyard workers
Director(s)/Producer	R.P. Amudhan
Discussants	Imayam
Screening Schedule	4:30 - 5:05

Film	Scavenging Dreams (2007) English (28 min.)
Theme	It portrays life of Ragpickers and Scrapdealers
Director(s)/Producer	Jasmine Roy & Avinash Roy PSB Trust
Discussants	Sukirtha Rani
Screening Schedule	5:05 - 5:35

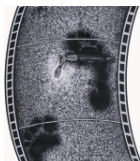


JANUARY 26, 2010 TUESDAY
Session 4 10:45 am - 1:30 pm

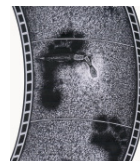


Film	Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Feature Film: 2001) English (3 hrs.)
Theme	Life & Mission of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
Director(s)/Producer	Jabber Patel / National Film Development Corporation and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
Screening Schedule	9:30 - 12:30

Film	<i>Oru Nadien Maranam</i> (Death of a River:1999) Tamil with subtitle (40 min.)
Theme	Mancholai estate workers wage struggle & State Repression
Director(s)/Producer	R R Srinivasan
Discussants	Samuel Asir Raj
Screening Schedule	12:30 - 1:10



JANUARY 26, 2010 TUESDAY
Session 5 2:30 am - 7:00 pm



Film	Panthibhojanam (Short film 2008) Malayalam with subtitle (22 min.)
Theme	Caste and food
Director(s)/Producer	Sreebala K Menon
Discussants	Preetha / Salma
Screening Schedule	2:30 - 2.55

Liberation Theology Movements: Kerala(2002), Identity Formation of Syrian Christians and Social Change in Kerala (1999).

Gopal Menon is an acclaimed documentary film director who has commitment to the people's struggles. He is an activist filmmaker focusing on caste, communalism and nationality. His films portray people's liberation struggles. *Papa 2, When the State Declares War on the People, Hey Ram – genocide in the land of Gandhi, Naga Story* and *Of Inhuman Bondage* are his major documentary films.

Imayam is an acclaimed Tamil writer and is credited with three significant novels: *Koveru Kazhuthaigal* 1994 its translation in English 'Beast of Burden' (2001). *Arumugam*(1999) was his second and *Sedal* in 2006 and two short story collections namely *Mannbaram* 2004, and *Video Mariamman* in 2008. Some of his novels are prescribed as syllabus in many universities. He had been selected for the 'Tamil writers – 2009 award'.

Jasmine K Roy and Avinash Roy are independent filmmakers working under their own banner, Wanderlust Films. She has graduated in Political Science (hons.) from Lady Shri Ram College, and he had his post graduation in History from Delhi University. Both of them graduated from the Film & Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune in 2004, with specialization in Film Direction and Editing respectively. Their graduating diploma film *Saanjh* (The Dusk) received the National Film Award for Best Film on Family Welfare in 2005 and the same has been screened at international film festivals. Under the banner of Wanderlust Films, they have produced and directed short films and documentaries.

Kadambari is Associate Professor of English in Ethiraj College. She is credited with many publications and translated works. Bilingual speaker, writer and translator- served on many boards, interview panels, delivered keynote addresses, inaugural speeches and endowment lectures.

Kutty Revathy is a Tamil poet. Her poetry seeks to evolve subversive language to explore and reclaim a long colonized realm of experience.

Anjali Monteiro and K.P Jayasankar are faculties of Centre for Media and Cultural Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Monterio has a Masters degree in Economics and a PhD in Sociology. Jayasankar has a M.A in German language and a PhD in Humanities and Social Sciences from the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. Both of them are involved in media production, teaching and research. Jointly they have won thirteen national and international awards for their videos.

Azeez Tharavana is a reputed Malayalam writer, journalist and editor of State Institute of Languages, Kerala. He wrote six books in Malayalam. He holds a doctorate in Malayalam literature.

Azhakiya Periyavan is distinguished Dalit writer and columnist. He had authored books, novels, short stories and essays on cultural politics and literary criticism. He had received two state awards in 2003 and 2009. He also got *Sigram 15: Faces of Future* award for literature from India Today in 2006. He has a passion for film and music.

Bharathi Krishnakumar is an activist of TamilNadu Progressive Writer's Association from Sattur, South TamilNadu, Krishnakumar resigned his bank job to become a film maker. He is known for his convincing and powerful oratory. *Ramaiahvin Kudisai* is his debut film. His second film *Entru Thaniyum* is about the Kumbakonam fire accident in which more than 90 school children were burnt alive.

Deepthi Sukumar works in 'Christian Aid', U.K based NGO in Chennai. She is an emergency programme officer. She is a core member of *Safai Karmachari Andolan (SKA)*. She has other working experience with marginalized communities. She hails from Andhra Pradesh. She is an active dalit feminist voicing her concerns against manual scavenging.

George K. Alex is a lecturer in Political Science St.Thomas College, Kozhencherry has Published three major works in connection with Kerala's micro political movements entitled *Eco-Politics* (2003),

Film	She Write (2005) Tamil with subtitle (54 min.)
Theme	Feminist poets' personal narratives
Director(s)/Producer	Anjali Montero & K.P. Jayashankar/ Centre for Media & Cultural Studies, TISS
Discussants	Theodore Baskaran
Screening Schedule	2:55 - 4.00

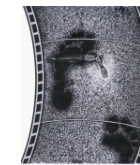
Film	Resilient Rhythms (2006) English (64 min.)
Theme	Atrocities against the Dalits across India
Director(s)/Producer	Gopal Menon
Discussants	K.A. Shaji
Screening Schedule	4:00 - 5:05

Film	To Die for Land: The Ultimate Sacrifice (2008) Malayalam with subtitle (37 min.)
Theme	Chengra land struggle
Director(s)/Producer	Saratchandran/Third Eye Communication
Discussants	George K. Alex
Screening Schedule	5:05 - 5.45



JANUARY 27, 2010 WEDNESDAY

Session 6 9:30 am - 1:30 pm

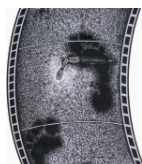


Film	Dondara (2006) Telugu with subtitle (42 min.)
Theme	Madiga struggle for Scheduled Caste categorization
Director(s)/Producer	P. Srinivas
Discussants	Sareen Chatla / Nageswara Rao
Screening Schedule	9:30 - 10:15

Film	Melavalavu (1999) Tamil with subtitle (30 min.)
Theme	Murder of six dalits including a Panchayat president
Director(s)/Producer	Santha / Institute of Social Science
Discussants	M. Velusamy
Screening Schedule	10:15 - 10:45

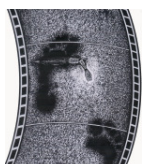
Film	Riding Slow to the Top of World (2006) English (1:34 min.)
Theme	Experience of lonesome traveler in Himalayan region. Exploring lives of herdsmen and nomads
Director(s)/Producer	Gaurv Jani
Discussants	Ramanujam
Screening Schedule	10:45 - 12:20

Film	The Time After Tsunami English (37 min.)
Theme	Testimony, struggle and concerns
Director(s)/Producer	K P Sasi/VAK
Discussants	Pavanathi
Screening Schedule	12:20 - 1:00

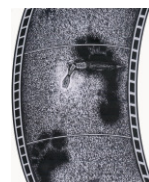


JANUARY 27, 2010 WEDNESDAY

Session 7 2:30 - 7:00 pm



Film	Kal Manithargal (2009) Tamil (35 min.)
Theme	Stone cutters' struggle
Director(s)/Producer	Kutti Revathi/Quarry workers development society
Discussants	Kadambari
Screening Schedule	2:30 - 03.05



Imaging Dalit Reality: Politics of Visual Representation

**A brief Profile of
Film directors and Discussants**

Aadhavan Theetchanya is a creative writer and chief editor of *Puduvasai*, a Tamil Literary Quarterly. He credits three poetry collections: *purathilirudhu*, *Poozeeyathilirundhu Thuvangum Attam*, *Thanduki*. Two short story collections-*Ezhuthu Vendiya Notkurippu*. Besides, he also writes essays on socio-political issues. He is a Joint General Secretary of Tamil Nadu Progressive Writer's Association.

Akumarthi Nageswara Rao is working as Assistant Professor-cum-Assistant Director in centre for study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad. He also is completing his Ph.D. thesis in Political Science, University of Hyderabad. He had actively participated and presented papers in national and international seminars and conferences.

Dr. Amal is a Vascular Surgeon, health activist, interested in equity and peace and disarmament.

Amudhan R.P is a media activist based in Madurai is involved in making documentaries, organising regular film screenings, annual film festivals and video workshops. He has founded and coordinated the Madurai Film Festival since 1998.

Anand Teltumbde is a human rights activist associated with CPDR, Mumbai and IPHRC; political analyst, theoretician, and writer on contemporary issues. He has published 16 books and numerous papers and pamphlets, which are widely translated in most Indian languages. An alumnus of IIM, Ahmedabad, he is presently working as Managing Director of Petronet India Ltd., Mumbai. One of his many facets, which is overshadowed by his activism is that he is an accomplished painter, with three one man shows to his credit.

labour. These invisible communities live in deplorable situation with untold exploitation met out to them. The film travels to quarries of Tamil Nadu and captures the reality and vulnerabilities of their existence. The women and children have become part of the bonded labor system that is exerted on them through generations.

Ramaiahvin Kudisai (2007) 70 min.

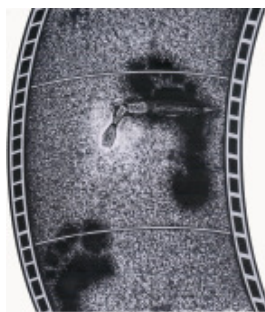
Bharathi Krishnakumar

Keezh Venmani, a village near Tanjore in Tamil Nadu witnessed bloodshed in 1968, where 44 landless agricultural laborers who are dalits, mostly women and children were burnt alive in a closed hut. The incident was a painful proof of the castiest-feudal oppression experienced by the dalits and landless workers in rural India. After several decades the history was retold graphically in this film.

In the name of medicine (2005) 25 min.

K. P Sasi

A documentary film is about medical industries and health care system in India. It is a problem that banned and bannable pharmaceutical drugs across the country are freely sold and manufactured. As a result it is always the poor and working class who fall victims of vices. The film brings out the anti-people practices of pharmaceutical companies and its implication on health in India.



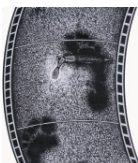
Film	Ramaiyavin Kudisai (2007) Tamil without subtitle (1:10 min.)
Theme	Based on Keezhvenmani Massacre
Director(s)/Producer	B. Krishnakumar
Discussants	R. Mallika
Screening Schedule	3:05 - 04:15

Film	In the Name of Medicine English (25 min.)
Theme	Medical industries and its business
Director(s)/Producer	K P Sasi
Discussants	Amal
Screening Schedule	4:15 - 4:45

JANUARY 27, 2010 WEDNESDAY • SESSION 8 • 5:15 - 7:00 PM

VALEDICTORY

Chair	Prof. A.R. Venkatachalapathy Cultural Historian, MIDS
Summary	Ph.D. Scholars, MIDS
Speakers	Prof. Sadanand Menon Faculty, Asian College of Journalism Dr. Anand Teltumbde Eminent Scholar and Political Activist
Vote of Thanks	Dr. C. Laskshmanan Coordinator of the film festival and painting exhibition MIDS



Imaging Dalit Reality: Politics of Visual Representation

Synopsis of the Films

We have selected the films on four diverse aspects which directly /indirectly deals with the issues of development and thematic concerns of the programme. The aspects of films represent the caste culture, problem of the labourers, creative potential of the marginalized; finally struggles and concerns for natural resources. However, we have decided that screening would be as per the following sequence:

Mahadiga (2004) 42 min.

Lelle Suresh

The film is a brilliant portrayal of musical treat with exploring objective conditions of the landless agricultural labourers. It weaves into distinct knowledge of skinning animals and techniques of Dappu instrument making. Further, it also explores the exploitative feudal casteist mode of production and the continuity of the same without a major change. It offers solace even in the utter discrimination, deprivation of working class/ caste embedded with so much traditional life skills with joy and pleasure.

The Untouchable Country (2001) 30 min.

R.R Srinivasan

This film crisply focuses on atrocities against Dalits in Tamil Nadu, India over the decades. The film begins with the scene at the Kanda Devi (Trinelveli, Southern Tamil Nadu) temple where the Dalits are not allowed to draw the temple chariot and which goes back to the 1968 Keezhvenmani massacre. This film was specially made for the purpose of screening at the World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, 2001.

Breaking the long Silence (2008) 25 min.

Mustafa Desamangalam

As a constant engagement with culture and politics, Dalit Intellectual collective has taken initiative to bring together Dalit artists, writers, literary

were killed for contesting the election in the village called *Melavalavu*, South India. The film was shot within a month after Murugesan and others were killed. The documentary film exposes the intolerance of the caste Hindus against the Dalit emancipation. In December, 1996, Murugesan, a Dalit, contested for the post of president of *Melavalavu* Panchayat, near Madurai, and won. The members of the dominant community, the Kallars, were aghast and angry. "They told Murugesan he would be taught a lesson," says Dr. George Mathew, the founder-director of the Delhi-based Institute of Social Sciences.

Riding Solo to the Top of the World (2006) 94 min.

Gaurav Jani

The film is a wonderful treat to the viewers of a lonesome traveler, who rides his motorcycle to the Ladak region. He interacts with people in the Everest region capturing the moments of beauty, pain, love, hardship, self doubt and spiritual triumphs... The Hemis festival that comes once in twelve years, the Tashi Choling monastery where the Chang pas pray to the Rain God and the ever changing life of the Chang pas, have all been shot in their splendor and festivity. It explores the life of herdsman and nomads in the Himalayan region.

The Time after Tsunami (2005) 37 min.

K.P. Sasi

This documentary film awakens to recollect the pains of tragedy and there after. It captures people's public hearing on the progress of relief work and different initiatives. Tsunami victims of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Pondicherry had disposed their grievances to juries drawn from academics, political / human right activists and former judges. The testimonies of the victim's experiences clearly shows their agonies and indifferent attitude of the establishments.

Kal Manithargal (2009) 35 min.

Kutti Revathi

Kal Manithargal portrays "stone cutters"— communities/ quarry workers' objective conditions. They make their livings by hard labour breaking rocks, cutting stones and making blue metals. Their contribution to development is immense but the caste minds hardly recognized their

Resilient Rhythms (2006) 64 min.

Gopal Menon

India's caste system is perhaps the world's longest surviving system of exploitation based on social hierarchy. It places nearly 160 million Dalits at the outskirts of society, exploiting their services, especially to perform the so-called "polluting" tasks from cutting the umbilical cord to disposing night soil, to tending cremation of grounds while denying them acceptance even as human beings. The film documents the various atrocities that are committed on people simply because of their caste and shows how Dalits are fighting back. Resilient Rhythms is the first comprehensive film on the Dalit issue attempted in India and explores a range of Dalit responses from armed struggle to electoral politics.

To Die For Land: The Ultimate Sacrifice (2008) 30 min.

C. Saratchandran

The land struggle has become the venue for the people who seek the meaning of their life. The film documents the emotional culmination for the thirst of land as the primary source of their human development. The landless Dalits are coming from Rubber plantations of Chengara in Kerala, struggle for agriculture land. They are deprived of education, health, sanitation, housing, basic amenities. The film exposes the awed situation of the land reforms and model of development in the state.

Dondora (2007) 40 min.

P. Srinivas

Caste based state intervention for emancipation of subordinated social groups at time makes simultaneous effects and new challenges. The film Dondora portrays struggles of *Madiga* community in Andhra Pradesh for categorization of Scheduled Caste list. The film provides narration of diverse nature with justification for such demands. In the process of community mobilization, the people assert their culture, history and their politics.

Melavalavu (1999), 30 min.

Santha

In the year 1996 a Dalit Panchayat President Murugesan and six others

figures and poets to express their creative urges, the formation of a critical intelligentsia as a creative force and to occupy public spaces as the agent of social transformation. It explores 'Dalit Cultural Domain', through paintings and other creative forms. The documentary is based on Six days Dalit Painting Workshop, 'Breaking the Long Silence' which was held at Vagamon, Kerala.

Of inhuman bondage (2005) 27 min.

Gopal Menon

Caste based occupations for certain social groups in the Hindu/Indian Social Structure is never been the choice, rather it is enforced enslavement of the inhuman bondage of the system. So much we boast of scientific technological advancements/ revolution in many spheres of life, except consciously ignoring the manual scavengers. As a result, age old inhuman bondage of Manual Scavenging continued without any of the "habitation of modernity". This film depicts basic contradictions and conscious insensibility.

Nadantha Kathai (2009) 25 min.

Pon. Sudha

It exasperates the conscience of people, how in rural India having or wearing footwear is considered (even continue considering) as a crime. A retired ex-army man from Arunthathiyar (one of the Dalit) community recalls his childhood dreams and pains which revolves around a pair of footwear. This is based on a young and brilliant creative writer Azhakiya Periyavan's short story- *kuradu*. The community stitches footwear for many social groups but hierarchical caste systemic norms prohibits them having a pair! What an irony? Hence, time has changed caste based prohibitions which are being challenged/ broken or overthrown.

Resisting Coastal Innovation (2007) 57 min.

K P Sasi

Natural calamity/ devastation are used for dislocating and alienating the people from their livelihood and resource by agents of state and business for their vested interest. Tsunami has been used as an excuse for uprooting fisher community from the coast in the name of Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ). On the contrary, state and agents of Multi

National Corporations (MNCs) intended to establish Resorts for foreigners whereby one could earn FRC (Foreign Reserve Currencies) through dollars. However, fishing and marginalized communities had resisted with rock solid solidarity against the state and MNCs. This film shows the fishing community's life after Tsunami.

Notes from the Crematorium (2005) 30 min.

R.P. Amudhan

The film captures the experience of the people having to make a living out of the dead and how there is reconciliation, although in death, between the rich and poor, intellectual and idiot. The film shows that people undertaking to cremate or bury the dead are abused by people bringing the body. The film shows how even crematoriums are not provided with basic facilities. It is an inspiration from Fyodor Dostoevsky's 'Notes from the Ground'. The film is a journey through the Madurai central crematorium.

Scavenging Dreams (2007) 25 min.

Jasmine Roy and Avinash Roy

The short film portrays extreme world of different lives namely 'Rag pickers' and 'Scrap dealers', which civil society and academics casually ignores to think and address or even understand them. The movie spins around what we had so far completely ignored the objective conditions that dares us with truth. The truths are not merely about 'Rag pickers' or people of the fringes but of our culture, democracy and politics. The film has addressed the sensibility of aesthetics and attempts to expose the truth.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Feature film: 2001) 3 hrs.

Jabber Patel

This film takes place between the years 1901 to 1956, a period of great social upheavals and revolutionary movements around the world. Seventy million Indian untouchables, led by Dr. Ambedkar were fighting for their rights against upper caste Hindu society. This film holds its significance due to the fact that, though the ethos contained is Indian, it has its equation in the political and social disparity all over the world. The basic aim of the social revolution is to uphold the meaning of humanity in its truest sense. The film has several narrative threads.

Death of River (1999) 25 min.

R R Srinivasan

This film explicitly reveals the state's repression against the Dalit estate workers, who demanded better wage in the plantations. In Tamil Nadu, whether it was the massacre in 1968 of Keezhvenmani, 1999 of Tamirabarani or even the feudal or democratically elected government which did not make any difference. The Dalit landless workers demands were always met with iron-hands. It provides people's democratic mode of protest received by the agencies of state. This particular film exposes how 18 demonstrators were killed in broad day light by the police. It is interesting to hear of state administrations concern about officers' caste than their transgression.

Panthibhojanam (2008) 23 min.

Sreebala K Menon

This is based on a short story *Panthibhojanam*. It peeps into how different castes developed particular kinds of food taste, at least it is presumed to be such a perspective. Characters in the film are reflection of everyday reality of our time, in a way it is a subtle form of untouchability that caste - Hindus uphold the caste values. Whence, modern education provides positive alternative at a time, it also catches-up with new forms of supremacies. Caste permeates Indian society, even today. But its influence most often lurks beneath the surface.

She Write (2005) 45 min.

K.P.Jayasankar and Anjali Montero

She Write weaves together the narratives and work of four Tamil women poets. Salma negotiates subversive expression within the tightly circumscribed space allotted to a woman in the small town of Thuarankurichi. For Kutti Revathi, a Siddha doctor and researcher based in Chennai, solitude is a crucial creative space from where her work resonates, speaking not just for herself but also for other women who are struggling to find a voice. Malathy Maitri is editing Tamil literary magazine – *Anangu* and militantly opposes the attacks on women writers. Sukirtharani, a school teacher in Lalapet, writes of desire and longing, celebrating the body in a way that affirms feminine empowerment and a rejection of male-centred discourse.