



VANDANA TRADING COMPANY

in co-production with

LES FILMS DE L'ÉTRANGER

BEAR CALLED DOG

WALLPAPER PRODUCTIONS

presents

CHATRAK

(MUSHROOMS)

a film by Vimukthi Jayasundara

INDIA – FRANCE, DCP COLOUR, 1:1,85, DOLBY SRD, 90 MINUTES, 2011

ORIGINAL VERSION IN BENGALI AND ISLANDIC. ENGLISH AND FRENCH SUBTITLES

with

Paoli Dam

Sudip Mukherjee

Sumeet Thakur

Tómas Lemarquis

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SYNOPSIS

Rahul, a Bengali architect who had gone off to build a career in Dubai, returns to Kolkata to begin a huge construction site. He is reunited with his girlfriend, Paoli, who had long awaited his homecoming, living alone far from her family. Together, they try to find Rahul's brother, who is said to have gone mad, living in the forest and sleeping in the trees. Despite appearances, the two brothers might have a lot in common.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Early fall 2010, I was asked by Vinod Lahoti, a film producer based in Kolkata, to write and shoot a film in West Bengal, India.

It was such a rare opportunity and privilege that I couldn't pass on. In many ways, India is like a big brother to Sri Lanka. We share quite many beliefs: Hinduism and Buddhism play a very significant role in Sri Lankan life for instance. Generally speaking, India has always been influential to the people in Sri Lanka, whether in the field of politics, arts and lifestyles... As a student, I learned that most of what was dear or important to me was closely related to India: the tooth relic of Buddha, Sri Maha Bodi and even the Sinhalese language, which is ultimately derived from Sanskrit.

This invitation, albeit unexpected, allowed me to fully embrace those roots. So much so that I've never felt – during the whole writing and shooting process – out of place, even while being so far away. Certainly because, deep down, I knew that I was coming home.

“Filmmakers and architects alike share the same goal: to create something that each and everyone can behold and relate to in this world.”

Had I not become a filmmaker, then I guess I would have wound up an architect. Come to think of it, there are very little differences between them. Both are engaged in complex, collaborative co-creation processes. Both have to visualise something that doesn't exist, if only in the form of an idea, a thought or a dream, something that is totally impalpable. And then shape it accordingly, one with the means and possibilities of cinema, the other with those offered by modern software and construction materials.

There is one major difference though. The architect is bound to work within a narrow frame, he's tied to follow detailed specifications and comply with security standards whereas the filmmaker is mostly free of his choices. At the end, the filmmaker is still able to recognize himself in the film he brought to the screen whereas the architect cannot, in most cases, claim ownership of the building he has shaped.

Traces of the old Kolkata are still visible yet. In some parts, the city – within a rich and diverse cultural background – has retained its colourful blend of British colonial architecture.

The need to build on untouched land has led authorities to displace people, especially farmers. As a result, skyscrapers have sprung up like mushrooms. Mushrooms are rootless, they just cling onto surfaces, any surface almost, and proliferate. It's just the same in Kolkata with those skyscrapers you see popping up out of nowhere. Not only do they disfigure the city, they also turn everything upside down and disrupt people's lives.

"The main character is confronted to the transformation of a cultural tapestry in a stereotypical landscape."

Somehow skyscrapers have ultimately become the triumphant cliché of progress and wealth, just as if it were enough to stack up vertical rabbit hutches for a country to be considered sufficiently developed. This is why I chose my main character to be an architect, one who has studied abroad and who finds himself at odds with the country he once knew. He comes back to a modernized Kolkata and is confronted to the transmogrification of a once harmonious landscape into a purely clichéd image. His being part of it, makes it all the more difficult and painful.

I wonder when this transmogrification will reach the shores of Sri Lanka, just as it happened from immemorial time. My little island, will she be able to withstand the weight of skyscrapers? Won't they sink into the sea? Those questions never cease to nag at me.

Up until now, one was able to spot different architectural styles through cultures, lifestyles and traditions, whether in Asia, Europe or Africa. Up until now, one could get about in an environment that had its own life and soul. I shudder at the thought of what will happen when we'll all live in a standardized housing environment worldwide.

Eventually, we'll wake up in a country that might just look like any other and we won't be able to tell where we are. You could be in Kolkata or in New York or Tokyo as well, what is a terrible and unpleasant experiment. Well, this is my obsession and perhaps also my nightmare.

"Staging and filming in India our entry into a world where there will be no more room for diversity."

My first two films, *The Forsaken Land* and *Between Two Worlds*, explored contemporary themes — war, violence, sexuality and mysticism — that affect me very deeply. They endeavoured to break away from the conventions of Western narrative by colliding temporalities and by altering the viewer's perception of time.

Here I was given the unique opportunity to broaden the scope and horizon of my tales without giving anything away. Here I was given the means to make a film about the progressive standardization of our lives and our futures, ultimately meshed up in a certified lifestyle, in a single story, as in a mould, trapped in a kind of architectural esperanto. As if we were all going to make the jump in a world where there would be no more room for diversity.

It is particularly terrible to put it on stage in India. Sixty different languages, dozens of religions and ethnic groups, thousands of gods. I know of no other nations or countries who exceed India in terms of cultural diversity. Given the richness of its culture and traditions, India's transmogrification into a single story is nothing short than infuriating or terrifying. And somehow architects find themselves caught in the middle of the storm...

Vimukthi Jayasundara

VIMUKTHI JAYASUNDARA

Born in Sri Lanka in 1977.

After *The Land of Silence*, a documentary in black and white about victims of civil war, which participated in several international film festivals (Marseille, Rotterdam, Berlin), Vimukthi Jayasundara studied in France at Le Fresnoy Art School. He was selected in 2003 by the Cinefondation of the Cannes Film Festival to participate in their residency programme. Since 2003, Vimukthi lives between Paris and Colombo.

His directorial debut, *The Forsaken Land (Sulanga enu Pinisa)*, has been officially selected at Cannes Film Festival in 2005 (Un certain regard), and got the Camera D'Or award.

Between Two Worlds (Ahasin Wetei) was premiered at the Venice International Film Festival in 2009. The film has been selected afterwards in more than 40 International Film Festivals all over the world.

Chatrak (Mushrooms) is his third long length feature film, the first not to be shot in his native language.

filmography

Between Two Worlds, second feature film, 2009

Venice 2009, official competition

The Forsaken Land, first feature film, 2005

Cannes 2005, Un Certain Regard, Camera d'Or

Special Prize of the jury for the sound (Osian's Cinefan, New Delhi, 2005)

Main Award, World Cinema Film Festival, Bangkok 2005.

Best Cinematography, Durban Film Festival, South Africa, 2006.

Released in France in January 2006 (Tadrart Films)

Released in USA in June 2006 (The New Yorker)

Empty for Love, short, 2002

Selected in 2003 in the programme of shorts of Cinefondation.

The Land of Silence, documentary N&B, 2001

Festivals: Marseille, 2002 ; Rotterdam, Berlin, 2003.

Thibiri Dela, video, 59 min, 1996

CAST

Paoli Dam
Sudip Mukherjee
Sumeet Thakur
Tómas Lemarquis

Paoli
Rahul
The brother
The soldier

CREW

Written and Directed by **Vimukthi Jayasundara**
Music **Roman Dymny**

Cinematography **Channa Deshapriya**
Sound **Dana Farzanehpour**
Franck Desmoulins
Roman Dymny
Art Director **Arup Ghosh**
Production Design **Aloke Roy**
Editing **Julie Béziau**

Line Producer & dialogues
in bengali **Bappaditya Bandopadhyay**

Co-producers **Philippe Avril**
Francisco Villa-Lobos
Michel Klein
Stéphane Lehembre
Yov Moor
Executive producer **Vinod Lahoti**

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