



# HYDERABAD FILM CLUB NEWS LETTER

JUNE 2010

Editor : Bh.S.S. Prakash Reddy

Vol.XXIV

Issue : 4

Rs. 2



CAPTAIN ACHAB



THE SON



THE LAST DAY OF THE CRAZY PEOPLE

RNI No. 44862/86

Registered as a News Paper

BOOK-PACKET (Printed Matter)

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**PROGRAMME**

at Sri Sarathi Studios Preview Theatre, Ameerpet

08-06-2010	6.30 p.m.	: CAPTAIN ACHAB (France/2007/Color/100 mins.) in collaboration with Alliance Francaise of Hyderabad
12-06-2010	6.30 p.m.	: TINY HANDS (Documentary) & Saturday : OSCAR AWARD WINNING BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM (Title will be announced later)
17-06-2010	6.30 p.m.	: THE SON Thursday (Belgium-France/2002/Color/103 mins.)
22-06-2010	6.30 p.m.	: THE LAST DAY OF THE CRAZY PEOPLE Tuesday (France/2007/Color/95 mins.) in collaboration with Alliance Francaise of Hyderabad

**CAPTAIN ACHAB**

(France/2007/Color/100 mins.)

Directed : Philippe Ramos  
Cast : Jean-François Stévenin, Virgil Leclair, Jean-Paul Bonnaire, Philippe Katerine, Pierre Pellet, Carlo Brandt, Denis Lavant, Dominique Blanc, Lou Castel, Jacques Bonnaffé

1840. Who could imagine this young boy reading the Bible in a hunting hut, lost in the middle of the wood, would become, one day, captain of a whaling ship? Nobody. Nevertheless, Ahab grows and seizes the oceans. He becomes a frightening captain, and meets a dazzling white whale... Moby Dick.

An admirer of Bresson, Ford, Hawks and several contemporary action film directors (such as Richard Donner), Philippe Ramos directed his first short film, Vers le silence in 1995. His first feature, Noah's Ark starring Philippe Garziano and Emmanuelle Cornet, was released in France in 2000. Captain Achab is his second feature film.

**Award:** Locarno International Festival Critic's Prize 2007, Rotterdam International Film Festival 2008.

**THE LAST DAY OF THE CRAZY PEOPLE**

(LE DERNIER DES FOUS)

(France/2007/Color/95 mins.)

Directed by : Laurent Achard  
Cast : Annie Cordy, Dominique Reymond, Dorine Bouteiller, Fattouma Ousliha Bouamari, Florence Giorgetti

Young Martin watches the quirky, extraordinary events that occur in an around the family home and barn from a distance. Quiet and introverted, it is only the housemaid and occasionally his brother, Didier,



who pay him any attention. As for his mother, she has locked herself away in her room, while his grandmother assumes control of the household, which is slowly falling apart. When Didier discovers that his next-door neighbour and lover have decided to get married, all hell breaks loose, and the family disintegrates.

**THE SON**

(Belgium/France/2002/Color/103 mins.)

Directed by : Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne  
Written by : Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne  
Cast : Morgan Marinne, Isabella Soupart, Olivier Gourmet

The practice of work is central to Le fils (The Son), a movie about revenge and redemption. The film, like all of the Dardennes', seems straightforward enough: Olivier, a carpenter (played by Olivier Gourmet) takes on a young man named Francis as an apprentice. Francis is newly released from juvenile detention, and Olivier discovers immediately that Francis played a part in the death of his son some years earlier. Francis is unaware of the connection he shares with Olivier, and the Dardennes' use this asymmetrical relationship to investigate the ideas of forgiveness and vindication.

Awards: Olivier Gourmet received the Best Actor Award at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival<sup>[1]</sup> for his portrayal of the tormented Olivier.

**TINY HANDS**

(Documentary/2010/Color/15 mins.)

Directed by : R.K. Akna Goud

A boy was supposed to be inschool, but poverty trapped him in child labour. However he never lost heart; and kept hoping for a chance, to go to school. Sure enough an opportunity knocked at his door. He grabbed the opportunity; and today he is a Doctor. There are thousands of such children's trapped in child labour. What can we do for such children? to know it watch this film "TINY HANDS"

**ATTENTION PLEASE !!**

Members are requested to send their email ID to [hydfilmclub@yahoo.co.in](mailto:hydfilmclub@yahoo.co.in) with their full name and Membership Number

## FILM SOCIETY MOVEMENT'S GENESIS AND EVOLUTION

*(A review of the book: The Film Society Movement in India by H.N.Narahari Rao –by Mrs. Latika Padgaonkar - Article appeared in 'Asian Age' Delhi edition on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2010)*

AT A time when so much of world cinema — classics, new and obscure films — is available on DVDs, television and the mobile, the work done by the Film Society Movement in India sadly remains unrecognised. Few know of its steady build, and of the ideals that nourished it at a time when cinema was a wholly collective experience.

The Federation of Film Societies of India (FFSI) turned 50 last year. A landmark book, *The Film Society Movement in India*, compiled and edited by H.N. Narahari Rao who works with the Suchitra Film Society, traces the movement's genesis, growth and decline over half a century. For those unacquainted with its grand history, it could be a

revelation. Comprising facts and figures, interviews and essays (some unsparing in their critique), the book recalls the personalities that wondrously shaped both the filmmaker and the viewer and sheds light on why the movement declined.

London's first Film Society, founded in 1925, showed hitherto unscreened films from France, Germany and Russia, but definitely not Hollywood or England. "The recent murder of the silent film by her garrulous sister" meant that silent films no longer shown in theatres were also screened. In Paris, cine-clubs took up avant-garde films considered too abstruse for popular exhibition.

That Indian audience also needed to look beyond Hollywood was keenly felt in the '40s itself. But acquiring and screening proved to be a tough call. Statutory requirements had to be fulfilled, censorship and tax exemptions sought and a convenient hall organised for screenings. Above all, people had to be tempted to become members.

By the time FFSI was founded in 1959, societies in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Patna and Roorkee were already operational as intellectual, non-political, non-profit cultural bodies. Screening outstanding but unavailable films was their *raison d'être*, but equally important was to stimulate a serious interest in cinema, hold discussions, launch publications, foster new talent, and even make 16-mm documentaries on an amateur basis.

Those first wondrous years are lovingly recalled by several enthusiasts in the book. The breakthrough came in 1964 when FFSI got a marvellous package from Colombo Film Society — *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, *The Last Laugh*, *The Italian Straw Hat*, *Metropolis*, *Passion of Joan of Arc*, *The Blue Angel*, *Le Million*. It laid the foundation for a healthy film movement in the country. Foreign embassies, the Central Film Library, and later the National Film Archive of India were a vital source of films. The visit of the British journalist and Padma Bhushan awardee, Marie Seaton, catalysed the spread of an enthusiastic film culture. Invited by the ministry of education in 1955 to work with the NCERT and introduce audio-visual aids in teaching, Seaton toured extensively, talked indefatigably, showed films she had brought with her from the British Film Institute, developed friendships with Satyajit Ray, Jawaharlal Nehru (she wrote books on both of them) and Indira Gandhi. Societies mushroomed, some in very small towns accessible only by bus.

It was a fairy-tale beginning that brought in a galaxy of foreign luminaries. For any cinema student, the list reads like a who's who: Georges Sadoul (one of the world's most respected film theoreticians), Roger Manvell (author/co-founder and first director of the British Film Academy), Jerzy Toeplitz (co-founder of the Polish Film School), Donald Richie (former Curator of Film at the Museum of Modern Art, New York), Raymond Durgnat (influential British film critic); and some of the tallest names in cinema: Jean Renoir, Louis Malle, Istvan Szabo, Jiri Menzel, Krzysztof Zanussi, Majid Majidi and Pudovkin. Indian stalwarts also hailed from the movement: Satyajit Ray (the first FFSI president, a post he held till he died), Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak, K.A. Abbas, Shyam Benegal, Basu Chatterjee, Basu Bhattacharya, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Girish Kasaravalli, Pahari Sanyal, and B.N.Sircar to name a few.

But the movement's history was a chequered one. Occasionally, a society's work raised the hackles of outsiders. The Calcutta Society, led by Ray, suffered attacks by film trade members for being a "group of subversive youngsters (that) was running down Bengali films". At another time, they were thrown out

of the house where a meeting was in progress for “spoiling (the) sanctity of the abode.

What dogged the early office bearers was the question of membership: Was there an ideal number of members to be admitted? The problem remained a knotty one for years. The Delhi Film Society, founded by 12 educationists, diplomats, businessmen, administrators (including Vijaya Mulay, Muriel Wasi, Krishna Kripalani, L.K. Jha, and Chanchal Sarkar) believed in the virtue of small committed numbers. Since their meetings were not social events, only those with a deep and sustained interest in cinema could join. Long before their political careers took off, Indira Gandhi and I.K. Gujral became members, and even held the posts of vice-president and Treasurer respectively. Aruna Asaf Ali was also part of this small, privileged circle.

In 1964, Usha Bhagat became joint secretary of the FFSI. Inspired by Seaton, she organised a programme of Ray’s Apu Trilogy, which had thus far been “screened once in a while at unearthly hours in remote cinema halls.” As Indira Gandhi’s long-serving social secretary, it was her responsibility to keep Mrs Gandhi informed of “new developments in the arts, crafts, cinema and theatre”. She took up the thorny issue of censorship of foreign films which had bothered society activists and disappointed and embarrassed embassies that loaned prints.

It was during Mrs Gandhi’s tenure as I&B minister in 1964 that the decision not to censor films screened by film societies was taken. Ironically, it proved to be a double-edged sword. People with little interest in cinema flocked to see nude scenes and sex. Activists were disheartened, but the rising costs of running a society meant that the doors had to be opened to “the hordes of sex-seeking members” (sic): permissive films meant more members; more members meant more money. Genuine aficionados fell out, discussions dwindled and the original stimulus waned.

But the good work carried on: organising festivals with the help of foreign missions; promoting regional cinema, creating study groups, holding seminars (Lindsay Anderson, Richard Attenborough and Georges Sadoul at Iffi, 1965), starting a short film festival and launching publications (Indian Film Culture, Montage, Film Bulletin, KINO, 10th Muse, IFSON, Close-up, Chitra Biksham among others). In Kerala, Adoor Gopalakrishnan started not just a society but a film cooperative for production and distribution. Most interesting was the movement’s

impact on film criticism. In Bengal, writes Chidananda Das Gupta, the press “changed the style and content of its reviews” as early as in the 50s.

With the advent of colour television and the VCD in the 80s, decline was inevitable. While some societies were active, others depended on the drive of a single individual.

Responses to the movement have been mixed. Some writers regret the absence of palpable results, others speak of “irregularities in accounting and misappropriation of funds”; still others acknowledge that new filmmakers were promoted, but proper film appreciation and clarity of purpose were lacking.

Where do the 250-odd extant societies go from here? Gaston Roberge, author, teacher and founder of Chitrabani, a communication centre in Kolkata, feels that since cinema is not the only important medium today (there are telefilms, ads, music TV, the mobile etc), societies need to focus on not just film appreciation but on media appreciation as well.

The Film Society Movement in India is a labour of love. Richly illustrated, it would have gained greater polish with tighter editing and subbing. But as it stands, it presents an objective account of what some far-sighted and dedicated individuals did for the glory of cinema in this country.

**Latika Padgaonkar**



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**Printing Courtesy**  
**navya printers,**  
Rajbhavan Road, Somajiguda,  
Hyderabad - 500 082 . Ph : 040 - 23314147

**Printed, Published and Edited by**  
**Bh.S.S.Pakash Reddy, Secretary,**  
Hyderabad Film Club,  
103, Padmavathi Mansion, Gayathri Nagar,  
Hyderabad- 500 038. Cell : 09391020243  
Processing and Printing at Navya Printers, Hyderabad-82.