



The inaugural ceremony was so colourful and unique with the lighting of lamps by the veterans of yester year Malayalam Cinema followed by the cultural show 'Incredible Kerala'.

#### Madhu Eravankara

The International Film festival of Kerala (IFFK-2006) held at Thiruvananthapuram has made yet another indelible mark in the map of International Film Festivals. As the Festival's Artistic Director claims, it is a 'Festival with versatility', showcasing the current trends in World Cinema.

# A Festival With Versatility

The inaugural ceremony was so colourful and unique with the lighting of lamps by the veterans of yester year Malayalam Cinema followed by the cultural show 'Incredible Kerala'. The opening film, *Sounds of Sand*, directed by Marion Hansel, set in the wilderness of African desert took the audience to an unparalleled cinematic experience that

necessarily gave an insight into the characteristics of the films to come in the following days.

#### IFFK Competition

The standards of the films for the competition determine the character of a particular film festival. The IFFK-2006 could attract a bunch of renowned filmmakers from Asian, African and Latin



A still from the film 'Paradise now'



A still from the film 'Kiss me not on the eyes'



A view of the closing ceremony of IFFK 2006.

American countries for the competition, restricted to films from these countries. The devastating reports in the local media created an impression that the competition films were not up to the mark. To a serious cineaste these films were not disappointing as they represented various schools of filmmaking with distinct forms of narratives. However one should not discard the fact

that the general fall in the standards of films from these countries naturally reflect on the competition films too.

### Malayalam & Indian Cinema

These sections could bring out a package of films, which do not necessarily represent the mainstream. The films like *Pulijanmam*, *Pranju Theeratha Visheshangal*, *Saira* and *Nottam* were refreshing. But the

Indian Cinema section is a warning to the alarming conditions of Regional Cinema where parallel cinema movement has already died out. But films like *Mati Maayi* (Marathi), *Naayi Neralu* (Kannada), *Kathanthar* (Oriya) and *Dosar* (Bengali) are rays hope indicating the green contour of real Indian Cinema.

### World Cinema

This was the most attractive section of IFFK with a lot of brilliant selections. The festival audience had the opportunity to view some of the extra ordinary films like

*The Bow* (Kim-Ki duk), *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* (Ken Loach), *Volver* (Pedro Almadovar), *Climates* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan), *It's Winter* (Raffi Pitts), *Scream of the Ants* (Makhbal baf), *The Journey* (Gautam Ghosh) and *Hidden* (Michael Haneke).

### Retrospectives, Contemporary Masters, Country Focus and Homage

One of the exciting highlights of IFFK-2006 was the retrospectives of the Phalke Award winner Adoor Gopalakrishnan, the mighty Brazilian director Glauber Rocha and the uncompromising French master Louis Malle. The films of Abderahmane Sissako, the celebrated second-generation African filmmaker and Albert Dupontel,



**In the Country Focus section, films from South Africa, early Iranian films, French comedies and short films from Spain were presented of which the South African films have stolen the glamour of the show. *Sarafina*, *Cry the Beloved Country* and *The Red Desert* addressed the issues of South Africa of the post independence period.**

Man is an absolute riddle. His moods and behaviours are unpredictable. Keeping the inner anarchy and restlessness within him, he smiles and shouts like a performer in a running drama show. But at times a sudden outburst occurs inviting the unexpected and putting the system in entropy. *Angel's Fall*, set in the backdrop of the modern city life, explores the inner world of human beings where loneliness, absence of love and longing for love forms an integral part.

An young lady Zeynep is working as a chambermaid in a big city hotel. She has no attachment with the people or world around her. She lives with her father to whom she has no intimacy at all. At times he becomes violent too. His behaviour seems to be unpredictable. She neither wants to be friendly with her colleague who unsuccessfully

## ANGEL'S FALL



**Angels' Fall/** Turkey- Greece/ 2005/35mm/Colour/98'/ Turkish

woes her. When her life was thus flowing uneventfully, she happens to meet an abandoned husband, which turns her life drastically.

## FOREVER FLOWS



**Forever Flows/Bangladesh/2006/35mm/Colour/95'/Bangla**

And, yet another story of a sex worker who sacrifices her life for the sake of her family, *Forever Flows* dwells on the human predicament, the coldness of relationships, and the immaculate flow of life in its trials and tribulations.

*Forever Flows*, in Bangla language, is an adaptation of the acclaimed novel 'Janam Janam' by the celebrated novelist Humayoon Ahmed. The protagonist Thithi, the eldest daughter of an aristocratic but financially weak family, had to resort to the job of a sex worker to keep her family alive. Her old sick father, complaining mother and unemployed younger brother are very much dependent on her. A pimp, who dislikes his own unholy profession, helps her to find out suitable customers. For a brief period she enters into an uncomfortable relationship with an ill-fated wife of one of her client's. Thithi helps her brother to establish his business and soon he shifts to a modern

the cult figure from France were included in the Contemporary Masters section. In the Country Focus section, films from South Africa, early Iranian films, French comedies and short films from Spain were presented of which the South African films have stolen the glamour of the show. *Sanafina*, *Cry the Beloved Country* and *The Red Desert* addressed the issues of South

Africa of the post independence period. It was simply fair on the part of the festival to pay homage to one of the greatest cinematographers of the world Sven Nykvist, the noted Malayalam filmmaker Pavithran and the celluloid enchantress Srividya.

### Jury Films, Documentaries

### and Short Fiction films

A presentation of films by Jury members added charm to the festival. Patricio Guzman's *Salvador Allende*, Elia Suleiman's *Chronicle of Disappearance* and Revathi's

*Phir Milenge* need special applause. IFFK has paid due importance to otherwise marginalized documentaries and short

## IFFK-2006 AWARDS

*Angel's Fall* is slow paced. Profusely employing wide frames to convey the melancholy mood of Zeynep, the director Semith Kaplanoglu, catches up the emotional build up of the protagonist. In craft, characterisation, and in the attempt of reaching the spectator, *Angel's Fall* excelled many of the films in the competition section and so rightfully shared the Suvarnachakoram of the 11<sup>th</sup> IFFK.

*Angel's fall* is Semith Kaplanoglu's second feature film, made in 2005, as a Turkey Greece co-production. The film has won many laurels in International Film festivals. The film had an entry in Berlin, Istanbul, Nantes, Pusan and Rootterdam film festivals before being screened in IFFK-2006

flat in the city with the parents. She is left alone in the ancestral house and realizes that her life will flow like this eternally without any change.

Even though the film has come from Bangladesh, directed by Abu Sayeed, it looks very much Indian in its set up and depiction of family drama. For an Indian viewer, there is nothing new in the theme, but the creative use of the film medium to expose an oft-repeated story is really commendable. And this might be one of the reasons for sharing the Suvarnachakoram by the film in IFFK-2006. Interestingly this may not be one of the best films in the competition section, but the assessment of an international jury is not to be taken in mistrust.

fiction films from all parts of the world and in addition special avenues were extended for animation films and diploma films from Film Schools.

Apart from screening the films IFFK could provide enough space for interactions and deliberations. The 'Open Forum', which dwelled on issues pertaining to cinema and the 'Meet the Director's

Programme' were daily events. A seminar on 'Digital Aesthetics and the Future of Cinema', lecture on 'The origins of American Film Noir', Workshop on 'Emerging Trends in Sound Recording' Lecture Demo on 'Digital Special Effects' and the Aravindan Memorial Lecture by Mani Kaul were the other highlights.

IFFK-2006 had more than six

**IFFK-2006 had more than six thousand delegates registering a record. Does this in any way increase the quality of the festival? The answer is definitely negative. Issuing the delegate passes double the seating capacity naturally invited troubles in proper viewing.**

- Suvarna Chakoram for the Best Film ( Rs 10 Lakhs ) Shared by the films *Angel's fall & For Ever Flows*
- Rajata Chakoram to the Best Director ( Rs 3 Lakhs ) Ashar Farhadi ( Director of *Fireworks Wednesday/ Iran* )
- Rajata Chakoram to the Best Debut Film of a Director ( Rs 2 Lakhs ) *Sankara* ( Srilanka ) directed by Prsanna Jayakodi
- Special Mention by the Jury *The Whispering Of The Gods* ( Japan ) directed by Tatsushi Omori
- Audience Prize Rajatachakoram to the Best Film in Competition voted by the festival delegates ( Rs 1 lakh ) *The Violin* ( Mexico ) directed by Francisco Vargas

### Other Awards

*Fipresci* : Award for the Best Film in Competition

*Forever Flows* ( Bangladesh ) : Directed by Abu Sayeed

*Netpac* : Award for the Best Asian Film in Competition

*Sankara* ( Srilanka ) : Directed by Prasanna Jayakodi

thousand delegates registering a record. Does this in any way increase the quality of the festival? The answer is definitely negative. Issuing the delegate passes double the seating capacity naturally invited troubles in proper viewing. It may be an unpleasant observation that the decrease in the number of matured audience deteriorates the quality of the Kerala festival. The majority, it seems, are not interested in understanding the dynamics of cinema. The absence of a fine culture of film viewing has long lasting effects. The new audience cultures of 'impatience' coupled with lack of state-of-the-art exhibition centres make the other side of the IFFK not encouraging.

In spite of the shortcomings, IFFK is emerging as the topmost International Film Festival of the subcontinent with its wide acceptance in the International circuit, participation of domestic and foreign delegates, the organizational merits and providing a different platform for contemporary world cinema.

■ The writer is a filmmaker and Member of International Film Jury.