

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 4, 2018
2:00PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

KATHO UPANISHAD

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



Based on a sixth century BCE Sanskrit text, one of the most frequently translated sacred texts of Hinduism, filmmaker Ashish Avikunthak's three-part film presents a dialogue between a young man, Nachiketa, and Yama, the god of death, about what it is to die. In the first section, we follow Nachiketa (Suvrat Joshi) through the wilderness. In the second and longest section of the film, Nachiketa encounters Yama (Ram Gopal Bajaj), while the third section depicts Joshi walking towards the camera in the median of a busy Indian road.

In the exhibition catalog that accompanied the presentation of KATHO UPANISHAD at the Chatterjee & Lal gallery in Mumbai in 2012, film historian Amrit Gangar described the structure of the film this way: the first section is about the quest to know, the second about knowing, and the third about experience. Avikunthak describes it as a "film that expounds on this basic quest of human existence. It is a film about a man's pursuit for nirvana."



THE CAST

In the same exhibition catalog, Avikunthak describes the process of finding his actors, beginning with the man who would play Yama, the god of death. "I searched for that man for six months because the one big challenge was that the old man had to memorize the long dialogues. I met Ram Gopal Bajaj, very well-known in the theatre circles, who had headed the Delhi-based National School of Drama (NSD) in the 1990s. When I met him it turned out that as a young student he had read *Kathopanishad* and he remembered many of its phrases by heart. Then I looked for a young student. Nachiketa in the original text is shown as much younger but I wanted someone older and I found an alumnus of the NSD, Suvrat Joshi, in Pune. Though the selection and rehearsal process went on for six long months, I did on-location rehearsal for only two days and then shot the film immediately thereafter."

THE FILMMAKER

Ashish Avikunthak has been making films for more than twenty years. In 2014, he was named one of *Art Review's* "FutureGreats." The publication's citation of Avikunthak describes the duality of his work: "...Avikunthak's works insist on an Indian epistemology while utilising a rigorously formal visual language that is clearly aware of Western avant-garde practices such as those of Andrei Tarkovsky and Samuel Beckett. These are self-consciously difficult works that are filmed in a self-consciously beautiful way." His films have been shown worldwide in film festivals, galleries, and museums, including the Tate Modern, Centre George Pompidou, the Taipei Biennial 2012, the Shanghai Biennial 2014, and the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley. In 2011 he was short-listed for the Skoda Prize for Indian Contemporary Art.

In 2016, the Yale Film Study Center received prints of eight of Avikunthak's films, including the 35mm print of KATHO UPANISHAD screening today, which join the unique collection of Indian home movies and Indian government films that Avikunthak has donated to the FSC since 2015.

WRITTEN, PRODUCED, AND DIRECTED BY

ASHISH AVIKUNTHAK

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY

BASAB MULLIK AND SETU

(2011) 82 MINS.

STARRING

SUVRAT JOSHI AND RAM GOPAL BAJAJ

DID YOU KNOW: AVIKUNTHAK SHOT EACH OF THE THREE SECTIONS OF THE FILM AT A DIFFERENT FRAME RATE, GIVING EACH ITS OWN DISTINCT LOOK WHEN PROJECTED BACK AT 24 FRAMES PER SECOND. THE FIRST SECTION WAS SHOT AT 32 FPS, THE SECOND AT THE TRADITIONAL 24 FPS, AND THE THIRD SECTION, JUST TWO MINUTES IN LENGTH, WAS SHOT AT 72 FPS. ONLY THIS THIRD SECTION WAS SHOT USING A 16MM FILM CAMERA, WHILE THE REMAINDER OF THE FILM WAS SHOT WITH A RED DIGITAL CAMERA, TO ENABLE LONG, CONTINUOUS TAKES.

FIRST, JOIN THE FILM STUDY CENTER FOR THE THIRD INSTALLMENT OF OUR SEMESTER-LONG **INGMAR BERGMAN CENTENARY SERIES**. TO CELEBRATE 100 YEARS SINCE THE BIRTH OF THE SWEDISH DIRECTOR, WE PRESENT NEW 35MM PRINTS OF **THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY** AND **PERSONA**, WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY PROF. DAVID BROMWICH, **THURSDAY, NOV. 15 AT 7PM**

THEN, WE CLOSE THE TREASURES SERIES FOR 2018 WITH KOREAN DIRECTOR KIM KI-DUK'S MEDITATIVE AND DEEPLY MOVING FILM **SPRING, SUMMER, FALL, WINTER...AND SPRING**, PRESENTED ON 35MM ON SUNDAY, **DECEMBER 2 AT 2PM**