



entertainment

C16 Naveen Andrews Appears in 'The Brave One' C14 Indian Comics Perform in SF Bay Area C35 Hrithik Roshan Injured in Movie Stunt

Shyam Benegal: Trailblazing Filmmaker Still Going Strong

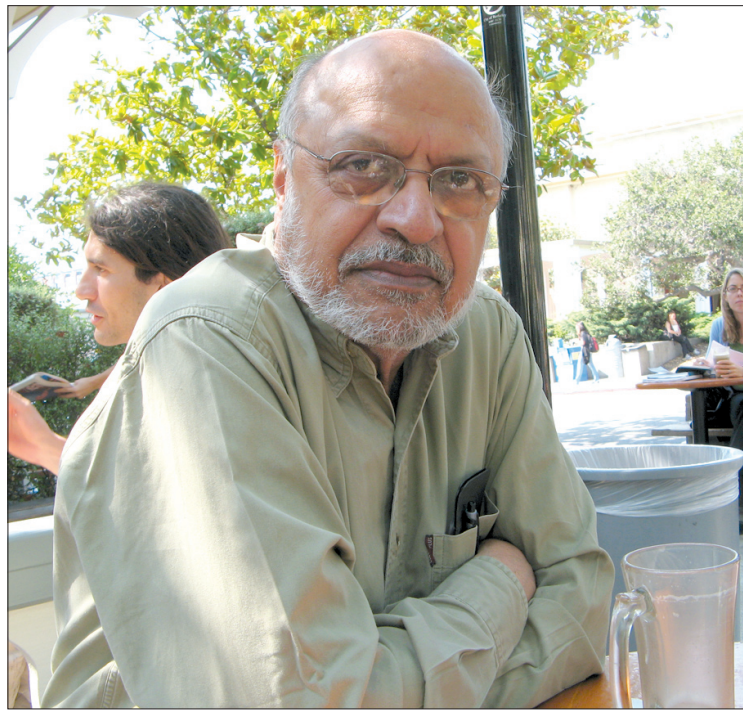
By ASHFAQUE SWAPAN
Special to India-West

BERKELEY, Calif. — In the final scene of Shyam Benegal's debut feature film "Ankur," injustice appears to triumph. The feudal chieftain's son drowns his guilt by publicly beating up the deaf-mute husband of a poor woman.

Then a young kid throws a stone that breaks a window — a powerful symbolic warning that tomorrow will be different.

This is probably a symbol for what Benegal himself did for Hindi cinema. His "Ankur" (1973) broke new ground, bringing in a fresh dose of realism into what was — and essentially still remains — a stylized cinema where fantasy still tends to rule the roost.

Recently Benegal was invited by the Pacific Film Archive at the University of California at Berkeley as it screened three of his films, "Ankur," "Bhumika" and "Zubeida." UC Berkeley's Center for South Asia Studies helped in organizing his visit, which was



Filmmaker Shyam Benegal at Caffe Strada in Berkeley, Calif., during a chat with *India-West*. (Ashfaque Swapan photo)

followed by a visit to UC Santa Cruz.

"We were very excited that Teluride Film Festival had the great

sense to bring Shyam Benegal to this year's festival for a three-film tribute," Steve Seid, PFA video curator, told *India-West*. "It paid

off wonderfully for us at PFA. Not only were we able to screen his films to large, energized audiences, but Mr. Benegal's generosity and warmth with the audience was something to behold. Like his groundbreaking films, Benegal is truly engaged with the world around him, adding another dimension of import to his provocative body of work."

As the 73-year-old filmmaker sat down for an hour-long chat with *India-West*, he didn't look anything like the iconoclast he has been — soft spoken, gentle and disarmingly down-to-earth, he was generous and gracious.

Over the years, he has accumulated a formidable array of awards — numerous National Awards, two Filmfare Awards, as well as two of the most prestigious international film awards — the Palm d'Or at Cannes for "Nishant" and the Golden Bear at Berlin for "Ankur."

A previous winner of the Padmashri and Padmabhushan, he has recently won India's top award for cinema, the Dadasaheb Phalke award.

"It is definitely an incredible honor, there can't be a higher recognition," he said. Yet it was not an unmixed blessing, he said. "I have a kind of mixed feeling about that," Benegal told *India-West*. "I feel wonderful that the state considers me to be good enough to be part of that pantheon ... on the other hand, I feel that normally this kind of an award is given to people after they have finished their careers and I am still an active filmmaker."

Benegal has come a long, long way since a childhood love affair with films that evolved into a desire to actually make them. He grew up in Hyderabad, and it was the films of American directors like John Ford and Billy Wilder that he grew to like. The 14-month post-independence siege of Hyderabad when the Nizam refused to join the Indian union provided a fortuitous opportunity.

"In those 14 months, English language cinemas had no films to show," Benegal said. "Nothing was coming in. So they would go into their vaults and bring out all these

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Doing Good and Having Fun Go Together at Induz Event

By LISA TSERING
India-West Staff Reporter

SUNNYVALE, Calif. — Hundreds of local Indian American families thronged the Sunnyvale Hindu Temple and Community Center Sept. 8 for an all-day event that proved that it's possible to have fun and do good at the same time.

More than 900 people visited the Induz Lifestyle Carnivale over the course of a marathon 12-hour event that included an Induz Idols singing and dance competition, a performance by the Jhankar band, magic performances and a stand-up comedy performance, a yoga demonstration, kids' storytelling sessions and a fashion show.

"Our main goal is to encourage community building," Induz cofounder Ray Mitra told *India-West*. Mitra, along with

Jayadev Chakravarty, organized the event.

The event wasn't a fundraiser per se, Mitra said, but was designed to draw attention to two nonprofits — the Sankara Eye Foundation and the Bring Me a Book Foundation.

The SEF is well-known in the Indian American community for its work providing free eye care in South India and elsewhere; the Bring Me a Book Foundation provides libraries of quality, hardcover children's books and read-aloud training to over 40,000 children across the United States.

Another feature that left an even more lasting impression was the fair's onsite bone marrow drive, which managed to draw in an impressive 91 registrants during its urgent South Asian campaign.

Since South Asian bone marrow donors are desperately needed, Induz's efforts made a great impact last weekend, said one volunteer. "The success of your event is measured by the many people you helped selflessly," noted marrow drive volunteer Varsha Upadhye. "[Induz is] doing a great service to humanity."

The Induz Lifestyle Carnivale's entertainment lineup started with a non-competitive children's performance followed by a fashion show.

In the Induz Idols kids' singing competition, young Anisha won with a rendition of "Chalo tum lekar chale," and Ridhi won in the kids' solo dance category with "Where's the party tonight?" The youth group solo dance was won by Safari Kids with their energetic performance of "Shakalaka boom

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Bhakta Raghavan (l) and Richa Shukla took the top prizes in a modeling contest and fashion show as part of the Induz Lifestyle Carnivale Sept. 8 in Sunnyvale, Calif. (Som Sharma photo)

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