

A fiction film on
The Construction of Identity

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Project II
A fiction film on
The Construction of Identity
by Vaibhav Singh

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Although the ideas and opinions expressed in this work are the author's personal views and do not represent absolute truths or ideas widely held to be true, it is with inevitable humility that one has to admit the fact that there is hardly an idea which one can claim to be totally one's own. In this regard, the entire sphere of influences, conscious or subconscious, deserves to be acknowledged. But since that would be an arduous task, if not entirely an exercise in futility, the author wishes to acknowledge the following for various reasons:

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A film is not about a thought, it is about giving birth
to a thousand thoughts. A film cannot age.

- Mani Kaul

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Cinema [From kinein, to move. kei- in Indo-European Roots]
Greek kinema, kinemat, for motion; French cinéma, short for cinématograph; from cinématographe, coined in 1890s by Lumiere brothers, who invented it, from Gk. kinema “movement,” from kinein “to move” (see cite). Meaning “movies collectively, especially as an art form” first recorded 1918. Cinematography is from 1897; cinéma vérité is 1963, from Fr.; Cinerama, proprietary name, is from 1951. *Source:* Online Etymology Dictionary

Film [Middle English, from Old English filmen]
Word History: One indication of the gulf between us and our Victorian predecessors is that the Oxford English Dictionary fascicle containing the word film, published in 1896, does not have the sense “a motion picture.” The one hint of the future to be found among still familiar older senses of the word, such as “a thin skin or membranous coating” or “an abnormal thin coating on the cornea,” is the sense of film used in photography, a sense referring to a coating of material, such as gelatin, that could substitute for a photographic plate or be used on a plate or on photographic paper. Thus a word that has been with us since Old English times took on this new use, first recorded in 1845, which has since developed and now refers to an art form, a sense first recorded in 1920. *Source:* wikipedia

Foreword

The idea of a written document accompanying a work of cinema tends to be merely descriptive and explanatory, and more often than not, a repetition of the ideas already conveyed through other means. As I fail to understand the objective of such a repetition, this piece of writing concerns itself with my ideas about the cinema and on the subject of my project, that is, identity and the realization of the self - and not a description of how I went about doing what I did. As Tarkovsky, in *Sculpting in Time* writes :

“Search as a process (and there is no other way of looking at it) has the same bearing on the complete work as wandering through the forest with a basket in search of mushrooms has to the basket of mushrooms when you have found them. Only the latter - the full basket - is a work of art: the contents are real and unconditional, whereas wandering through the forest remains a personal affair of someone who enjoys walking and fresh air.”

Also, in this case explanation amounts to nothing. If, for instance, the objective of the work is to create signs and metaphors then they must be complete in themselves and independent of accompanying footnotes, otherwise one has to be content with creating cryptograms.

I do not consider cinema to be a problem solving activity, or a puzzle that is to be decoded within a set of rules that the filmmaker decides. Cinema is temporal experience and deals with things as they are. The primary material for cinema is the real - things that are manifest to everyone. It is not in finding or creating unusual things on the screen that the significance of cinema lies, but in the way ordinary everyday things are looked at, in a new light, in fact in a new light that was always familiar, as it were.

That leaves nothing to be explained or deciphered. The work exists independent of my explanations and even my intent, insofar as it is conveyed. The following, is a collection of my thoughts assorted as reflections on the ideas of the work and interludes of meditation on cinema and the self.

I



Images and Reflections

Prologue

The project that I have undertaken deals with three main concerns : the self, cinema and the interaction of the two- all three to which I can hardly claim to have extended my understanding. That is not meant to be a statement of failure right at the outset of the work, but to say that to begin with, I am skeptical of the finality of conclusions. There are no direct answers that can be conclusively derived out of the work nor is it in any way my intention. In fact, in a way the idea is to challenge our preoccupation with definitive answers and logical explanations for each and every thing.

This can be looked at in different ways : as chaos or poetry. One can say that poetry is chaotic in that no one may get the exact idea to be communicated. But in that case, one has presupposed that there is an exact idea to be communicated. Perhaps there isn't a single idea but a nebulous entirety of ideas expressed in a manner which necessitates interpretations. One cannot eliminate the possibility that meaning can entirely be a function of interpretations and therefore purely subjective. In that way meaning can only be suggested and never conveyed or communicated as a finality.

The project that I have undertaken deals with questions of self, of being and the identity or identities in which this being is manifested.

Since it is difficult to estimate how much of what is thought is represented in words, and how much of what is perceived, captured in images, the significance of the medium is substantial in the expression of any idea. Cinema affords the possibilities of exploring not only visual aspect of things but also the temporal aspect, in fact more of the latter. Cinema is before everything else, a temporal medium. And it is the medium which I have the greatest affinity for.

Some Ideas About Cinema

I don't like films that explain themselves. Cinema is not a form of explanation. It is a confrontation- with ideas, with situations, with people you never thought existed (or maybe even those who you think have no right to exist). Therefore, cinema is a more difficult medium to accept than most other forms. It refuses to lie passively on a shelf, the images live by themselves despite everything.

I like to take this idea further and think of cinema as a marginal art, one that is invariably in the system and belonging to it, and in spite of that always at the fringes. The capacity to show what no one wants to see is, I think, of paramount importance. Who wants to look at a man walking? Who would want to look at things that happen everyday? And yet, if one were to probe a little, it would not be difficult to find that we live in an idea of reality that is force-fed to us, and in a way that gets us to like being force-fed. Perhaps, after all we haven't really seen a man walking or that we do not really see things that happen everyday. The capacity of cinema is not merely in representing reality but in disrupting it in a way that one becomes aware of it. The function of cinema, as I see it (and if a term like function can be applied to it at all) is to reinvent reality every time for everyone to confront.

The cinematic narrative cannot be merely an exercise in causality. In fact, the practice of as it were, serving everything on the platter as opposed to active interpretation is what has led to expositions of pedestrian logic being taken for the ultimate goal. The mental lethargy that comes about as a result demands only more escapism and the reduction of cinema to entertainment. That is not to say that entertainment is altogether an error, but that what is significant is the quality of this entertainment and not merely assurances of its presence, which is what most of the mainstream cinematic effort today (and its appraisal) revolves around.

Insofar as the cinema is not simply an illustrative medium, I do not believe that a cinematic idea must be totally understandable or unambiguous. It is only when cinema stops expounding and thinking on our behalf that a clear temporal experience is possible- for that is what cinema is all about. To expect the cinema to provide new and instant knowledge is like expecting a two day seminar to turn someone into a luminary in the field. In that sense, the cinematic experience becomes less falsely gratifying but not any less stimulating (that would not be such a great loss if one recognizes all the machinery already employed in audience gratification).

Cinema cannot make people understand anything more than what they already know, though through the film a process can be initiated leading to newer discoveries within themselves. The medium can only act as a catalyst, not the end in itself.

Interlude : The Self as Absence

“The absolute can never become an object of knowledge, for what is known is finite and relative. Our limited mind cannot go beyond the bounds of time, space and cause, nor can we explain these since every attempt to explain them assumes them. Through thought which is itself a part of the relative world, we cannot know the absolute self.”

Indian Philosophy Vol. I by S. Radhakrishnan

It is evident that the realm of our enquiry is quite definitely contained in the relative world and that all one can ever know is nothing more than passing truths. This assertion in a way invalidates the idea of self realization but as I said in the beginning, the idea of a definite finality is a preconceived notion which may not be meaningful in any given situation. If the self cannot be realized as a measurable entity then it can certainly be understood as an active absence. The self cannot be described in terms of what is already known, for then the realization of the self would amount to the realization of something other than the self. The self cannot be separated from the description of the self, except as negation, and therefore it can never be described. Given this premise, it becomes obvious that the self could only be understood as a metonym, as the pause, the punctuation of a sentence rather than the words themselves. Meaning dwells in the silence between words.



Consequences in Cinematography

In thinking about cinematographic expression, it is evident that the way one looks at an image in cinema has been pre-conditioned by long exposures to a certain point of view and way of looking at the cinema. Today when one thinks about the image one thinks in terms of ideas propounded by a century of cinematic thought which is predominantly, for lack of a better word, Western. That is not a difficult idea to understand given the origins of cinema, at least in its physical form. One can argue that the history of cinema goes back to the history of art and that the history of art is synonymous with the history of humanity - and in that sense, cinema has existed as long as mankind has. Of course, what one is referring to is a much wider sense of cinema than just the beginning with the actual invention of the camera.

What is implicit in this view is that there are ways of looking at and thinking about cinema other than what already exist as systems of some kind of established visual grammar. And what is more important, there already exist world views and conceptions of time and space in every civilization that have been totally discarded in favour of a mono-minded view to universalize expression. As long as the cinema is an artistic endeavour, it will have to be open to embrace all the aesthetic possibilities without resorting to favouring a particular sensibility over the others.

This leads me to the thought of considering the possibilities of an alternative aesthetic in cinematography, given the entire wealth of philosophical and metaphysical Indian thought that already exists.

In thinking about cinema, there is a very slight chance of considering the tradition as anything except the tradition of the West, in fact, to the extent that even unfamiliar genres have been taken for granted, and in the more successful instances, adopted as natural. In speaking of an alternative way of looking at cinema, the tradition of our own filmmaking practices seems sparse and mostly neglected. The mainstream has already consigned itself to an almost parodistic superficiality in the name of the great Indian tradition of entertainment and the small number of attempts that challenge this, are overwhelmed in part by the sheer quantity of such films and in part, by the reluctance of an underexposed audience.

As T.S. Eliot says, "Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour." This is obviously too much to expect from the mainstream and therefore the idea of drawing from the tradition of Indian cinematography is limited to a very small number of films. This has its own problems as given this small representation, it is often misunderstood as elitist and not indicative of the mass culture. The question then is whether it is any good trying to find a tradition to belong to instead of simply complying with the demands of a well established consumership.

Any attempt to answer that question is not in any way to invalidate what exists either in the mainstream or outside it nor to pass judgements over what should or should not be done. The answer lies simply in, as it were, holding a mirror up to everything without separating one's own image from it. Invariably, the one holding the mirror up to the others assumes a superior position, which distances both the problem and its resolution. It is only through one's own reflection that the rest of the image can be reflected upon. In fact, it is only in this light that any meaningful arguments can be made. The one who reflects is himself the image of what is reflected.

The question then, does not remain whether one needs to belong to a tradition or not, but that whether one is in full awareness of the tradition to which one belongs.

The significance of this awareness will be understood when the filmmaker realizes the position of his film as an inseparable part of all the cinema ever made. When the entire body of the cinematic tradition becomes one's own conception, there cannot be any other but one all-encompassing sensibility which would be synonymous with the tradition.

In the entire proposition above, the word tradition has not been implied as a set of rules to be followed and held sacred above all, but as that larger sensibility that our minds invariably draw from.

With this understanding, drawing from a tradition does not remain a question of recognizing familiar motifs or repeating representative ideas but to achieve what in another context has been called a 'new continuity'. With the opening up of the cinema to the entire world and the growing accessibility of filmmaking, it hardly remains for me to point out the relevance of the awareness of the tradition to which one belongs. That the cinema is no longer the privilege of a few, is only as much a thing to rejoice for, as it is a matter of understanding the difficulties and responsibilities that surface with this change.

As Samira Makhmalbaf says, "Twenty years ago if someone wanted to enter the profession of filmmaking she would have been asked if she knew its technique. If she did not, she would have been told that she was illiterate of about half of the art. Some twenty years later the only question she needs to answer is if she has an art."

All the ideas of learning the craft of filmmaking are reduced to mere pretexts for a lack of a meaningful endeavour on the part of the filmmaker. Similarly, all the pyrotechnics of empty style amount to nothing more than a juvenile fascination for a new-found thing. The same applies for the appreciation of a work of cinema. The important thing is to look beyond the surface before extolling short-lived spectacles. In that regard, the cinema cannot be taken to be an entirely visual medium, so long as it becomes restricted to the rectangle on the screen, but as a medium that has 'the ability to take an impression of time'.

The Distance between Fictions

Words and Meanings

It is difficult to determine how many words must pass before any meaning is conveyed. It is, after all, merely an assumption that any meaning could be conveyed through words, irrespective of their magnitude. But one cannot measure the relationship because never will all the words in all their possible combinations be said, nor will all the meaning that is to be conveyed, be known. Perhaps it is more meaningful to travel beyond words into silence, or even move beyond the realm of meaning itself. But as it has been said, one must deserve that silence. So, first words, then silence, seems to be the natural course of being.

If there is anything one has lost, it seems to be this silence. Not only in terms of auditory disturbances but in terms of the entire agenda for sensory bombardment. What fascinates and gratifies the senses for a short period of time could well be stretched to eternity. The loss that is incurred is that of the periods of silence where you invariably become one with the immense silence of the universe. At least that has been the one thin connection that is realized intermittently throughout our lives.

To sever this connection entirely or gradually is to stop deserving silence - the silence that is the origin of all meaning.

And to stop deserving the silence is to relegate oneself to the limited world of words, and to wonder how many words must pass before any meaning is conveyed.

After this, how can anyone think of the cinema as a sensory experience? It is, if anything, a revolt against the senses. That it utilizes and engages the senses in its course is by no means an argument for sensory gratification. It is merely a simplistic formula of exaggeration to keep one from thinking more than what is considered useful. The cinema that resorts to an onslaught of empty sensorial thrill, is like a situation where one is required to out-shout everyone else in order to make oneself heard. What comes out of this situation can hardly be expected to be anything more than an all-pervasive noise where one cannot hear even oneself.

There is an enormous difference between the sensorial and the sensuous. The sensuous experience is the realm of cinema and it does not depend on antics of any sort. It can be thought of as arising from the simplest of situations. In that capacity, it defies any separation from the spiritual, and the artificial divide between the sensual and the spiritual fades away as easily as that between dream and reality in cinema.

Interlude : The Self as One Vast Moment

“The fact that time flows the same way in all heads proves more conclusively than anything else that we are all dreaming the same dream; more than that: all who dream that dream are one and the same being”

Arthur Schopenhauer

If the self exists only in relation to the other, then if there is nothing other than me I must become the other to be myself- for I must be myself at all times. So the other resides within the self. The self is inclusive of the other. Therefore, the existence of the other is reduced to fiction. The self is the distance between fictions.

The self cannot be considered in isolation, it exists as a result of everything and is itself the cause of everything else. When nothing is only itself, there is only one simultaneous existence, of cause and effect, of all oneness and dualities, of all reason and contradiction. The self exists in one vast moment, without a history or a future but the embodiment of both.

Consequences in Cinematography

What is to be derived from all the thought about one's being, the self and the idea of identity, in cinematographic terms alone- to consider a specificity?

The question is too wide to consider even in a fairly specific condition like this. It does not merely concern addressing this issue in the work, but it demands a deeper understanding before the very act of expressing it. In that, it does not remain an external idea to be looked at, but transforms into the entire sphere of experience, in the gradual realization of the work.

This concerns the questions of identity as an artist, the questions of one's relation to the work, the questions of one's understanding of the world and the expression of it in the work. To consider the first, the idea of a distinct identity more often than not is the product of a conscious insecurity in terms of one's position in relation to others. The idea of creating distinctions, to stand out and differentiate one's work from that of the others is merely an outgrowth of this insecurity. These ideas lose their meaning as soon as the attention is shifted from the differences to the work itself, as soon as the work stands on its own feet, as it were.

The understanding of the ideas of the self discussed above lead one to express not only his own view of the world but that of the simultaneous history of all that has passed before because then the work stands not in opposition to but in the wholeness of the entire knowledge. That is the only way of meaningfully looking at it, as it is absurd to say that new knowledge does not belong to existing knowledge. All new knowledge is still knowledge and that in no way undermines its being nor does it accord it any special status.

Therefore, the idea of identity becomes suspect - when everything is one and everything else is also one in this wholeness, the idea of separate identities dissolves.

Also, identity is a function of and depends on memory, of what one was and what one is. This idea also projects itself to construct or aspire for an acquired state of being that one would like to become for some or the other reason. But when the self is understood as one vast moment, memory as a separate instance fades away and becomes one with the consciousness of that particular moment. Then the question of acquiring an identity for oneself or for the work does not arise as there is no continuation but only that particular moment. Identity is distinct from continuity which is merely an outcome of remembrance of things as separate from oneself. When separations cease, there is no illusion of memory and the conception of time changes. This change in the conception of time is especially important to regard, for the purpose of cinematography, as it can be utilized to constitute a more wholistic way of looking at the world.

Cinema defines the dimensions of our experience of situations, and the more open and extensive these dimensions are, the more meaningful our understanding of the work becomes. Place and event, space and mind, are not separate entities, distinguished from each other. Rather, mutually defining each other, they fuse unavoidably into a singular experience. The mind is in the world, and the world exists through the mind.



Ideas and Transformations

Before the Beginning

The ideas of a work should be, I think, like the light of the sun: illuminating everything but leaving the beauty of perception to the eyes of one who sees. The work cannot in any way become the light itself for it would amount to nothing more than just glare, blinding even those who are in full possession of sight.

The obtrusion of the ideas of the work, to the extent that the work becomes a veritable signboard, can hardly be considered a desired quality and at least in that sense, cinema is not about communication. My work is not about communicating a particular idea in its exact form, but rather about stimulating communication. How can anyone, at least anyone in my position, claim to 'deliver the message', as it were, or 'get the idea across', when there exists no idea of giver and receiver? Even assuming such a notion, the only position that can be accorded to the viewer is that of equality, there being nothing that makes my truth more important than anyone else's.

The work can only be appreciated fully, when it evokes in the viewer the same realizations that were the driving force of the filmmaker. The similarity of this evocation, and the extent to which the viewer can experience the oneness with the work, is perhaps the only criterion on which I can make any judgements on it.

That brings me to the idea of the motivations behind the realization of this film, in other words the driving force of the project. I don't think I can say that I wanted to address the subject of self and identity, nor can I say that I chose this topic over others after a detailed analysis. In fact, I am in complete agreement with the idea that, "It is a mistake to talk about the artist looking for his subject. The subject grows within him like a fruit and begins to demand expression." (*Sculpting in Time*, Andrei Tarkovsky)

It is only when the filmmaker is not running the show, but is himself a medium through which the ideas pass, unite and re-emerge in a completely fresh form that, I think, a meaningful work can come into being. The creative act does not remain a choice or privilege but becomes a form of existence, as natural as the act of breathing. With these ideas, the film realizes itself in a form that is the only form in which it can.

Also, given the apparently abstract nature of these ideas, one would expect the work itself to be more abstract. But as discussed earlier, the idea of making a film is not related to finding unusual images, resorting to what may be called literal abstraction, but to deal with that which is manifest. For instance, in order to depict a changing personality, one need not resort to theatricality by using masks. That would only be abstraction in a literal way - 'describing that which is already abstract materially.' Cinema can deal in more subtle ways and can make the very act of viewing an abstraction. It does not need to depend on anything else.

The Construction of Identity

The idea the film began with, was an amorphous character around whom situations and themes evolved. The construction of identity was never the theme of the film but rather the idea implicit in the film. It has to do as much with the character in it, as it has to do with the person watching it. To begin with, I do not intend to demonstrate the idea of constructing one's identity in relation to another, but to let this process take its course through the narrative and through the screening of the film.

It would not mean anything if I were to describe the events, or 'story' in the film, and try to explain the meaning behind each of these. In fact, it would be presumptuous to convey any meaning like that. If any meaning exists, it exists in the mind of the viewer. That is why the events and their meaning must be experienced in time, moment by moment, rather than be explained at once.

In these terms, the film can be understood to be a sequence of events, and not entirely a story, connected to one another not always through cause and effect but through time and consciousness. And the experiencing of these events in time constitutes the film idea. Thus temporality is the basis of the narrative and not the outcome of it.

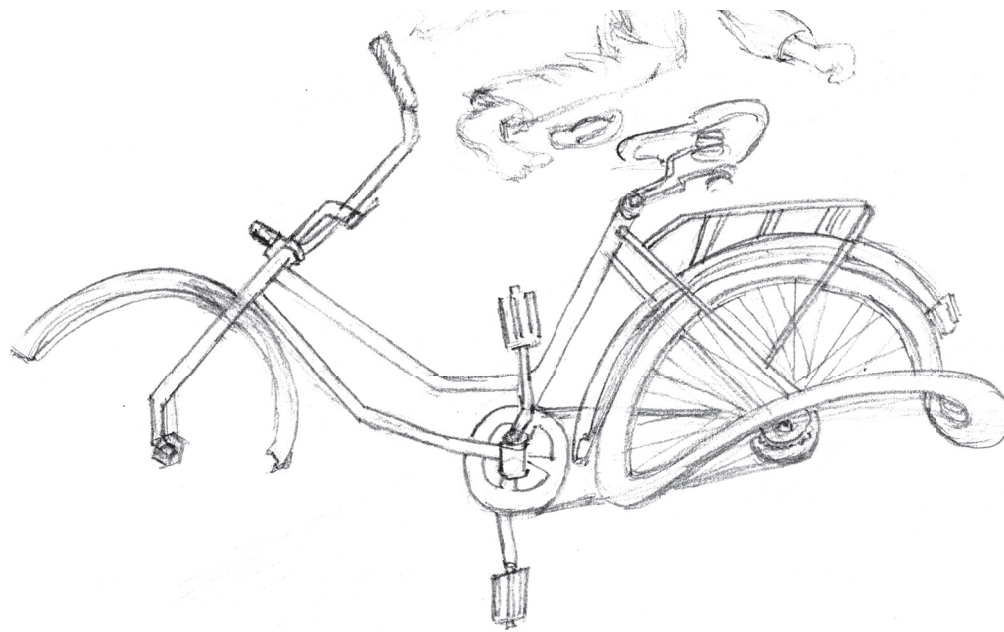


In the process of dealing with identity, the narrative form is seems most appropriate to me, since it helps in portraying the idea of existence without going into such historical and psychological detail that it takes more time than I have at my disposal. The narrative is understood as a way to extract the essence of an event with only the relevant detail, and not merely as a chain of causal events that constitutes a plot.

My objectives at the outset were, to develop and visualize a narrative that reveals the ideas of the work and allows the characters to move within situations in which these ideas can be raised without seeming obtrusive. In the development of the narrative it was natural to consider only those details that were most meaningful to the life of the characters.

The perception of the ideas that the film explores could vary according to the viewing and depends entirely on how far the viewer is ready to indulge in thinking about the images or impressions of time. Obviously, no viewing can be more correct than another - despite the maker's intentions. The film is experience, and no experience is a wrong experience.

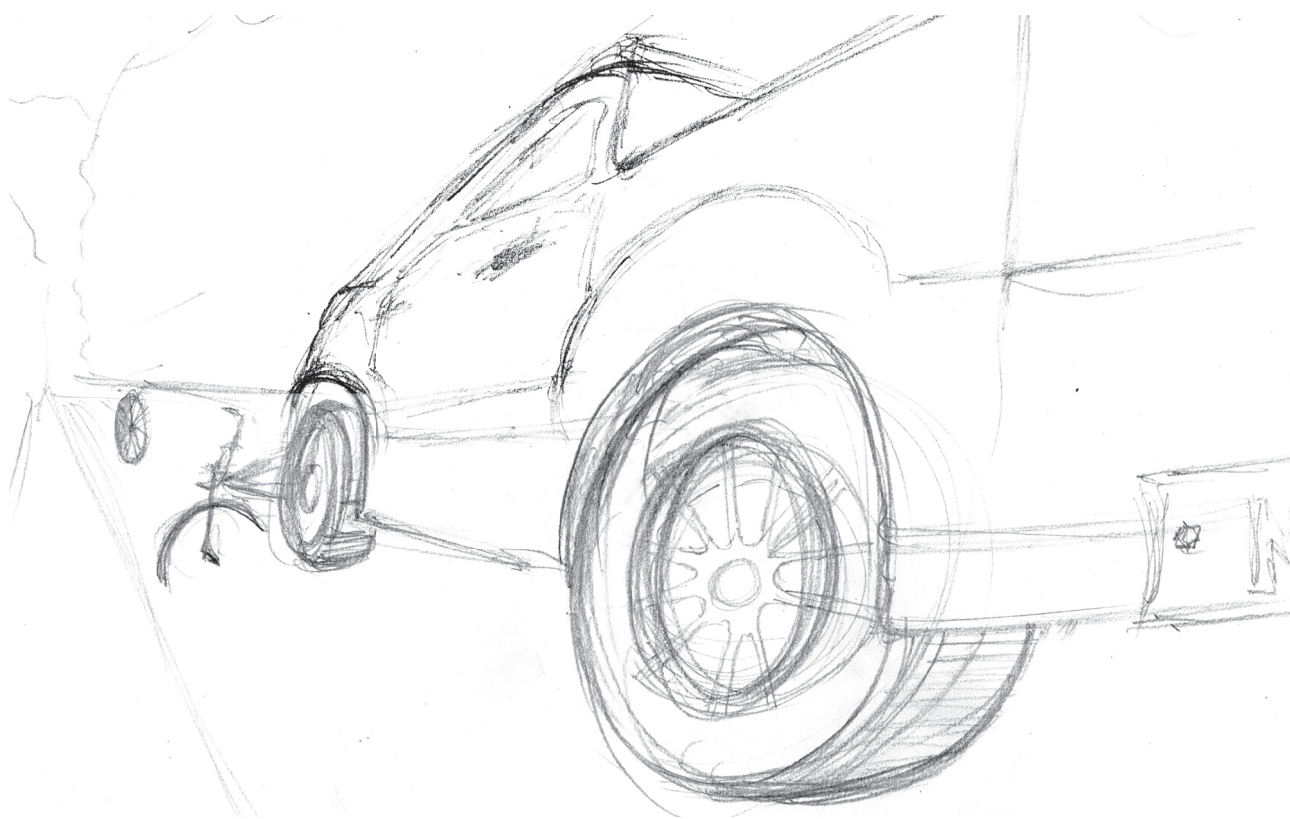
In a short film, it becomes more difficult to realize the idea of a permeating sense of the flow of time, as it is all over too soon - in a sense. That is why most short films make form their sole concern. In my visualization, the sense of time had to be realized through longer shots that gave the viewer space to create or dismantle his own foreboding of the entire sequence, thus creating a kind of parallel time.



Of the many questions that I tried giving visual expression to in the film, one was the uncertainty of whether one could ever lie in the real sense. For as long as one supposes that one lies, it is also implicit that one knows the truth and that one has decided to alter it. All other forms of lying amount to nothing more than errors or misunderstandings. To lie one must first be in full possession of the truth. In that way, all conscious lying is an impossibility for one can hardly ever say that one knows the truth.

This relates to the construction of identity as appearing in opposition to the identities of others, as the existence of the identity of a person as unknown and unknowable except as a construction. When everything is seen as separate from oneself, the duality of oneself and oneself in the eyes of others begins to take shape. For its own existence, the identity must presuppose the identity of the others.

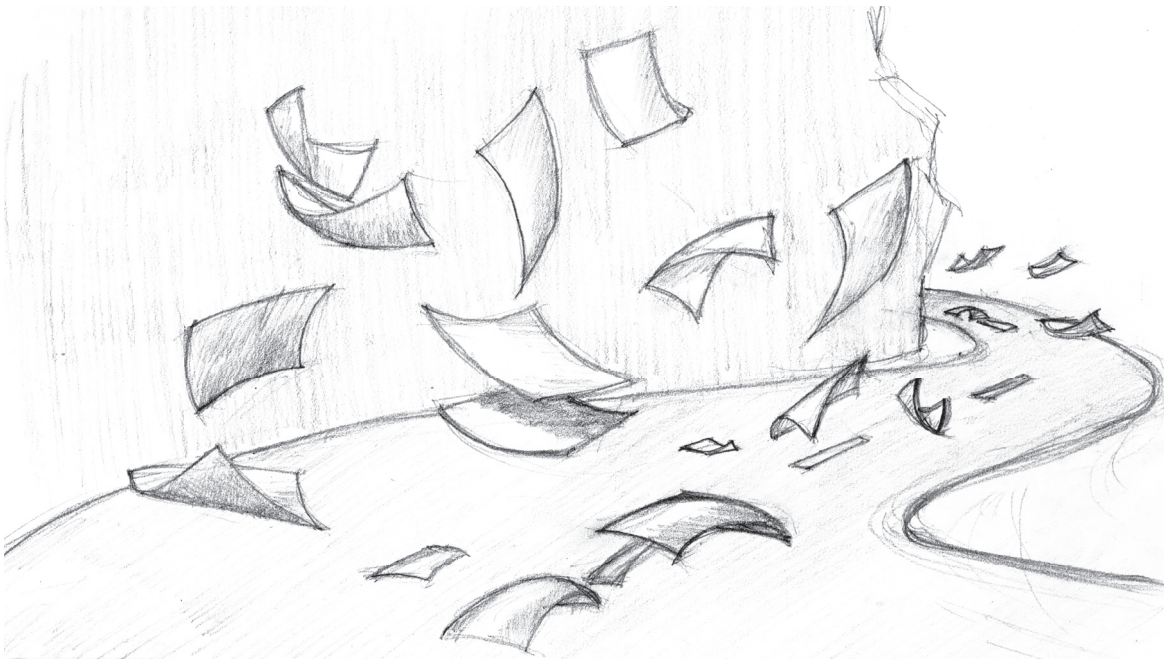
Another question arises from the relationship between identity and manifest action, or behavioural responses. The more the action or behaviour shifts from an arbitrarily accepted idea of conformity, the more the identity starts to acquire stronger notions, negative or otherwise. What is implicit in this response is the idea that identity as understood in its general meaning has a certain basic composition, which is quite independent of the being, and which, when it is upset by unfamiliar responses tends to make one react more strongly towards them. The same action can lead to the construction of many different identities simultaneously, depending upon the level of familiarity or acceptance.



It is not a new phenomenon that the viewer is constantly creating identities for the characters in their own minds as the events of the film unfold in time. The more powerful instances surmount this process and lead to a feeling of empathy in the viewer. The idea of empathy still implies a distinction between one who is and one who is empathizing. The ideal state for me, would be that instance where the feeling of empathy is surmounted by a feeling of oneness with the entire work, as if for a time, one were to be completely in tune and transported to the terrain of the film. Of course, this is not an empirically measurable idea and the response can hardly be expected to be universal.

The idea of the movie began as a poetic response to the questions of being and it is this poetry of the image that was sought throughout the work. I did not want to resort to metaphors, allegories, dream sequences and the like for they cannot be taken to be poetic in themselves. What is poetic is not out of the everyday banality. It does not in any way reside in a -now well established- reservoir of images and has nothing to do with peripherals of colour, environs and setting. The poetry that is sought, is that which is only right in front of our eyes but yet to be realized.

To find an expression in these terms, the only quality to be explored was the rhythm and flow of time and the manipulation of it to achieve the transcendence of one moment into the other without recourse to an empty vaunt of stylistic elements to do the same.



To summarize, the film is about the journey of the self realized through a character whose transformation forms the body of the work. Through the transformation, the ideas of attachment, owning, distinction from others, duality of one's identity for oneself and for others, denial of this identity and realization, crop up and find expression in the work in one form or another.

As the outcome of my understanding at the end of this project, I do not intend to present my work in arguments or generalizations, but rather in living images that exhibit my concern, and possibly connect with the people who engage in it.

Afterthoughts

I do not believe that a film is made on paper. It demands a greater capacity than defining frames and ordering them in a sequence. The material of the medium is very much the parts that cannot be depicted on paper, or even thought out beforehand. The delight in the process results from a fusion of all the parts- the locations, the actors, the equipment, the makers and over it all, the light of the ideas of the film.

Looking for locations is like beginning to make contact with the film idea. Meeting actors is like finding various forms of the character, right out of one's imagination, in flesh and bones. It is an activity that cannot be purely intellectualized as it depends on the constantly changing material being of everything, the locations, the actors, the particular instance in the shoot. This necessitates the capacity to respond to situations, to instances in a purely spontaneous way, instead of sticking to a rigid process of translating the ideas as they are, from paper to video tape. The shooting becomes a living process that acquires its own rhythm and the capacity to follow this rhythm decides the quality of the flow captured on the camera. It is only through a complete subjection to this idea of the rhythm of the living process that one can dream of a purely unconditioned view of things - what Mani Kaul has likened to 'not looking through the camera.'

In a medium of expression as prone to and instrumental in conditioning as cinema, it is difficult to check when the images start speaking to the viewer, and when they start speaking for him, putting words in his mouth designed to be his own. When that happens, I think the medium fails, the filmmaker becomes not one who takes impressions of time, but one who sells ideas for mass consumption.

In my effort, I think I would be able to judge the quality of the work by the variations in responses that it manages to create, rather than passing on a uniform message. In that sense, clarity amounts to some sort of obsession with regulations and a rather limited and predictable view of the world.

The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a
continual extinction of personality.

– *T.S. Eliot*

Postscript

The Beginning, the Middle and the End

It is with great difficulty that one can call oneself a filmmaker (or anything else for that matter). Filmmaking is not an end in itself just like nothing else is. The only manner one can exist consciously is as oneself, not as an extension of oneself. The only way to exist is as a human being, not as a codified, categorized and delineated idea of a human being - everything else is extraneous and descriptive. And one cannot exist merely as a description. It may sound like a primaeval idea but it defies any relation to time, for the only certainty is, that one is, and there is nothing more to it.

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Films

Rosetta (1999) by Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne
Paris, Texas (1984) by Wim Wenders
Jukti, Takko Aar Gappo (1974) by Ritwik Ghatak
Subarnarekha (1965) by Ritwik Ghatak
The Decalogue (1989) by Krzysztof Kieslowski
L'Avventura (1960) by Michelangelo Antonioni
The Mirror (1975) by Andrei Tarkovsky
The Werckmeister Harmonies (2000) by Bela Tarr
The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser (1974) by Werner Herzog
In Praise of Love (2001) by Jean Luc Godard
Pierrot le Fou (1965) by Jean Luc Godard