



Romance Screenwriters Lab 2014

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Romance Screenwriters' Lab Mentors

A Second Life



Pravina Chaube
Writer

Pravina Chaube

After seventeen deeply satisfying years in Mumbai where Pravina worked in advertising and media sales, she moved to the jungle between Auroville and Pondicherry with her husband and two children. The family owns a guest house and conference centre which they manage themselves. She started writing screenplays in 2006 and apart from *A Second Life*, she has written four other thriller dramas.

Synopsis

Raksha, from a sticky, middle-class family, works in a food factory and is a trained classical singer. She is overwhelmed when her guru invites her to perform alongside him on stage. At her family's insistence, she quits her job to perform at series of concerts where Punit Sinha, an NRI, bride-hunting in India, sees her perform and falls in love with her.

He woos her into marriage and after the wedding, she returns to San Diego with him and works at the diner that is a part of the family's drive-in complex. She discovers that Punit hates his oppressive father, who holds Punit responsible for the death of his older son. Punit's mother, a bitter woman torn between her husband and son, vents her frustration on Raksha who is forced to abandon her music and manage the diner alone. Punit's depressive bouts of alcoholism and drug abuse grow worse and when he smashes her sitar in a rage, she decides to leave.

She becomes a housekeeper and nanny to two adopted kids of a banker in Denver; the conservative Matt Wayne; who's reeling from a divorce after being dumped by Cindy, who he married out of compassion when they lost their families in an accident. Family friends, Brendan and Emma who have stood by Matt, forge a warm bond with Raksha, who settles into her work and gets along with the kids who grow to love her.

Matt, apprehensive at first, begins to trust and depend on her and falls in love with her. Raksha's torn between sharing her past with him and allowing things to unfold between them, but when he gifts her a sitar on her birthday, she succumbs and love blossoms. But Punit re-appears one day and when Matt hears of Raksha's past, he breaks off the relationship. Raksha confronts Punit and demands a divorce.

She reaches out to Matt but he's shutdown. They try to rebuild their lives with some help from friends, but it's up to Time- the Healer, to determine whether their paths will meet or drive them apart forever.

Anjuna Beats

Thomas Jacob

Growing up, like a lot of Indian students, Thomas Jacob thought he was going to be an engineer or a doctor. But he loved to write short stories and create comic strips. He began to take writing seriously at the age of seventeen, when he won the TIME Magazine essay writing competition on 'The Most Important Person of the Twentieth Century'. Two years later, he published a non-fiction book called *Trek the Stars* (DC Books, 2002). He then started shooting a lot of short films, his friends and family being the cast and crew.

To pursue his passion as a career he decided to do his Masters in Film Production from New York Institute of Technology. An experimental music video he made in film school, *Strait Jacket*, started winning awards at various film festivals. After finishing film school, he was offered a job at GEN247, a New York based production company. He worked as a writer and film editor before directing *Alternate Reality Games (ARGs)*, web shows, trailers and commercials for the company.

On returning to India, he continued to hone his craft, writing stories, articles and essays. He was a part of the Berlinale Talent Campus conducted by the Berlin Film Festival in 2010. He wrote and directed short films like *Mumbai 2025* (futuristic noir) and *The Actor* (set in the film piracy business). He creates short films, documentaries, corporate ads, music videos and features. He aspires to create meaningful cinema that depicts the human condition honestly.



Thomas Jacob
Writer

Synopsis

Anjuna Beats is a dark comedy about three young people who come of age after a swirl of drug-fuelled madness in Goa. Ronny Fonseca is a young musician living with his grandmother in their ancestral Portuguese bungalow. During the tourist season the rooms of the bungalow are let out and he meets two travellers, Krati and Steve. Krati Shah is an aspiring actress. But after four years in the seedy wilderness of Bollywood, she is sick and tired of it. Steve 'Super Tramp' Haustein, is a disillusioned German hippy searching for the meaning of life.

The three of them form a friendship. Ronny makes his 'party' money by selling weed to fellow-members of his Church choir. He wants to get back with his ex-girlfriend, the beautiful Angelica but she isn't interested. She has started dating the son of an illegal Goan mining baron. To win her back, Ronny decides he needs to impress her by making a lot of money.

Ronny, Krati and Steve come up with an idea of scamming foreign tourists. Steve sells drugs to the potential victim while Ronny and Krati dress up like the police and in exchange for not getting arrested make the unlucky tourist cough up a fat bribe. Initially, the plan doesn't work. The victims are always too nice or too pretty or too poor and the three abandon their plan, guilt-ridden.

But eventually they make it work. The cash flows in. They start living the good life. They hang out in posh hotels, gamble in casinos and go to the hottest parties. Soon, they are caught up in a vortex of sex, drugs and Goan trance.

Everything changes when they scam a Swedish model, Veronika. Veronika's boyfriend is Avigdor, an Israeli gangster based in Arambol. The gangster is furious and soon his men are on the hunt for Ronny, Krati and Steve. The film explores themes of love and sexuality, the guilt and shame associated to it, and growing-up in contemporary, modern India, where changing social mores and cultural landscapes present an increasingly complicated and conflicted challenge for young people.

Love In The Time Of Moral Policing



Nihaarika Negi
Writer

Nihaarika Negi

Nihaarika is an actor, a theatre-maker and an independent filmmaker, based in India and UK. She completed her MA in Physical Performance and Actor-Training from the University of Exeter (UK). As an actor and theatre-maker in London, she has collaborated with leading companies/theatres like Howard Barker's Wrestling School, The Roundhouse, Battersea Arts Center, Barbican Pit Labs, The Hat Factory Arts Center and Artsadmin. She is the co-artistic director of the live art/performance collective *The Ahhhness Of Things* (UK) that has recently been awarded Arts Council Funding for their show at the prestigious SPILL Festival 2014. In India, she was twice awarded as the Best Supporting Actor for the play *Ends and Beginnings* at Thespo 8 (2006) and won the title of Channel [V] Campus Star in a national-level talent competition (2008). As a filmmaker, she has just completed work on her first independent film titled *Labours Of (An)Other Solipsist* with Rajkummar Rao and Atul Mongia. She has recently finished writing Pushan Kripalani's in-production feature, starring Rajit Kapur and Neena Gupta.



Samit Kakkad
Director

Samit Kakkad

Born in Mumbai, Samit is a sought after filmmaker in India, who grew up with an Ad/Corporate filmmaker father Amar Kakkad. He started his career as an editor on TV shows. After a long stint in editing, Samit worked with well-known Indian directors like Rahul Dholakia and Mahesh Manjrekar. He handled challenging and exciting feature films, learning every facet of filmmaking along the way. Samit was the producer and the creative director on his first home production *Huppa Huiyya* (a Marathi feature) which won six awards in different categories at various award ceremonies. Internationally acclaimed *Aayna Ka Bayna* representing India at 18 International Film Festivals, was his maiden film as a director, screenwriter and producer. *Aayna Ka Bayna* is the first Marathi film to be dubbed in Hindi for Sony Max.

Synopsis

This is a coming-of-age story of a female IPS officer during her first-year on the job in the Mumbai Social Services Unit (SSU). It is about the education of Sarita Gogoi: a South-Mumbai, convent-educated girl, who has been schooled into polite sophistication and conventional ideas of morality and femininity, but at her core she wants to 'run with the wolves.'

She believes her liberation lies either in the simulation of an adventurous life, i.e. by becoming an action-film heroine or by picking up a job where the 'action' is inherent. She flounders at the 'acting thing,' but succeeds in becoming an IPS officer and finds out that to be a cop on the streets of Mumbai is the most challenging role she'll ever have to play.

Set against the socio-cultural landscape of Mumbai and its complex-class structures, we trace her journey into womanhood. An anglicized idealistic female officer who speaks little Marathi, she is on the periphery of the SSU – a male-dominated, class-conscious group – headed by ACP Mhatre who is on a mission to cleanse the city off the curse of modernity plaguing the youth. His methods are unethical/unorthodox. In a career-destroying move, Sarita – as a representative of her generation – objects to his unconstitutional moral policing.

Her insubordination has consequences. Trials by fire, public humiliations are henceforth engineered to force her to quit. But she jumps, leaps and grovels through, till she learns how to survive and navigate the system. As she tumbles down the rabbit hole of shifting morals, she crosses paths with people who alter her life inexorably: Narain – a worldly-wise photographer working with the department, who becomes more than a mentor; Amit – a troubled actor who becomes more than a case; Kajal – a little girl from the slums who allows Sarita to accept the ruthless wilderness inside her.

In midst of moral policing, nightclub raids and anti-Valentine's Day campaigns, Sarita soon begins to realize that the city, the work, its politics is more complex, more terrifying than she imagined. And love in this concrete jungle of far too many, comes in uncontainable shapes and never without violence.

Magic for Maria

Annie Zaidi

Annie Zaidi has been writing across various genres – journalism, poetry, fiction, drama, comics. She has written and directed three short films – *Engine*, *Ek Bahut Hi Choti Love Story*, *Ek Red Colour Ki Love Story*. Her short film, *Sujata* was part of a set of five that was released under the title *Shorts* in 2013.

A play *So Many Socks* was short-listed for the prestigious META awards in several categories, including best script. *Jaal* opened at the Writers' Bloc (3) Festival at Prithvi Theatre. A radio play *Jam* was short-listed for the BBC's International Playwriting Competition in 2011.

Her books have been well received, including the latest novella, *Gulab*, and a short story collection, *Love Stories # 1 to 14*. The first collection of essays, *Known Turf: Bantering with Bandits and other True Tales* was shortlisted for the Vodafone Crossword Book Awards (Non-fiction). She is also the co-author of a series of inter-linked coming-of-age narratives called *The Bad Boy's Guide to the Good Indian Girl*, and a book of illustrated love poems called *Crush*.

She has written for various newspapers and magazines including *Mid-Day*, *Frontline*, *Tehelka*, *Caravan*, *Mint*, *Elle*, *Femina*, and *DNA* (Daily News and Analysis).



Annie Zaidi
Writer

Synopsis

Maria is a devout Catholic and has a deep, personal relationship with Mother Mary. Although time is running out for romance and marriage, she still waits for the man of her dreams. She lives alone and runs a cafe in a Goan village. Her parents are dead but have left her the ancestral villa, near the beach. Her only relative, Uncle Ervell, was disowned by his parents and is now trying to force Maria to sell the ancestral house, since he has found a buyer who wants to build a boutique hotel here.

When the tourist season starts, Maria's problems reach a flashpoint. There's a transporters' strike. Coffee shipments are delayed. Maria is losing customers. Her cafe helper also quits in a huff. Her uncle is harassing her. Maria begs Mother Mary for a blessing, for a little bit of magic in her life. Early next morning, a new carton of coffee is delivered. It has a strange watermark, like a silhouette of Mother Mary. As soon as she serves anyone this new coffee they start being nice to her. Tourists flirt. Her helper returns to the job. Life seems to be on track.

Maria is convinced that the coffee is a divine gift. Even Uncle Ervell shows his nice avuncular side. Soon Wiktor Novak arrives, a Polish architect who

is looking at some properties for an international client. His manners, his looks, everything is perfect. But he is not much fond of coffee. Maria does everything in her power to make him eat or drink her coffee in some form or the other, and eventually, Wiktor seems to be falling for her too.

But Maria is worried. Her coffee is running out. She prays to Mother Mary to send more. She's afraid of losing Wiktor once the magic wears off. But no more cartons of coffee arrive. Then Maria finds out that Uncle Ervell is meeting Wiktor to discuss an upcoming property. She realizes that Wiktor is supposed to negotiate for a reconversion of her own ancestral house, which her uncle hopes to sell. She feels betrayed.

Meanwhile, Uncle Ervell has been scheming. The cafe apparently violates coastal regulations and can be demolished. When the demolition squad arrives, Maria is carried away, screaming and kicking. Despite Wiktor trying to help her rebuild, Maria refuses to acknowledge his good intentions. She is convinced that the love was only an illusion. It is not until after he leaves that she realizes that perhaps, Mother Mary did not intend to interfere so directly in her life.

Vanmala



Abhimanyu Kulkarni
Writer

Abhimanyu Kulkarni

Abhimanyu Kulkarni has done UCLA's professional Screenwriting course (1 year, 2 scripts) in 2010 and also a short course with Kamlesh Pande, a well known film writer. He won a prize in ScriptSavvy competition (US) in 2011 for the original script *The Code*. Abhimanyu has been commissioned on three scripts so far; a futuristic thriller-drama set in a dystopian society, a comedy of three young Punjabi men in Kolkata and the third, an action- thriller about a man troubled by violent flashes of his last birth. He has also developed an action drama last year with Kanu Behl, writer/ director of the film *Titli*.

Besides writing, he has also drawn cartoons in Marathi publications like *Lokprabha* (Indian Express), *Lalit* (well known literary magazine) and in English periodicals like *Teens Today* (India Today). He has studied design and currently works as the head of design department in an MNC.

Synopsis

Sushila is a spirited, young woman born in a royal family of the princely state of Gwalior. Angered by Sushila's college fling with a commoner, her disciplinarian father marries her off to a small trader from Bombay, Padmakar. Tired of fighting her father, Sushila tries to make the best of her chawl life. She persuades Padmakar to let her join the college where she meets Bharat, an unconventional student.

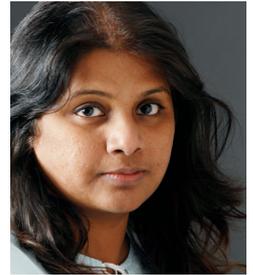
Padmakar seems outwardly liberal and encourages Sushila to be social, but she soon learns of Padmakar's attempts to extort money from her father and leaves him. She finds refuge at her aunt's home in Pune where, at a school, Sushila meets the larger than life Baburao Atre, the founder of the school; a writer and filmmaker. Baburao is instantly smitten by Sushila and invites her to join the school as a teacher. Sushila is drawn to Baburao, despite him being older and married. Baburao decides that he wants Sushila to be his film's heroine.

Sushila is an overnight success and rises to fame with her new name Vanmala. Baburao and Vanmala move in together. With his sheer gumption, Baburao becomes the owner of the largest studio in Bombay and announces an ambitious film starring Vanmala. Vanmala loves the adventure ride with Baburao but their relationship changes her. Soon the pressures of the movie career, Baburao's drinking and his failure to end his marriage with Sudha, drive a wedge between Baburao and Vanmala. An often lonely Vanmala finds an empathetic listener in Gajanan, the assistant director.

The big budget movie on which Baburao bets his fortunes turns out to be a flop leading to a violent confrontation between him and Vanmala. When Baburao threatens to dump her, Vanmala walks out on him and spends the night in the studio. Next morning at the train station, Vanmala hears a news that tears her heart and tests her resolve.

Romance Screenwriters' Lab Mentors

Bhavani Iyer



Bhavani Iyer started her career as a Trainee Copywriter with an advertising agency, while still in college. She then joined Magna Publishing and was the youngest editor of 'Stardust' magazine. Her stint at Stardust helped her meet several people from the film industry who influenced her decision to venture into Screenwriting. *Black* was her first screenwriting venture after which she wrote films like *Guzaarish*, *Lootera*, *Main Aisa Hi Hoon* and *Swami*. Bhavani has also written the Indian version of the American TV show *24*.

Girish Joshi



Girish Joshi started his career working as a Sound Engineer at an experimental theater group called Maharashtra Cultural Center. His award-winning play *Babhulban* that won him a State Award in 1992, marked his entry in the theater world as a professional. Some of the plays to which he contributed as a writer, director, set designer are *Lovebirds*, *Abholi*, *Abhinetri* and *Katkon Trikon*, to name a few. Girish slowly graduated to writing for critically acclaimed television serials such as *Bhumika*, *Abhalmaya* and *Bandhan*. He wrote his first film *Kadachit's* screenplay in 2001, which was only released in 2008. Till today, Girish has written screenplays for award winning films like *Dhobipachaad*, *Raanbhool* and *Kaksprash*. He has also won numerous awards for his work and contribution to Marathi cinema.

Girish is a visiting faculty and teaches Television and Film Writing at premier film and media schools in India. He was invited by the German consulate to study contemporary German theater and directed an Indo-German partnered project *Im Stillen*. Currently, he is a member of the newly incepted Maharashtra Film Fund.

Habib Faisal



Habib Faisal is a screenwriter and director based out of Mumbai. He is best known for his films *Ishaqzaade* & *Do Dooni Chaar*, both of which he wrote and directed. Habib's forthcoming film is titled *Daawat-e-Ishq* starring Aditya Roy Kapoor & Parineeti Chopra.

Habib also wrote the screenplay and dialogues for the sleeper hit *Band Baaja Baaraat* which was released in 2010 and Maneesh Sharma's second feature, *Ladies vs. Ricky Bahl*.

An alumnus of Jamia Millia Islamia, he has directed the television serials *Lavanya* and worked in New Delhi as a camera person with NDTV.



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