

# pokku veyil

Rarely has the cinema, not merely in India but anywhere, ventured into such recesses of the world of the mind, pushing back its frontiers through a singular vision - reviews Shri. Chidananda Das Gupta about Aravindan's latest creation.

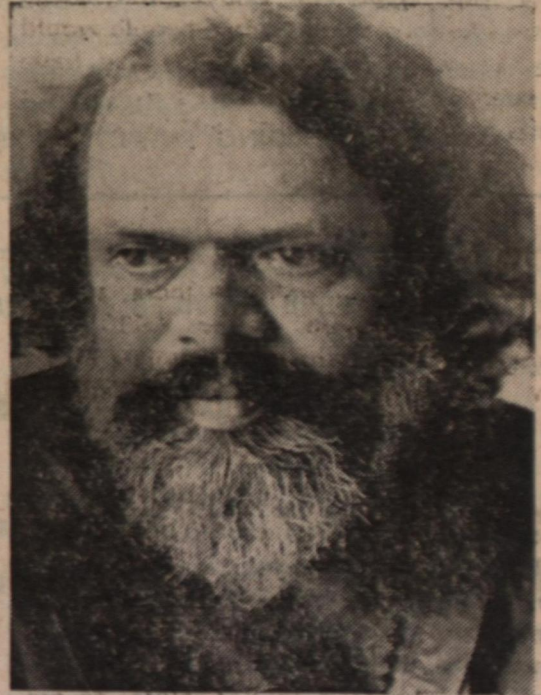
In India's burgeoning "new cinema", social criticism in the form of realistic narrative provides the major strain. The true exception is Kerala's G. Aravindan whose films reveal a fine sensibility drawn to poetic fantasy rather than social comment.

Only Aravindan can show us a sunse, as though we have never seen one before. His visuals, whether black and white as in Thampu, or in colour as in Kanchana Sita or Esthappan, have always held some magic in them. Yet the visual poetry enchanting as it has been, has also had a certain thinness about it. Its delicacy has not been matched by the strength to hold up a structure. With his new film Pokku Veyil, it is no longer so. Aravindan's poetry has acquired a new remarkable depth.

The version seen so far is without subtitles, it makes you concentrate on the visuals and the sounds with a heightened perception. Besides, the story has little to tell'. A silent, sensitive young man arrives at a mental asylum, accompanied by his mother. Through his eyes, we see the process by which he arrived at his madness: the death of his father; the accident to his basket ball-playing friend's leg; the estrangement from the girl he loves. The film ends virtually where it began; his mother's visit is over, and two

attendants lead him into the doorway to the asylum, as they had at the start.

Pokku Veyil means twilight, and the film lives up to its name. All its shots



were taken very early in the morning or in the evening, enveloping its entire reality in the half-light of some world other than this. The visual beauty is not just one of marvellous photography;

---

## pokku veyil

---

those who revel in that will soon tire of it and lose Aravindan half-way. The loss will be theirs. His film demands an intense participation in his dream. There is no superficial entertainment here. This is no film for the tribe of hard boiled intellectuals without sensibility who keep flexing their muscles in the Indian art world. Rarely has the cinema, not merely in India but anywhere, ventured into such recesses of the world of the mind, pushing back its frontiers through a singular vision.

The film is the view of the poet as a madman. His eyes are so filled with beauty, and his heart with love, that he finds the real world too painful to live in. He retreats therefore into a private world of his own—a world of intense sensual beauty and a perfect harmony of the elements. The youngman sits still with his girl on the shore of the lake. The water ripples, down in the background, always the same but constantly changing, for a long time. As the ripples keep coming down, they cast a spell on the eye, and the earth seems to keep rising as though the two still figures in that unearthly light are on a spaceship rising for ever into the infinite.

The light engraves the trees upon the sky and the water, and the slow, graceful motions of the camera turn nature into a ballet of movement and pause, not unlike the basketball game cameraman Shaji photographs so lovingly. The light touches the bodies of the characters turning the mother's beautiful, weatherbeaten face into a piece of sculpture left out in the open for a long time. The young man's

own body, as he lies on his back on the verandah, his arm stretching out of the torso and falling back on the ground, is rounded and polished smooth by the light. The body turns, as it were into nature. On the other hand, the hill etched against the evening sky and reflected so blue in the still water looks like a woman lying on the horizon with her head thrown back in some unknown ecstasy. Some of the shots of clouds seen over the lake and reflected in its water are like images of cosmic dust in 2001: A Space Odyssey's journey beyond Jupiter. The imagery is powerfully reminiscent of the poetry of Jibanananda Das. It has the same kind of starting originality and depth of vision.

The music - Lalit and Gurjai Todi-played by Hari Prasad Chaurasia on the flute and Rajiv Taranath on the sarod - is so entwined with the visuals that one cannot exist without the other. At first the slow notes of Lalit in Chaurasia's inimitable tone seem decorative, meant to "enhance the beauty" of the dreamlike landscape. But it is persistent and strong willed. In a while it begins to define the contours of feeling with precision, giving a wordless meaning to the film. It almost seems to acquire a shadowy body that take the viewer by the hand and guides him into the inner world of the young man's mind which alone gives meaning to the film's vision. The music is punctuated only by two recitations of poetry and here one needs the language. The only thing about the music that leaves the viewer vaguely dissatisfied is

---

## pokku veyil

---

the way it disappears into thin air in the concluding sequences of the film, as though Aravindan had run out of it and had to leave the rest to silence.

It would be a mistake to call Aravindan and Shaj's photography 'Beautiful', because there is no self-indulgent aestheticism to it, it simply depicts certain states of mind very precisely. Aravindan holds his shots on the screen sometimes for very long periods, caring little if he loses some of his audience on the way. In the process he builds up a tense visual rhythm, not always perfect but as

compelling at times as the flow of the music. Aravindan is an avowed extremist. He does not bury poetry beneath the narrative in order to lend a glow to the story-telling; he puts it right there in the centre for all to see. He leaves the cinema of action and restless narrative far behind to enter a delicate, shadowy world, one that vibrates with pain, and joy, and their inseparability. ●

(Courtesy: India Today)

With Best Compliments From:

**M/s. Sagar International**

44/17-1 MANACAUD, TRIVANDRUM 695009

Phone: 4502

Wholesale Buyers of Golden Tobacco Co. Ltd., Bombay

A Company which manufacture  
Cigarettes like "PANAMA" and other  
Brand as per satisfaction of the consumers.