

Article

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## **Miranda House: Hide and Seek between Truth and Pretence**



Texting is going on between two persons... And starts a hide and seek exercise between truth and pretence. Two simple looking persons are pitted against each other, each of which is hiding some mystery deep down inside. *Miranda House*, a Marathi/Konkani film by Rajendra Talak unravels, nay entangles the mysteries and poses a challenge to solve them for the audience. Every time, it seems it is unfolding, it in fact has woven yet another puzzle and so on... But what is more fascinating about this film is not the story as such, but the cinematic treatment. I would rather say that the story is a pretext to use the cinematic language that the director is so much fond of. Originally a

stage personality Rajendra Talak, fascinated by the film medium shifted to it, polished the technique and attained mastery on it and is now considered a leading film personality of the Goan film industry. In fact the industry started evolving in the last decade when Goa became the venue for IFFI. Film industry of Goa and Talak`s career as a film director are literally contemporary happenings. With as many as 6 critically acclaimed films to his credit he has led the Goan film movement.

Normally a story poses or creates a puzzle in the first half, starts giving subtle hints here and there by the end of it and in the second half the hints begin to be obvious leading the plot to the ultimate solution with a bang at the end of the film. But this traditional pattern gets totally shattered here in *Miranda House*. The puzzling relationships as fickle as quick silver take a shape of a kallydoscope as if, showing a new pattern with every new situation and this continues till the very end. Here the plot is the means and the treatment is the end.

Out of the three characters the third one keeps on being mentioned by the two protagonists pitted against each other or abetting with each other (that one keeps on guessing)! The kaleidoscope of their relationships and their respective vested interests keeps one guessing. The guess game has a lining of the third character, conspicuous by his absence.

In his earlier films such as *Sawli*, *Alisha* and *Oh Maria* Talak dealt with the present socio-economic and environmental problems in Goa. They get personified in the conflict between the various characters. In *A Rainy Day* morality and immorality are at war with each other and keep the tension between husband-wife relationship increasing leading to a mystery. The title *Miranda House* itself has a potential to hint towards a mystery. And the further mystery is about the warring vested interests of the characters. The pace is moderate. Neither slow

nor fast. Nor does the film pick up fast pace in the end and yet keeps the audience spellbound.

*Miranda House* is a spacious bungalow on the beach and the location at the centre of the plot. But not like a traditional mansion in a mystery film. Traditional picturization of the mansion has been done away with. It is a mute symbol of the greed for material wealth. But it's role is very much passive. The active part is played by the tensions in the mysteriously entangled relationships. And they are reflected in the compositions using mirrors. These compositions are especially significant.



The reflections in a mirror are a mysterious world in itself. It is a virtual world. A world spread within a frame and resembling the real world. It makes left what is actually right and right what is actually left. It gives the real world a certain depth and it does not have depth. It is flat and it is non-existent. We often see how small kids and pet animals get deceived by the reflections. What is more, even the grown-ups when caught unawares by the mirror get confused. That is why mirrors are so very effectively useful in creating the impact of

mystery. Installation artists often use mirrors. How can film medium overlook this tremendous potential of a mirror that adds to the impact? At the same time it poses a huge challenge for the cameraman. And perhaps that is why if used skillfully it increases the impact all the more. (I remember the filming of the song *jo humne dastan apni sunai aap kyon raye* in Raj Khosla's *Woh Kaun Thee*.) *Miranda House* uses mirrors in the compositions quite meaningfully to deepen the impact of the confusion, suspense and mystery. The drama concerning the valuable paintings of a certain well known artist are at the centre of the conflict and from that point of view the compositions become all the more significant. The mirrors at the hotel room and *Miranda House* play an important part in the compositions. Camera movements use these mirrors to create the confusion as to what is the truth and what is the pretence. Whether the persons are really what they look like or are their looks as virtual as their mirror images?

The risk of clichés has been mostly avoided and hence *Miranda House* presents a pleasant picture of an experience of freshness.

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