

Rati Chakravyuh

A film by Ashish Avikunthak

October 22 – November 1, 2014

Press Preview & Private Screening: Wednesday, October 22, 7:00pm

Featuring an Artist's Discussion and Q&A

New York, 35 Great Jones Street



Ashish Avikunthak, Production still from *Rati Chakravyuh*, 2013, 105 min.

Aicon Gallery is pleased to present *Rati Chakravyuh*, a new feature-length film by Ashish Avikunthak. The film, comprised of a single 105-minute shot, centers around the continuous conversation of six young newlywed couples and a priestess after a mass wedding. Made entirely in Bengali, *Rati Chakravyuh* develops a complex and intense narrative through its meditation on an unbroken ever-evolving conversation about the whole of the human condition, questioning beliefs about life, death, love, sex, violence, religion, war, mythology, history and modernity. *Rati Chakravyuh*'s screening at Aicon Gallery, New York represents the international premier of Avikunthak's mesmerizing new film, following acclaimed debuts in Kolkata and Mumbai.

Director's note:

The film is the experience of the inescapable maze created through the dizzying effect of the camera that moves in spirals throughout. In that dizzying spiral, words vanish, faces blur into a stream of light and eyes crave for the darkness of ignorance, of innocent illusions, of dreams where redemption is really possible. The stories are non-existent, they are the same, yet very different; but we must transcend them. How do we do that? Temporality is a painful truth to reckon with. It stretches out in a painstaking fashion, trapping every attempt to radiate out of the circle. It is our pain on that screen and we cannot look away, we cannot wish it away or magically transform it into a dreamscape. There is simply no space for any space. Space collapses into that speck, but floats endlessly unlike that moment which is out of time. The circular motion of the camera creates that spiral maze and makes us aware of the harsh truth – that we must fight a losing battle, only to inevitably lose, die and disappear. The film thwarts all our attempts to hide, to run, and all we can really do is to watch those faces blur in the spiral motions, watch those words become a hazy long stretch of intimately familiar sound, watch everything turn into myself - the emptiness that gave birth to the words. The inspiration for this film came from Leonardo da Vinci's 'The Last Supper'. The idea of the final communion among loved ones before an imminent finale was a dramatic conduit for a philosophical exploration of contemporary Indian life.

This is a single shot film. It is bookended with two title cards – the first appearing at the beginning of the film mentions the mass wedding, and another ends the film announcing the mass suicide. In the middle is the single shot of 98 minutes of the conversation among the thirteen individuals. They all sit in a circle in the middle of a brightly lit ancient temple.

They talk about their lives and their times in postcolonial India – violence, love, death, sex, cricket, suicide, life of Gods and Goddesses, religion, political murders, non-violence, cars, and riots. The film is an allegory of being Indian, being human, being alive. It is the last meeting before an impending tragedy to open up the world of living, that will eventually court death. It is a dramatic dialogue of death before suicide.

The camera is on a circular dolly and goes in circles throughout the shot. The continuous single shot is employed to heighten the temporal nature of the film. The circular motion of the camera creates a spiral universe in which the voices float and create a continuous image/ soundscape that encompasses the film. The slow spinning of the camera movement in a single shot produces a dizzy vortex - a cinematic whirlpool into which the image, the sound, the actors and the whole film is sucked.

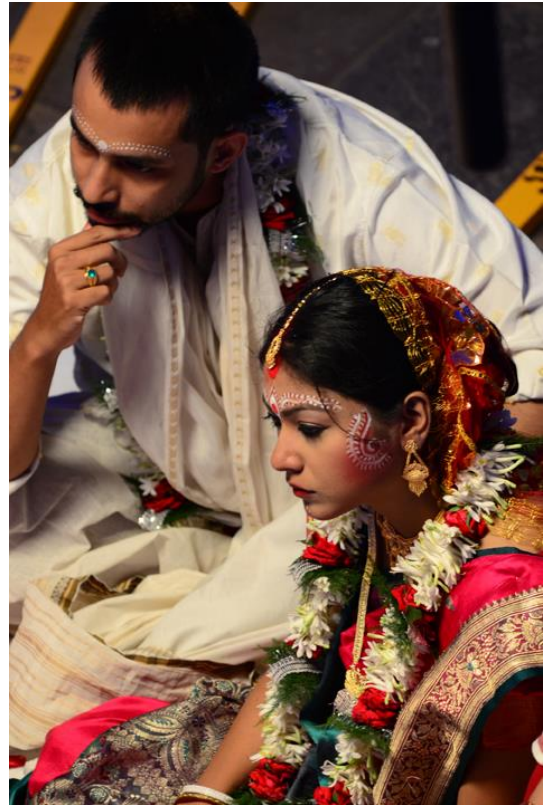
Theatrically it employs a typical form of community gathering in Calcutta - the 'adda' – a freestyle intellectual exchange among a group of people – students, poets, activists, and artists – very common in the public life of the city. In this film, the group consists of newly wed young men and women who have come together after their communal wedding to talk about life, death and everything in between before they give their life. They commit mass suicide.

Trailers for the film may be viewed at the following links:

<http://vimeo.com/97888465>

<http://vimeo.com/97719308>

<http://vimeo.com/98841932>



Ashish Avikunthak, Production still from *Rati Chakravayuh*, 2013, 105 min.

Ashish Avikunthak is an experimental filmmaker who has been making films in India since the mid nineties. His films have been shown worldwide in film festivals, galleries and museums. Notable screenings were at the Tate Modern, London, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, along with London, Locarno, Rotterdam, and Berlin film festivals among other locations. He has had retrospective of his works at Les Inattendus, Lyon (2006), Yale University (2008) and the National Centre for Performing Arts, Mumbai (2008), Festival International Signes de Nuit, Paris (2012), Rice University (2014). He has a PhD in cultural anthropology from Stanford University and has taught at Yale University. He is now an Assistant Professor of Film Media at the Harrington School of Communication & Media, University of Rhode Island. Avikunthak was included as a "Future Greats" artist in 2014 by Art Review magazine.

Please contact Aicon Gallery (Andrew@Aicongallery.com) for more information.