

Om Puri, Sharmila Tagore
Girish Karnad, Soha Ali Khan in

a Sangeeta Datta film

Life goes on

Awards

Best Feature Film

Pravasi International
Festival, Delhi

Best Feature Film

Audience Appreciation Award

London Asian Film Festival

Festivals

MIAAC, New York

MAMI International Film
Festival, Mumbai

Marche du Film,
Festivale de Cannes

Life Goes On

Director's Note

Life Goes On is inspired by the old tale of King Lear and his daughters. It is trying to find meaning for Shakespeare's King Lear in a contemporary multicultural British context.

The Iraq war, rising terrorism and global violence, and resultant Islam phobia in the West have all led me to urgently tell a story of overcoming prejudice and fear.

As an Indian migrant I am also aware of the prejudice between Hindus and Muslims since the 1947 India partition days and memories of violence and terror, which are tough to dismiss. I find a connection between such past and prejudices and how people view the present world through fixed lenses, interpreting the present through past filters.

My protagonist Sanjay Banerjee is such a man, struggling to come to terms with his wife's sudden death, he is forced to forge new relationships with his three daughters. The youngest that he loves the most is pregnant by her Muslim boyfriend. This discovery puts to test the views and values of an older man arrogant about his wealth and status. It forces him to face the past- the traumatic memory of communal riots during the partition of India when, as a child, he saw friends turn into enemies. He learns to put this behind him and his dead wife's compassion and humanism help him to embrace life in the present, to love his daughters for what they are and finally to include the Muslim boy in his family space for the funeral in the final scene. If Sanjay is the archetypal Lear then

his friend Alok is the philosophical fool who laughs and jokes but says profound truths.

Sanjay Banerjee and his daughters have to deal with Manju's sudden death and prepare for the funeral. The micro story of a family brought together by the mother's loss is placed in the macro world of global war, terrorism, sports and music. In fact the music reflects the culturescape of a diverse city like London. It is a story about overcoming grief and prejudice by embracing life. It is a layered story about generational conflict where we enter many lives from many cultures and know them better. Inspired by the popular song "Life Goes on and this whole world will keep on turning...."

News events filter through television, computers and radio. The scope for fresh images of looking at London through a fresh lens, mediated by TV images, radio news, home videos, the dead mother's music offers a complex and layered narrative for me. The realist films of Satyajit Ray, Ken Loach, Mike Leigh and the melodramatic appeal of Ritwik Ghatak – the romance of Bollywood films- the fresh look at the city by younger filmmakers (Brick Lane, Kidulthood) – are all inspirational texts for me. Film texts inspirations for this moving yet sharply relevant family drama:

King Lear; Secrets and Lies; The Valley of Elah; My Son's Room; Earth; Four Months, Three Weeks, Four Days; My Son the Fanatic; Utsav (The Festival) India; The Middleman (India).





Feature film Synopsis

Script and Direction: Sangeeta Datta

The drama explores the relations between a grief stricken father and his three daughters. Set in London, the time is now, the family of Indian origin- part of the UK diaspora. With his wife's sudden death, Sanjay is suddenly thrown into close proximity with his three daughters. The drama unfolds over five days from the day when Manju dies to day of the funeral. Haunted by memories, grappling with this devastating loss, missing the mediating influence of his wife, Sanjay finds himself assessing and carving out new relations with his three daughters. He is faced with a further crisis when he discovers his youngest and most loved daughter Dia, has a Muslim boyfriend -Imtiaz. Confused and angry, Sanjay leaves home and wanders the streets of London one night. With an unexpected series of events, Sanjay is forced to face his past demons, his trauma over the

partition of India when as a child, he was forced to leave his home with his parents. Finally to come to terms with his old and unspoken prejudice about Muslims, in the larger context of the country in the grips of Islamaphobia as the events of 7/7 and the consequences of the Iraq war reverberate.

As he sits drenched and tired on a bench on Hampstead Heath and watches the sun rise – Sanjay puts his demons to rest. At the funeral he has come to terms with himself, he allows the Muslim boy to join the family rituals and sees his daughters for what they are and not what he expected them to be.

The shadow of Shakespeare's King Lear bears on this contemporary and free adaptation. It works functionally as a sub- text in the film as we see Sanjay and Dia within the contours of the mythical Lear and Cordelia.

Life Goes On

Characters

Dr. Sanjay Banerjee, played by **Girish**, is an Indian doctor who has been living in London for 40 years. He is a prominent member of the community, an amateur theatre practitioner and has received several professional awards. He is 68, somewhat concerned about his erratic blood pressure and completely dependent on his wife on all domestic issues.

Manju, played by **Sharmila**, is Sanjay's wife. She works as a librarian and a singer. She trains young children in Indian music in her spare time.

The Banerjee's have three daughters. **Lolita**, played by **Mukulika** is the eldest. She is married to John, a British investment banker. She has her hands full with a 3 year old daughter and a six month old baby.

The second **Tulika**, played by **Neerja**, is a TV news presenter. She lives in Birmingham and has not been home for a few months.

Dia, played by **Soha**, the youngest, lives at home, is a university student and passionate about theatre.

Sanjay Banerjee has a close friend **Alok**, played by **Om**, who is close to the family. His access to the house and its inmates is unrestricted.

Imtiaz, played by **Rez**, a young muslim doctor, is Dia's boy friend

John, played by **Christopher**, is Lolita's husband who is presently torn between the credit crisis and the crisis at home

Maria, played by **Steph**, is Tuli's girl friend and colleague



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Main Cast Biographies

Sharmila Tagore

A diva who mesmerised audiences with her stunning looks and breath taking performances, Sharmila Tagore made her film debut with Satyajit Ray's *Apur Sansar*, at the tender age of fourteen. She went on to star in Ray's *Devi* and then featured in several other films directed by him. The most well known among these are *Aranyer Dinraatri*, *Nayak* and *Sheemabodhho*. Tagore established herself in the Bombay film industry with her memorable performance in *Kashmir ki Kali*. Her onscreen chemistry with Rajesh Khanna drew several box office hits like *Amar Prem* and *Aradhana*, for which she won the Best Actress Award in 1969. Her performance in Gautam Ghosh's *Abar Aranye* was critically acclaimed and it won her the National Award for Best Supporting Actress in 2004.

Girish Karnad

Girish Karnad is a renaissance man. Well known playwright, novelist, actor and director he is winner of the highest literary award in India - the Jnanpith award. Known best for his plays like *Hayavadana*, *Nagamandala*, *Tughlaq* (using Indian epics and myths) Karnad has been conferred the Padmabhushan civilian award in India. Part of the new cinema movement he acted in the award winning Kannad film *Samskara* and collaborated with Shyam Benegal in *Manthan*. Others involve *Godhuli*, *Swami*, *Pukar* and recently *Iqbal*. He has directed several Kannad films and acts regularly in Kannad films. Karnad was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford University and a Fulbright scholar at the University of Chicago.

Om Puri

An honorary OBE receiver, Om Puri is an Indian actor with a wide variety of both mainstream as well as parallel films to his credit. He is perhaps the only Indian actor with such extensive experience in the world film forum. *East is East* and *The Parole Officer* are two of his well known British films. Puri has also worked in Hollywood. His most memorable role is opposite Patrick Swayze in *City of Joy*. Puri has also worked for Satyajit Ray in a short film entitled *Sadgati* which also starred Smita Patil and Mohan Agashe. Puri has been equally brilliant in mainstream commercial cinema. *Hera Pheri*, *Chachi 420*, *Singh is Kinng* and the recent *Billu Barber* are some of his best known films. He has received two national awards for Best Actor for his performances in *Arohan* (1982) and *Ardh Satya* (1984)

Soha Ali Khan

Born into the illustrious nawab family of Pataudi, Soha made her acting debut in a Bollywood production titled *Dil Maange More*, which also starred Shahid Kapoor and Ayesha Takia. Her performance in Rituparno Ghosh's *Antarmahal* won her a lot of critical acclaim. Soha is best remembered for her role in Om Prakash Mehra's *Rang De Basanti*, for which she won a Best Supporting Actress award. Critics have also commended her performance in the film *Khoya khoya Chand*. Her recent films include *Dil Kabaddi* and *Mumbai Meri Jaan*. Soha is an Oxford University Graduate, followed by a Masters from LSE.

Rez Kempton

Popular Brit-Asian actor who has starred in the recent feature *I Can't Think Straight* and the award winning short *Adha Cup*. Has several features to his credit *Mystic Masseur*, *Brothers in Trouble*, *My Son the Fanatic* and TV dramas *Spooks*, *Desperados*, *Doctors*, *Roger Roger*.

Neerja Naik

Young ingenue Neerja Naik graduated from Cambridge before training at Drama Centre London and has since featured in shorts *Professional Woman of the Year* - directed by Don Boyd, *Maryam* and *Meetha Zehar*.

Mukulika Banerjee

Mukulika is a professional anthropologist based at London School of Economics. She has a special interest in the theatre of Samuel Beckett since her university days and has worked recently in stage productions in London and south of France directed by Sangeeta Datta. This is her first film.

Steph Patten

Steph has been a passionate actor from her student days. Having performed Shakespeare at UCL she was really noticed when playing *Maya* at Bloomsbury (theatre director Sangeeta Datta). Her recent theatre credits include *The Scribe Who Wouldn't Scribble*, *The City Wive's Confederacy*, *Love* and the *Gentle Heart*.

Christopher Hatherall

Talented actor Chris has to his credit the features *Super Telephoto* and *The Point of Regret*. His shorts include *Cosmonaut*, *Resistance*, *Back to Back*. Chris features in TV drama *Two Worlds of Douglas Foster* and *Agent X*. In addition work for radio and stage.

Sangeeta Datta

Script and Direction

Sangeeta Datta is a well known writer/director, independent filmmaker and cultural commentator based in London. She is director of two companies:

BAITHAK promotes South Asian arts in the UK and aims to bring an understanding of cultural heritage to Brit-Asian youth.

STORMGLASS PRODUCTIONS is dedicated to making meaningful cinema and theatre drawing from narratives which have an international appeal.

Education

Ph D in English Literature, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, India.

Post doctoral Research Fellow at University of Sussex and SOAS.

Taught post colonial literature (South Asia) at Birkbeck College, Univ of London.

Presently: teaches South Asian Cinema for MA, NILE at Centre for Advanced Studies, University of London.

Recent Publications

Shyam Benegal, World Director Series, British Film Institute, 2004.

Contemporary Bengali Cinema in Edinburgh Review, 2007.

In and Out of Ray's Legacy: Contemporary Bengali Cinema presented at the International Conference on Cinemas of India , Abu Dhabi, Nov 2008. Forthcoming publication 2009.

Regular critic and feature writer for Confluence (London).

Film

Documentaries

The Way I See It on Women filmmakers in India

In Search of Durga on the UK diaspora , culture and religion.

Working with Worries on children with learning problems

Short film

Letter from an Ordinary Girl (a contemporary adaptation of Tagore's Sadharan Meye).

Feature

Associate Director of **Brick Lane** (UK) and **Chokher Bali**, **Raincoat**, **Antarmahal**, **The Last Lear** (India)

Life Goes On, 2009. English language feature.

Commissioned script **All for Love** (Bandwidth Films Bombay).

Theatre

Translated and directed: **The Other Side** play based on Taslima Nasreen's Oporpokkho.

Directed two musicals **Maya** (Bloomsbury Theatre) and **The Dark Light** (Mill Hill Theatre).

Writer/Director of **The Dying Song**: a widely acclaimed production which went on a UK national tour in 2008. Produced by Asian Music Circuit.

Dance-Theatre

The Wife's Letter and **Gharey Bairey** (programmed in DANCE UK 2008)

Scripted and directed **The Awakening** (as part of Tagore Festival, London, 2008)

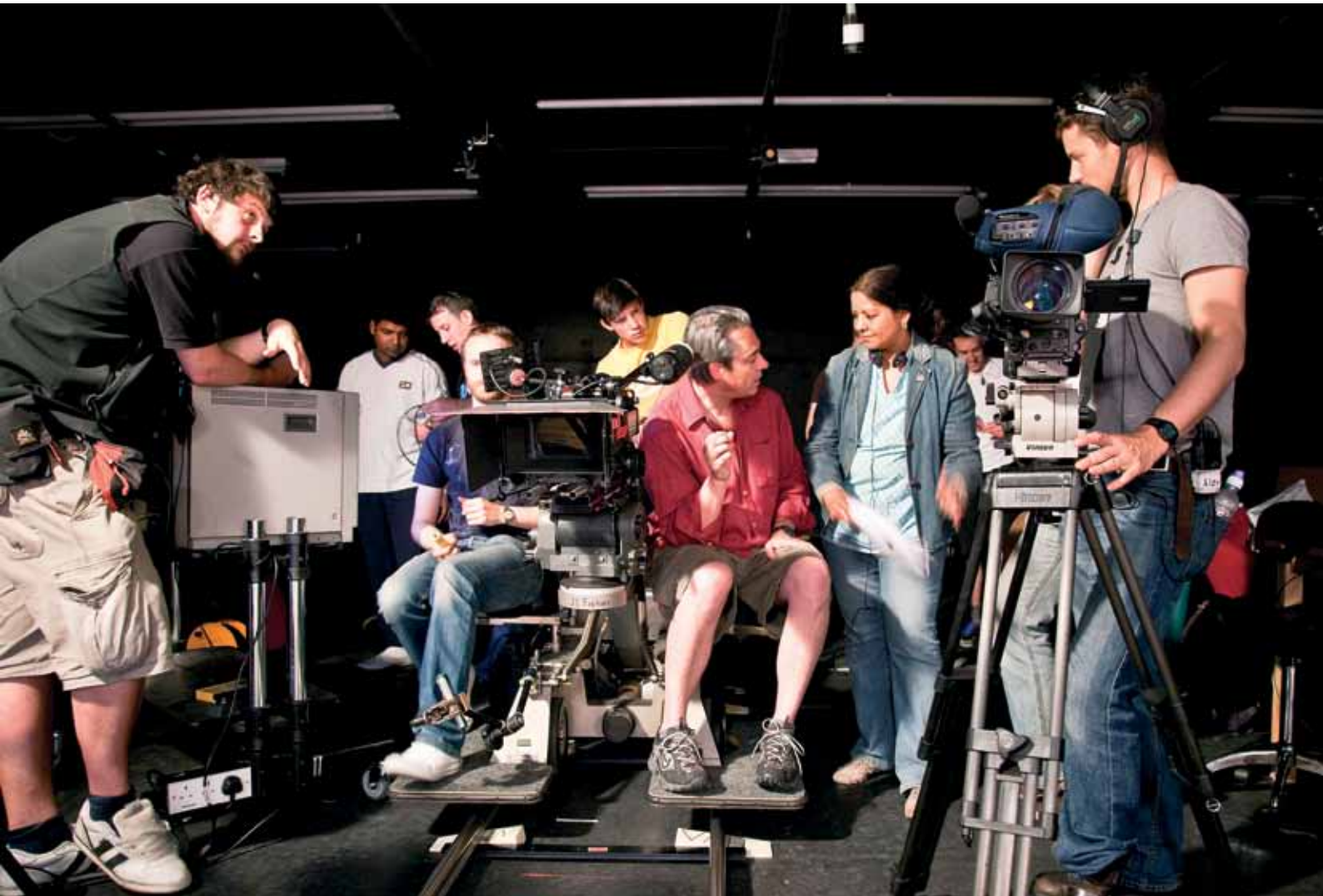
Sakhi (part of International Woman's Week, 2008)



Life Goes On

Production Team

Script and Direction	Sangeeta Datta
Director of Photography	Robert Shacklady
Editor	Arghyakamal Mitra
Music Director	Soumik Datta
Lyrics	Rabindranath Tagore, Javed Akhtar, Fiona Bevan
Art & Production Designer	Vipul Sangoi
Production Sound Mixer	Simon Gillman
Sound Design & Mixing	Biswadeep Chatterjee
Playback	Abhijeet Bhattacharya, Pramita Mallick, Reena Bhardwaj
DOP (India)	Avik Mukhopadhyay
Stylist	Aindrila Ghosh
Make up and Hair	Rosie Kor
Executive & Line Producer	Gautami Trivedi & Sandeep Patel, SG Films
Produced by	SD Films LLP
Production Company	Stormglass Productions (UK & India)



Marking the 150th anniversary of Nobel Laureate Tagore - exquisite poetry and music on original soundtrack

...manages the feat of being both a paean to death and a celebration of life

Sight and Sound

Soha Ali Khan and Om Puri have a mesmerising screen presence

Asiana

Emphatic rendition of characters and real situations with resonating performances...

Jury Citation, Pravasi Film Festival Award for best Feature Film

Embodies the message of transcending barriers...lyrical and life assertive...

The Hindu, India

Deeply lyrical and residual, at once contemporary and contemplative

Audience Response, MIAAC New York

Life Goes On Music

Reflecting the rich diaspora of present day London, the music of Life Goes On marries Bangla Folk with Rap, Hip- Hop with Tagore songs, urban band culture with Indian classical music and Cuban rhythms with symphonic gestures.

Javed Akhtar translates Tagore from Bengali to Hindi over a background score that pulsates with orchestrated Ragas.

The theme music of the film is one such translation from Tagore's *Tobu Mone Rekho* to Akhtar's *Yaad Raho*.

Making his debut feature film soundtrack, Soumik Datta brings together his taleem on Sarod with his training in composition at Trinity College of Music. Collaborating with a team of UK based virtuoso musicians Soumik creates a haunting tapestry of sound that resonates with the complexity of the characters in the film and the relationships between them.



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