



Vrindavani Viaragya
Ashish Avikunthak

Avatars of Ideal Love: Ashish Avikunthak's *Vrindavani Viaragya*

- Ryan Trimm, Professor of English and Film Media, University of Rhode Island

Ashish Avikunthak is a poet of fog, and worn and derelict spaces. His films are often punctuated with thick, wooly air, enmiring isolated figures along rivers and atop roofs; the restless itinerary of his films revolve around not only river banks, boats, and rooftops but also fatigued dwellings, deserted antique temples and palaces, vacant construction sites. In framing this latter list, he is reminiscent of the American photographer William Eggleston in his eye for the hidden beauty of quotidian spaces, aged and faded, framed with fresh appreciation for color. In his 2017 film *Vrindavani Viaragya*, shades of light blue take center stage rather than Eggleston's reds. This visual restfulness helps produce the tensions running through the film, one announced in the title: a dispassionate love, an apparent paradox or impossibility, an emotional bond beyond passion, one where the cool blues contrast with tales of suicide and extremely complex love affairs. The visuals of fog and worn spaces provide an abstracted (which city are we in? when does this take place?), yet highly specific setting: an uncertainty as to where we might be located, an evacuation of situating context—and yet a sense there is a backstory stretching back, one known only through the indications of age and wear. It is a mysterious world, forever leaving us to catch up to its strange, teasing tales that never quite assemble into straight-forward narratives, but one marked by beauty and profundity. Narrative is confined, stripped down (we only see three characters, none of whom are named), abstracted and deconstructed through visuals producing problems of chronology and place. *Vrindavani Viaragya* is a film that teases the eye and the understanding, a riddle or *mythos* we can never quite get over or master, forever allured by the intricacies of its striking seductions.

Amongst the three characters we see, tensions multiply, generating a shifting and slippery whole; events and situations—suicide, turbulent

love affairs—are recounted by the actors in flat tones divorced from the emotions that would seem to be roiling within them, an estrangement from emotion as if they were recounting details of a tale that transpired long before. This detachment is underscored by their spatial arrangement: the actors's faces and bodies are mostly aimed neither at each other nor at the camera. The lens too aids in this divorce establishing Brechtian distance: particularly in the first third of the film, the camera rarely penetrates narrative spaces, instead transitioning only through cuts. We uncover a story whose chronology is uncertain and in which character roles are murky and mobile. But clearly everything revolves around Girish, a figure who never appears fully in his own guise in the film; he is the only character named but yet he never materializes on-screen; the other characters shift in their relation to one another, identified through their roles to each other but mostly through their connection to Girish: a young man who seems to be Girish's friend, a woman who would be Girish's lover, Girish's wife. These bonds are established through stories and emotional quandaries establishing a Girish who encompasses multiple roles: Girish the suicide, the lover (one who is both an adulterous partner and the one cheated upon), the husband, the father, the name called in throes of passion. He is also an identity projected upon the young man. Ultimately, the three on-screen characters are defined by their relation to the absent Girish, such as when, the two women, Girish's wife and his lover, find their love for him leads them to love one another in his continuing absence. In sum, he is both an absence around whom the tale turns (like Godot) and an entity, a god, one with many avatars and roles who is never directly seen in the wholeness of his or her being. Girish's paradoxical presence is maintained throughout the film through a persistent, shifting failure to ever appear fully as himself.



Girish's spirit pervades the film, something the other characters breath in: "I have to accept Girish with your presence. Or create your Girish devoid of me"; "My love for Girish is like a graceful awareness flowing in me"; "a similarity between your notion for Girish and your desire for him"; "Girish is not vulnerable to indulgent love. He's calmly detached. However, he does not reject love. He is an ideal lover." His love manifests and facilitates through his own absence. Indeed, when the two women discuss the complications of their relationship—one is married to Girish, the other in the process of embarking

on an affair with him—his presence is not actually needed: "This is a conversation between two of us. There is no need for the third person." Both love Girish and, through that love, begin to open to one another. Girish, in his absent presence, seems at once to embody love—and also what might happen through that love: in loving another, one becomes receptive to loving others. Moreover, the opening of the film, as the young man talks sometimes separately with each of the two women and sometimes with both present, works to smudge differences between the two, suggesting they too might

be somewhat identified with one another. Love makes connections, permits a rough sort of identification. Indeed, love raises the problem of otherness for the self: "Those who get possessed in love look for their self in the other; their wanton desire drains their love dry." Perhaps the dispassionate love of the title is at once the love that drains, emptying identity of energy and self through surfeits of passion, and a love that pervades, proliferating new and shifting connections, a multitude of engagements hollowing out the intensity of a singularly focused romance.

As relationships flow and shift, the identities of the characters are altered as well, an instability made all the more uncertain because of the unmooring of chronology and place. The opening conversation about Girish's death flows seamlessly on but the interlocutors are different: the young man is always there but sometimes he is with the woman we come to think of the lover, sometimes the one who will be his wife, sometimes both. Settings and costume oscillate over these exchanges. Time and place are uncertain, even the ordering of events cannot be precise. This instability complicates what follows as the film moves from Girish's suicide to a love triangle whose geometry becomes ever more fraught: the woman who would be Girish's lover wants to test her unconsummated love by sleeping with another man; Girish's wife is her confidante—and yet the emotional intimacies shared by the women leads to a physical connection, even as the lover opens herself to the young man. However, the young man is an especially uncertain presence—does his relationship with the lover come before or after Girish's death? Or does it matter? Is he the other man with whom the woman tests her love for Girish? Or might he himself become—or have been—Girish?

These flowing relationships signal fluid and uncertain identities, the characters, like Girish himself, less stable selves than a series of avatars defined through these mobile roles. The final shot of the film offers instruction: the woman we have known as the lover stands looking away from the camera; suddenly she is doubled, a second presence appearing perpendicular to her first self with a gaze that likewise does not meet our own. Identity is not distinct and well-defined, not something neatly given to us, but, because it is often situational, is betrayed as murky, fragmented, and multiple.

The film too as a whole is protean: it is a story shimmering in its fluidity and mobile references--Beckett, Hindu mythology (Girish is a name for Shiva), *Last Year at Marienbad*, Brecht, the short story "*Baba Eschechhen*" by the Bengali writer Pracheta Gupta. But, as if through a phenomenological reduction, these strands are pared down to a narrative that operates more through teasing allusions of possible storylines. As with other films from Avikunthak, these are not sources or frames so much as provocations, lines of departure. Formally, too, the film entrances within its restless itinerary of spaces: indoor and outdoor courtyards,

banks of rivers, stairwells, hallways, bedrooms, bridge construction sites, rooftops. Many are sites of transition, spaces allowing one to move from one defined place (an apartment, a bedroom) to another. And yet, for all this shifting, there is a type of claustrophobia—other than a family enacting a ceremony, there are very few glimpses of other humans beyond the young man, the lover, and the wife. The urban and exurban landscapes are deserted, an apparently abandoned city serving as the setting. This bracketing of space serves to abstract the already fraught storyline, removing it from any traditional realistic place; it is the nucleus of teeming possible stories, teasing us with potential readings. Through its slipperiness, the film in its own right appears to have multiple incarnations, refusing to conform to a singular identity, teasing us with multiple manifestations. *Vrindavani Vairagya* is a sovereign entity, a superior being we can know only through what appears to us tensions we labor to reconcile; its avatars tease us with unquenchable lines of thought and still points of beauty

The Rifle is a Bride Wearing Red Cloth and Ashes

- Brinda Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru University

What is the colour of suicide? What is the colour of a plenitude of love and longing that is left behind, left over, to spill in sumptuous shades over walls and floors, clothes and doors?

What is the colour of dispassionate intimacy that flows between a triad of lovers embracing a memory of death?

‘...in startled space, which an almost godlike youth suddenly left forever, the emptiness first felt the quivering that now enraptures us, and comforts, and helps.

~Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies, I

Ravishing are the colours of death and memory and passion that collide in the ‘startled space’ which Girish – lover, husband, friend, living ghost – has ‘suddenly left forever’. A ‘quivering’ ensues, that ‘enraptures, and comforts, and helps’: I draw on Rilke’s words to enter the mystic corporeality of Ashish Avikunthak’s

Vrindavani Vairagya (Dispassionate Love), an explosion of gorgeous frames, ebullient hues, seductive un/clothed bodies, and boundless, terrifying conversations in very close combat: circling life, death and eros. This is sheer poetry: Avikunthak offers us a cinema-poem that glides like a fistful of liquid jewels across

the screen, their sharp edges glinting and snapping through chinks between the fingers. From time to time the screen whirrs like a kaleidoscope, images swirling and stopping, mimicking the rhythms of life, death, life – threaded with desire, ever detaching even as it immerses and drowns.



What is the colour of suicide?

‘In your dying shall your spirit and your virtue still shine like an evening after-glow around the earth: otherwise your dying hath been unsatisfactory.’

~ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, Chapter 21

If death is dark as deep night, suicide takes on the colour of twilight, ‘an evening after glow’ that glances softly upon the faces left to square with such a violent passing. Two young women – wife and lover of the man now gone – demand to know how exactly Girish executed his own killing. In a chilling silver-grey monotone, the third of this taut troika, the male lover

who is both reality and dream, begins his exposition: ‘In Girish’s destiny was his father’s .303 Lee-Enfield rifle.’ In a series of bright, peaceful locations – by the river, on the terrace, on the steps of a temple, amid the ruins of decrepit houses – sitting, lying, walking, sometimes with one of the women and sometimes with both, we learn from him not only of how Girish had finally held

the nozzle of the gun below his chin and pulled the trigger, but how he had first cleaned and oiled and decorated and worshipped the rifle, garlanding it and covering its head with red cloth as if it were his bride.

What is the colour of a plenitude of love and longing that is left behind, left over, to spill in sumptuous shades over walls and floors, clothes and doors?

‘Finally they have no more need of us, the early-departed, weaned gently from earthly things, as one outgrows the mother’s mild breast. But we, needing such great secrets, for whom sadness is often the source of a blessed progress, could we exist without them?’

~ Raina Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies, I

If the film is drenched in an impassive eros, it is in thanatos, death, that the sexual is most potent. The rifle has a history quickened with adventurous life: before Girish’s father, the weapon had belonged to a tantric who had joined the Indian National Army fighting British colonizers in South-East Asia. The tantric had killed 37 Britishers with the gun, reciting the beej mantra (seed chant) every time he deployed it, a mantra that possessed transcendental powers to absolve any user of the responsibility of killing. The beej/seed is the seat of the erotic, that which sprouts life. Another (death) seed, a bullet, is embedded in the killing-machine while a prayer to the beej is invoked for protection of the killer, not the killed. That in Girish’s case the murderer and the murdered turn out the same, raises the pitch of the tale to an orgasmic crescendo; the mantra is validated even as the seed of the rifle, the bullet, shatters the skull of the one who pulls the trigger. We do not see the blood that splays at that head-implosion, but its scarlet-orange hues stain the sarees that serially adorn the two women as they seek details of his self-annihilation in a philosophical, apparently-passionless grief. The film glides ahead on the discomfited yet nonchalant shoulders of an absent presence, the man who killed himself. Girish’s life-force, which the seed-bullet destroyed, douses his women in the colours of the setting sun; an ‘evening after-glow’ that wraps his ‘spirit’ and his ‘virtue’ around them in an excruciatingly violent tenderness.

This colour of left-behind lives and loves is, overwhelmingly, the colour of skin, in warm olives rippling like silk as three lithe bodies sway and stroll. For a great part of the film, its protagonists are denuded of clothes, sometimes partly, sometimes wholly. Does this make *Vrindavani Vairagya* overwhelmingly sexual? Yes, and no. The film is persistently, disturbingly sensual, all the more so for mostly taking the sex out of it, and leaving magnetic nude bodies to touch, talk, argue, joust, and weep – to connect and part in waves of passion and dispassion, trying to hold in their collective arms all of life and death and the energy that buoys both, eros. Are these nude forms aroused, and arousing? Even if there is a momentary excitement at first disrobement, a deliberate, almost nonchalant nudity through much of the film deprives the actors and viewers of any sustained sexual thrill, culminating instead in a certain banked tension that is ardent and dispassionate at the same time. This appears intentional, signified by the title of the film, which balances the ‘Vrindavani’ mood of Radha-Krishna’s blissed forest abode with ‘Vairagya’, that is detachment, dispassion, renunciation. How and when can one find passionate love that is dispassionate? Perhaps only among lovers, in the aftermath of the death of one of their own, whose suicide was a consecration of passion and desire.



What is the colour of dispassionate intimacy that flows between a triad of lovers embracing a memory of death?

'Every one regardeth dying as a great matter: but as yet death is not a festival...

The consummating death I show unto you, which becometh a stimulus and promise to the living.

... Thus should one learn to die'

~Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, Chapter 21

This festival of left-behind love is drenched in colours of the warmest sunsets, the coldest midnights, the homeliest shades of tree bark, the emerald-turquoise lustre of peacock feathers: in the luscious sarees draped on the two sparring, entwined women, the paint on walls and doors and grills, the afternoon skies – as well as in the stories that they all tell each other, of worlds they can inhabit only in realms that hang somewhere between the tangible and the fantastical:

'A dream, which is like reality.

A reality, which was like a dream.'

The film flows through rushes and eddies of staccato, poetic prose-poems uttered by each of the three protagonists in to-and-fro exchanges, usually one-on-one. Each one of them is tied to the others in emotional, carnal and contemplative circuits, as well as untied in inevitable disengagement and separation. Is this love? Perhaps. Is this illegitimate, triangulated desire which races in all directions? Apparently. Do passions between them wax and wane? Indeed. Does love rupture, and bleed? Yes, noiselessly onto the waiting canvas of the screen, transforming into fifty blazing shades of rust, blue, yellow and brown: 'But everything is finite, even love.'





একদিন – একরাত করেছি প্রেমের সাথে খেলা!
এক রাত – এক দিন করেছি মৃত্যুরে অবহেলা
এক দিন – এক রাত তারপর প্রেম গেছে চলে –
সবাই চলিয়া যায় সকলের যেতে হয় বলে

‘One day — one night have I frolicked with love!
One night — one day have I been careless with death
One day — one night then love walked out the door —
Everyone goes away for everyone must go.’
~ ‘Love’, Jibanananda Das (translation mine)

The two impetuous, tantalizing women draw closer together; maroon monotonies of a folk dancing troupe enact a rustic Vrindavani rasa in the dust-coloured courtyard at twilight. (Twilight is the colour of suicide.) As pleasantly indifferent as the performers are in their costumes and pirouettes, the fraught interdiction and physical duelling of the three protagonists emerge in savage contrast: here lies a shackled, electric, amorous intimacy both wondrous and nightmarish, whirling for a few silver-trimmed, fleeting, unrestrained moments like dervishes under wild open skies. Reality is dream, dream is reality, death is suicide and suicide is love. By

the end, as if transformed into dervishes themselves, the trio becomes riotous, wanton. And even as they do, they appear and vanish, spar and kiss, hold and leave, stand and wait. As dispassionate (as) love.

Dispassionate Repetition and the Enfoldings of History

- Usha Iyer, Stanford University

Woman: "Are you conjuring stories? What is the truth?"

Man: "Which would you prefer?" "I narrated the story in my way, you interpret it in your way."

In the space between the query from the seated woman and the response from the standing man, the clay-colored floor creeps up onto the blue-colored wall; cream and blue, floors and walls, patches of damp and peeling paint folding into each other. *Vrindavani Vairagya* stages its theater of narratives in a textured system of folds between bodies and their representation, spaces and their experience. How do we come to know or un-know characters, compartments, and spaces, how do bodies experience spaces and how, in turn, do spaces experience bodies that have lived in and traveled through them? The man and woman are poised on thresholds, framed in blue and cream, their words suspended in the space between these two doorways in Vrindavan, floating questions of narration, interpretation, and conjurings of truth.

As three characters discuss their friend, Girish's suicide, and begin to choreograph a dance of their own desires – for him, for each other, for death – their bodies multiply, spiral, and loop, doubled and triangulated as lovers, storytellers, memory-keepers. Framed in fore- and back-ground, in and out of focus, turned towards and away from the camera, in *Persona*-like double framings, through jump cuts producing spatial and temporal repetitions, they become all-too-familiar and entirely unknowable. Much like the film's nodal themes of desire and death.

Two women address each other – in courtyards, desolate streets, in a swaying boat on a foggy Yamuna – one Girish's wife, the other his lover. In Vrindavan, the "city of widows," the women explore (through speech, always through dissociative, distancing, entrancing speech) sensations of bereavement, loss, and eventually a closing of difference and distance as they slowly – physically and within the cinematic frame – come together.



The repeated trailing of saris along floors, the slipping of blouses off shoulders, the triangulations of character intimacies intimate a pleating of subjectivities, surfaces, and sensations. Like in the Deleuzian fold, there is no separation of interiority and exteriority, of surface and depth here. Rather a haptic geography of experience is produced through folds of fabric and bodies, of breasts onto sheets, of hands onto skins, producing dermal folds, architectural folds, and audio-visual folds that layer speech and music onto image tableaux. The camera stays static and at a distance, watching these foldings and unfoldings of materialities, intensities, and temporalities.

Woman: "Can I call you Girish?"

Man: "Why would you call me your father's name?"

Woman: "You are Girish. Girish was my father. I am your mother."

Man: "You are my daughter."

Vrindavani Vairagya's mise-en-abymes generate what Deleuze refers to as an unlimited finitude, in which a finite number of components produce an infinite number of combinations. The man and woman stand by a door, the woman opens the door behind them, the man another door behind her, in an endless repetition that calls forth a terra incognita founded on a recognition of the recursivity of relationships but also the potential for reinvention.

The circularity of relationships in this chamber drama functions as a thematic and formal analytic with 360 degree pans, circular tracking shots, spinning crane shots, jump cuts, multiplication of bodies in a frame, folding in with the multiple relations between the characters, between dream and reality, man and woman, parent, lover, and child. The roving camera with its vertiginous track and crane shots braids together different levels of inhabitation and perception – up and down, single and multiple – through circular and vertical movements so that orders of knowledge are folded upon each other. Reversed actions, backtracking camera movements, rose petals flying back up from a prone body unfold and excavate spectatorial temporalities.



Folded with this visual scape of ambivalence, contingency, and repetition is a sonic envelope of faintly-heard *bhajans* and popular film songs, Hindustani music, the sounds of animals and birds. The characters' aphoristic enunciation – "I have a hobby of collecting suicide notes;" "Girish's death was a philosophical undertaking" – furthers the film's dissociative form. In a Derridean vein, aphoristic form foregrounds disjunction and heterogeneity: "aphorism separates, it marks dissociation (*apo*), it terminates, delimits, arrests. It brings to an end by separating, it separates in order to end and to define" (Derrida 416). In as much as aphorisms expose discourse, their sustained employment as a formal signature by Avikunthak indicates his cinematic oeuvre's deep entanglements with literature, theatre, oral narrative traditions, and the project of foregrounding representation.

An aphorism, as Derrida reminds us, "doesn't come all alone. It is part of a serial logic" (416). *Vrindavani Vairagya* articulates the folding and unfolding of narratives and histories equally through a dissociative visual portrait of Vrindavan, revealed to us in glimpses, through thresholds of neighborhood temples, river ghats, architectural ruins, havelis with radiant, patchy splashes of turquoise and ochre, spaces that bespeak the presence of multiple, overlapping, intertwined lived histories. The folding of Vrindavan and its long history of religious, cultural expression – in its architecture, music, performance traditions – with the three characters' musings and relationships reveals worlds that work through each other in intermingling phases,

weaving together Hindustani music, Raas Leela, colonial technologies, textile traditions, sculptural iconographies. This particular post-colonial folding of past and present in continuous, embodied ways is a thematic interest explored in many of Avikunthak's films.

"It is important for me to know how technology assists in self-annihilation," says a character even as *Vrindavani Vairagya* meditates on how cinematic technology mediates representations of self and other, self-production and self-annihilation. The technology discussed here is the 303 Enfield rifle, "a killing machine left in India by the British," employed in the second World War, used by the Indian National Army, and by police constables like Girish's father "during the Bombay riots of 1992, on 7th December, the day after the demolition of the Babri Masjid." The characters' staccato aphoristic speech evokes the gruesome violence of what we cannot see, are not shown – Indian soldiers fighting for the British in Africa, INA soldiers battling the British in Burma, Girish's father shooting down seventeen Muslims in Bhandi Bazar, and Girish's headless corpse, a lump of flesh where his head used to be before he shot it with the rifle. In this layered narrative, personal, social, and political histories converge in objects like the rifle.

The Vrindavan of sacred groves that Chaitanya and Mirabai wandered through is, in *Vrindavani Vairagya*, a space of old monuments but also of pylons and half-completed construction with metal and concrete cutting through rivers and streets. The vultures have become

extinct because of steroids in the animals whose carcasses they feed on. The sacred and the profane are irrevocably braided; the Yamuna twists alongside thick, coiled, high tension wires.

But Vrindavan is evoked equally through its performance traditions. The Shri Ram Krishna Kripa Mandal's Raas Leela performances fold our protagonists into the unending dance of the cosmic lovers, Radha and Krishna. The past is always a palpable presence, present through ritual, through performance. The Raas Leela performers do not exist in some static past and the protagonists in some static present but they inflect each other in these shared spaces and performance registers, where ritual and ritualized performance (of both sets of performers in the film) unfold to reveal enmeshed modes of spatial-temporal embodiment. The folding of the urban protagonists' spoken Bangla and the Raas Leela performers' sung Braj Bhasha affords a sonic evocation of intermingled expressivities, much as the inclusion as well of Hindustani *khayal* in the film folds categories of the classical and the folk, all lived traditions producing a haptic harmonics of music and bodies.

References:

Deleuze, Gilles. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
Jacques, Derrida. *Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. London: Routledge, 1992.

Credits

Vrindavani Vairagya | Dispassionate Love (Bengali; Color & B/W; DCP, 91 minutes, India & Germany; 2017)

Screenplay, Director & Producer: Ashish Avikunthak

Cinematography: Basab Mullick

Editing: Ashish Avikunthak & Bodhaditya Banerjee

Dialogue: Ashish Avikunthak & Sougata Mukherjee

Cast: Sagnik Mukherjee, Debleena Sen, Prakriti Dutta Mukherjee

Sound Design: Sukanta Majumdar

Music: Saket Sahu, Tarun Krishna Das, Aastha Goswami

Colorist: Ritajit Raychaudhuri

Co-Producer: Kristina Konrad, weltfilm GmbH Berlin

Ashish Avikunthak has been making films in India since the mid nineties. His films have been shown worldwide in film festivals, galleries and museums. He has made a half dozen short films and three feature films – *Shadows Formless* (2007), *Katho Upanaishad* (2011) and *Rati Chakravayuh* (2013). His films have been shown at 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 Goethe Institute, Calcutta (2004), Les Inattendus, Lyon (2006), Yale University (2008) and the National Centre for Performing Arts, Mumbai (2008), Festival International Signes de Nuit, Paris (2012) and 7th Signs Film Festival, Trivandrum (2013). He has a PhD in Cultural Anthropology from Stanford University and is now an Associate Professor of Film and Media at the University of Rhode Island.

b. 1972

Education:

- 2007 Ph.D., Cultural & Social Anthropology, Stanford University, USA
- 2002 M.A., Cultural & Social Anthropology, Stanford University, USA
- 1996 M.A., Ancient Indian History Culture and Archaeology, Deccan College Post-Graduate & Research Institute, Pune, IN
- 1994 B.A., Social Work, Bombay University, IN

Filmography:

- 2019 Glossary of Non-Human Love (Namanush Premer Kothamala) DCP, Color, Bengali, 94 minutes
- 2017 Dispassionate Love (Virndavani Vairagya) DCP, Color, Bengali, 91 minutes
- 2016 The Kali of Emergency (Aapothkalin Trikalika), DCP, Color and B&W, Bengali, 79 minutes
- 2015 The Churning of Kalki (Kalkimanthankatha), DCP, Color and B&W, Bengali, 79 minutes
- 2013 Rati Chakravayuh, DCP, Color, Bengali 105 minutes
- 2011 Katho Upanishad, 35mm, Color, Hindi, 80 minutes
- 2010 Vakratunda Swaha, 35mm, Color and B/W, Hindi, 22 minutes
- 2007 Shadows Formless (Nirakar Chhaya), 35mm, Color and B&W, Bengali, 82 minutes
- 2005 End Note (Antraal), 16mm, Color and B&W, Hindi, 18 minutes
- 2002 Performing Death, DV, Color, 16 minutes
- 2001 Dancing Othello (Brihnnlala Ki Khelkali), 16mm, Color and B&W, English, 17 minutes
- 2001 Rummaging for Pasts: Excavating Sicily, Digging Bombay, DV, Color, English, 27 minutes
- 1999 Kalighat Fetish (Kalighat Athikatha), 16mm, Color and B&W, Bengali, 22 minutes
- 1998 Et Cetera, 16mm, Color, 32 minutes

Solo Shows

- 2019 *Aapothkalin Trikalika*, Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2017 *Aapothkalin Trikalika*, Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai
- 2017 *Kalkimanthankatha*, Range Gallery, Kolkata
- 2015 *Kalkimanthankatha*, Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai
- 2015 *Deathlessness*, Apeejay Arts Gallery, New Delhi
- 2014 *Rati Chakravayuh*, Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2014 *Rati Chakravayuh*, Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai
- 2014 *Rati Chakravayuh*, Experimenter Gallery, Calcutta
- 2012 *Katho Upanishad*, Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai
- 2012 *Vakratunda Sawaha & Kalighat Fetish*, Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2010 *Vakratunda Sawaha*, Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai
- 2009 *Endnote*, Aicon Gallery, London
- 2005 *Foot Fetish*, Seagull Arts and Media Resource Centre, Calcutta
- 2004 *Calcutta Street Portraits*, Goethe Institut, Max Muller Bhavan, Calcutta
- 1999 *Still Life and Bridge*, Piramal Galley, Center for Photography as an Art Form, National Centre for Performing Arts, Bombay

Selected Group Shows

- 2019 *Fellowship Exhibit*, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
- 2018 *Drawn From Practice*, Experimenter Gallery, Kolkata
- 2018 *Artist's Artists: The Way You Look*, Burlington City Arts, Vermont
- 2018 *A Utopian Stage*, Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh
- 2017 *Unruly Shadows*, Nanyang Technological University, Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore
- 2017 *Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art*, England
- 2017 *You Will Not See Me*, Chicago Architecture Biennial
- 2015 *The Foveal Experiment*, New Delhi & Paris
- 2014 *Social Factory*, 10th Shanghai Biennale
- 2014 *Black Sun*, Devi Art Foundation, Delhi
- 2013 *Hundred Years of Experimentation (1913-2013): A Retrospective of Indian cinema and video*, Mumbai
- 2012 *Modern Monsters / Death and Life of Fiction*, Taipei Biennial 2012
- 2012 *Filament*, Experimenter Gallery, Calcutta
- 2012 *FiVe- Anniversary Group Show - Chatterjee & Lal*, Mumbai
- 2011 *You Don't Belong: Pasts and Futures of Indian Cinema*, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou & Kunming
- 2011 *Generation in Transition. New Art from India*, Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw
- 2011 *Paris-Delhi-Bombay*, Centre George Pompidou, Paris
- 2011 *Video in Progress 4: Feelings of Distress*, Kolektiva, Ljubljana
- 2011 *Human Frames*, Kunst-im-Tunnel, Düsseldorf
- 2009 *Re-Frame*, Centre George Pompidou, Paris
- 2009 *Re-Frame*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde
- 2009 *Indian Experimental Films*, La casa Encendida, Madrid
- 2008 *Cinema of Prayoga*, National Centre for Performing Arts, Bombay
- 2006 *Lightcone*, Centre George Pompidou, Paris
- 2006 *Cinema of Prayoga*, Tate Modern, London
- 2005 *Indian Experimental Films*, Cinema-Nova, Brussels

Selected Retrospectives

- 2019 Wolf Kino, Berlin
- 2019 Kino Klub, Split, Croatia
- 2018 Pungent Film Series, Athens, Greece
- 2015 Centre for Moving Image Arts, Bard College
- 2015 *Deathlessness*, Apeejay Arts Gallery, New Delhi
- 2014 Plang, Gallery Fotografic, Prague
- 2014 Rice University Chao Film Festival, Houston
- 2013 Signs Festival, Trivandrum
- 2012 Film Division, Bombay
- 2012 Festival International Signes de Nuit, Paris
- 2008 National Centre for Performing Arts, Bombay
- 2008 Whitney Humanities Centre, Yale University
- 2006 Les Inattendus, Lyon
- 2004 Goethe Institute, Max Muller Bhavan, Calcutta

Awards, Honors & Fellowships

- 2019 Winifred E. Brownell International Excellence Fund, University of Rhode Island
- 2018 Rhode Island State Council on the Arts Fellowship in Film & Video
- 2018 Panel – “Ruminations of the Cinema of Ashish Avikunthak” at the 47th Annual Conference on South Asia at University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- 2015 Early Career Faculty Research Excellence Award in the Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities, University of Rhode Island
- 2014 Future Greats 2014, Art Review
- 2011 Long List, The Skoda Prize for Indian Contemporary Art
- 2011 Open Doors Co-Production Lab, Locarno Film Festival
- 2008 Best Director, Indo-American Arts Council Film Festival, New York
- 2006 Andrew Mellon Foundation Dissertation Fellowship
- 2003 American Institute of India Studies, Junior Fellowship for Dissertation Research
- 2000 Stanford University, School of Graduate Studies, PhD Fellowship
- 2001 Best Documentary, Tampere International Short Film Festival, Finland

Appoinment

- 2016- Associate Professor Film Media, University of Rhode Island
- 2010-16 Assistant Professor Film Media, University of Rhode Island
- 2007-10 Lecturer in Anthropology, Film Studies and South Asian Studies, Yale University

chatterjee & lal

01/18 Kamal Mansion Floor 1
Arthur Bunder Road Colaba
Mumbai 400 005
T +91 22 22023787
E info@chatterjeeandlal.com
W chatterjeeandlal.com