

The British Raj on Film

Wednesdays at 6:15pm
Sept 24 through December 4
(no screening on November 26)

**Location: Room 832, Schermerhorn Building,
1190 Amsterdam Avenue, 8th floor**

To accompany the exhibition, *Delight in Design: Indian Silver for the Raj*, the Southern Asian Institute presents a selection of Hindi, Bengali, and English language films set against the social, cultural, and political backdrop of the Raj and its aftermath. The films are arranged chronologically, commencing with the watershed event of the Rebellion of 1857 that led up to the Independence struggle, and concluding with a final focus on Anglo-Indian life in post-colonial India

Screening Schedule and Film Descriptions

9/24 ***Shatranj Ke Khiladi (The Chess Players)***
Director Satyajit Ray (1977), 115 minutes

In 1856, officials of the East India Company move to consolidate their hold over North India by annexing the wealthy kingdom of Awadh. The chief minister to the Nawab attempts to warn his ruler and local landlords of the impending danger but they ignore him and instead indulge their obsession with playing chess. The game becomes a metaphor for the larger game of politics played by the British as they maneuver to capture Awadh's king. Based on a short story by Premchand.

10/1 ***Mangal Pandey***
Director Ketan Mehta (2005), 150 minutes.

This Bollywood epic is the first major film to focus on the 1857 Indian Rebellion, or "mutiny," as it is usually referred to in British history. The story centers on the rebel leader Mangal Pandey, an Indian sepoy in the service of the East India Company, and his friendship with a British officer. Pandey was a real figure but one about whom little is known. Filming began in 2003 and the opening scene was launched by Charles, Prince of Wales, during his state visit to India.

10/8 ***A Passage to India***
Director David Lean (1984), 164 minutes

Tensions between Indians and the colonial British come to a boil when a visiting Englishwoman accuses a young Indian doctor of raped during a tour of the local caverns. Based on E. M. Forster's 1924 novel, the film can be seen as a study of colonial relations and the nature of memory.

10/15 ***Lagaan***
Director Ashutosh Gowariker (2001), 225 minutes

A story of the people of a small village in colonial India who hope that they will be excused from paying *lagaan*, the crippling land tax that the British have imposed. Instead, the capricious officer in charge challenges them to a game of cricket, a game unknown to the villagers. If they win, they get their wish; if they lose, the increased tax burden will destroy the lives of the villagers.

10/22 ***The Deceivers***
Producer: Ismail Merchant; Director: Nicholas Meyer (1988), 112 minutes

In 1825, Lt. William Savage, a reform-minded District Officer in the service of the East India Company, undertakes to rid his district of what the British viewed as the two greatest problems of Indian society: *suttee*, or widow immolation and *thuggee*, a secret cult of robbers and murderers. The actions of Lt. Savage are eventually thwarted by his profit-minded Company superiors, but not before he attempts to infiltrate the cult and become one of the “deceivers.” Based on the 1952 novel by John Masters.

10/29 ***Ghare Baire (Home and the World)***
Director: Satyajit Ray (1984), 140 minutes

In 1907, Nikhil – a wealthy, enlightened, and charitable Bengali landowner – encourages his wife Bimala to emerge from the traditional female seclusion of *purdah* and introduces her to his old friend Sandip, a radical leader in the *Swadeshi* movement. Bimala is deeply affected by Sandip’s revolutionary fervor and experiences a profound political awakening that draws her out of her home and into the tumultuous world of the Indian nationalist movement. Based on the novel by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

11/5 ***Gandhi***
Director: Richard Attenborough (1982), 164 minutes

The life and times of Mohandas K. Gandhi from his days as a young lawyer in South Africa, to his death as the spiritual leader of the Indian nation shortly after independence. It provides a vivid account of the Indian nationalist movement from its beginnings through the independence and partition of the subcontinent.

11/12 ***Heat and Dust***
Producer: Ismail Merchant, Director: James Ivory (1983), 130 minutes

Adapted by Ruth Praver Jhabvala from her Booker Prize-winning novel, *Heat and Dust* is the story of two English women living in India more than fifty years apart. Olivia, married to an English civil servant in the colonial India of the 1920s, becomes involved in an affair with a romantic and decadent minor prince. Anne, Olivia's grand niece, comes to the subcontinent to investigate Olivia's life, which her family regarded as "something dark and terrible." Anne finds herself both in the same rooms and in the same

predicament as her ancestress, as she herself becomes involved in a romantic entanglement with an Indian man.

11/19 ***Cotton Mary***

Producers: Ismail Merchant & Madhur Jaffrey;
Director: James Ivory (1999), 124 minutes

Set in post-colonial India of the 1950's, *Cotton Mary* is the story of two Anglo-Indian (part English and part Indian) sisters, Cotton Mary and Blossom, their niece Rosie, and their tangled and complicated interactions with a British household. The drama centers on the relationship between Cotton Mary, who dreams of realizing a British identity and Lily Macintosh, a young woman recently returned to India to live in her childhood home.

12/3 ***Shakespeare Wallah***

Producer: Ismail Merchant, Director: James Ivory (1965), 122 minutes

The Buckingham are the husband and wife actor-managers of a troupe of traveling Shakespearean actors in post-colonial India, grappling with a diminishing demand for their craft as English theatre on the subcontinent is supplanted by the emerging genre of Indian film. Lizzie, the couple's daughter, falls in love with Sanju, a wealthy young Indian playboy who is involved in a romance with the glamorous Bombay film star Manjula. The Buckingham, for whom acting is a profession, a lifestyle, and virtually a religion, must weigh their devotion to their craft against their concern over their daughter's future in a country which, it seems, no longer has a place for her

(Hindi and Bengali films will have English subtitles.)

For additional information, please visit the Southern Asian Institute website.
<<http://sipa.columbia.edu/REGIONAL/SAI/index.html>>