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Cinema of Uttarakhand

While Uttarakhand was originally founded with ecological considerations in mind, progress in this regard has been lacking. The recent floods serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need for sustainable development in the region. It is reported that in Joshimath, a town in Uttarakhand, residents have raised concerns about the sound of powerful water currents beneath their homes, shedding light on the potential consequences of large-scale projects that often disregard ecological issues. One significant cause of this situation is unsustainable tourism, which has resulted in environmental degradation, resource depletion, the commercialisation of hill areas, and community displacement in Uttarakhand. These factors have collectively put immense strain on the delicate ecological balance of the region.

Uttarakhand, a cherished tourist hotspot, has consistently been favoured as a cinematic backdrop, highlighting the role of film-induced tourism in the state's tourism sector. The connection between cinema and Uttarakhand dates back to the 1950s. Uttarakhand has been a favourite film location for many acclaimed film-makers, gracing the silver screen in at least over 50 films, including several blockbusters, owing to its breathtaking scenery. Key filming sites in Uttarakhand include the Forest Research Institute and the Military Academy in Dehradun, along with sites in Mussoorie and Nainital. Uttarakhand received recognition as the best film-friendly state at the National Awards in 2019, and it garnered a special mention for its film-friendly environment from the Government of India in 2017. Film tourism thrives in Uttarakhand, and the state government actively supports it as a significant revenue source. There are plans underway to establish a film city in Uttarakhand, further underscoring the government's commitment to this sector.

However, these cinematic representations frequently perpetuate stereotypical portrayals of the region's picturesque landscapes, mountain lifestyle, and Himalayan culture, often relegated to

mere scenic backdrops. This can potentially lead to a growing influx of tourists primarily attracted to the area for its visual allure, lacking a profound appreciation for its ecological or cultural concerns.

However, serving as a film location provides limited tangible contributions to the overall development of Uttarakhand. Frequently, these locales assume a nondescript role in films, particularly during song sequences, where they serve primarily as aesthetic spectacles or artistic backgrounds. Furthermore, the concept of "sight" in cinema offers a malleable canvas for arbitrary interpretations and meanings, susceptible to manipulation or augmentation by both creators and viewers. For example, the movie *Kashmir Files* was predominantly filmed in Mussoorie and Dehradun, yet the narrative unfolds in Kashmir. It is important to recognise that the cultural essence and fundamental character of Uttarakhand transcend its geographical attributes.

Despite its scenic beauty and popularity as a film location, it is unfortunate that Uttarakhand has not established its own film industry. This is where the requirement of a regional industry is significant. The potential advantages of nurturing regional film-making are numerous, as it can give rise to a cinema of Uttarakhand that authentically addresses the state's unique cultural and ecological concerns. This approach transcends the mere portrayal of the landscape as a spectacle and enables the state to amplify its genuine identity. To realise this vision, the state should not only promote film tourism but also actively encourage regional film-making that authentically represents the people and culture of Uttarakhand.

Rahul Rawat, the director of the short film *Sunpat* (2021), emphasises the importance of cultivating a vibrant cinema culture within the state. He argues that cinema can contribute to cultural preservation, boost tourism, raise social awareness, foster community engagement, and promote overall economic development in Uttarakhand. Rawat calls upon the people of Uttarakhand and cinema enthusiasts to actively support and encourage the creative talents emerging from the state.

Thus, establishing an independent film industry that reflects Uttarakhand's culture, heritage, and values is advisable to genuinely support the state's sustainable growth. This initiative has the potential to not only foster sustainable development but also enrich the state's cultural and economic well-being, transcending its scenic beauty.

Vidya Sasikumar
BENGALURU

An Incomplete Account of Russia's War on Ukraine

Anuradha M Chenoy's account of Russia's war on Ukraine (*EPW*, 9 September 2023) is a strikingly incomplete jumble of tendentious pro-Russian talking points masquerading as a representative overview of the position.

The central error Chenoy makes is to deny Russia and Ukraine political and ethical agency. Chenoy never asks what the Ukrainian people want. The author could claim that her wishes are irrelevant—to Chenoy, after Euromaidan, Ukraine became “a bastion of permanent hostility towards Moscow” (p 24). That elision is only tenable by ignoring the subsequent victory of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a Russian-speaking moderate who advocated negotiations with Moscow, over the far more Europhile Petro Poroshenko—a proof of survival of competitive electoral democracy in Ukraine, in contrast to Russia. Similarly, Chenoy ignores earlier Russian freedom of action. Once, most Ukrainians probably were happy to live in a strategically neutral state, economically integrated both with Russia and the European Union (EU). The first polls indicating a wish to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization occur only after the Russian military intervention in February 2014. That intervention and earlier pressure on Viktor Yanukovich to halt economic integration with the EU were mistakes that the Kremlin need not have made.

That denial of Russian and Ukrainian agency also leads Chenoy to write of a “proxy war” (p 24) waged by “global elites” with “little concern” (p 25) for the Ukrainian people. Of course, Western assistance makes a difference. But Western powers in

early 2022 were offering evacuations and debating how to assist a government in exile. They were quite prepared to see Ukraine collapse, and would not sacrifice their own citizens in a war against Russia. The explanatory lacuna is filled by what Chenoy steadfastly refuses to acknowledge—the resolve of the Ukrainian people to defend their national sovereignty.

Chenoy's approach is also methodologically deficient; she baldly makes a number of misleading assertions without evidence or analysis. First, Vladimir Putin cannot seriously regard the use of depleted uranium shells as “bordering on using fissile material” (p 24) when Russia produces such munitions itself. Second, the direct attack on Kyiv in the early weeks of the war suggests that Russia did not merely

seek to “enforce” a neutral status on an unwilling Ukraine but to subordinate it as a colony—as we see in Russian-controlled Ukraine. Chenoy also never asks herself whether a nuclear-armed power really needs colonial “buffer states” for its own security, or what Western excesses such a principle would legitimise. Third, and perhaps the most bizarre, is the direct appeal to Putin's word, after studious attempts to appear neutral—the West, of course, was to blame for sabotaging peace negotiations, “as stated by Putin” (p 25). Well, as Putin also wrote (in 2021), when “some part of a people ... become[s] aware of itself as a separate nation,” others should respond “only ... with respect!”

J P Loo
OXON

Corrigendum

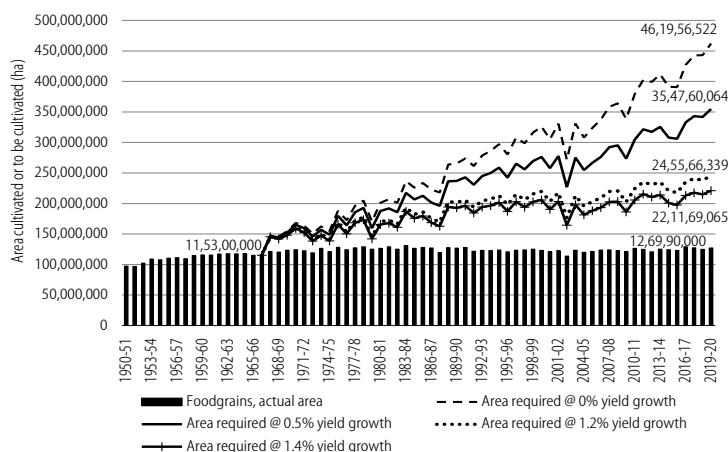
In the article “Meitei Majoritarian Politics of the BJP in Manipur” by Amom Malemnganba Singh (*EPW*, 7 January 2023), “in coalition with” on p 10 should have read as “is supported by.” The error has been corrected on the *EPW* website.

Errata

In the paper “Decelerating Farmers' Incomes: New Evidence from SAS Data and Ways Forward” by A Narayanamoorthy and Chandra S Nuthalapati (*EPW*, 21 October 2023), the following reference should have been removed: “Nuthalapati, Chandra S, A Narayanan, A Mulla, and R Sharma (2022): “Direct Procurement and Vegetable Growers Wellbeing in the Pandemic: Panel Data Evidence from India,” Mimeo, Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi.”

In the current paper “Public Agricultural Science and Yield Barriers in Foodgrains: A Long View on the Indian Experience” by R Ramakumar (*EPW*, 28 October 2023), Figure 2 should have been as follows:

Figure 2: Projections of Cultivated Area Required to Maintain Actual Levels of Foodgrain Production at Varying Growth Rates of Yield after 1965–66, India, 1950–51 to 2019–20



The errors have been corrected on the *EPW* website.

The errors are regretted—Ed.

Note: Clearer and coloured figures in the paper “Public Agricultural Science and Yield Barriers in Foodgrains: A Long View on the Indian Experience” by R Ramakumar (*EPW*, 28 October 2023), are available in the online version.

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Six to eight keywords

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