

YATRA

YEAR OF PRODUCTION: 2022/ PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

FORMAT: Analog, 16mm film

CAST & CREW

starring **LEA ELISHA, GALINA CHUDINOVA**

with **BÁRA WÜNSCHEROVÁ, PAOLA LADA FRANULOVÍČ & ALINA FALCONE**

director of photography **MIHIR KULKARNI**

still on set photography **EKATERINA FONINA**

screenplay **PRIYANKA SARKAR, PAOLA LADA FRANULOVÍČ**

art direction **PRIYANKA SARKAR**

lighting & set **ANZOR ABAZA**

make-up **PRIYANKA SARKAR, BÁRA WÜNSCHEROVÁ**

costume **MARIA RALUCA STREANG**

graphics **PALLAVI SEN, NEHA DAS**

music **GALINA CHUDINOVA, SHIV CHUGH FT. BABA KUTANI**

sound design **PRIYANKA SARKAR**

folley artist **PAOLA LADA FRANULOVÍČ**

sound mixing **FLEIX RAEITHEL**

editor, production & director's

assistant **PAOLA LADA**

FRANULOVÍČ

production & direction **PRIYANKA SARKAR**

special thanks **Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg, Film and TV School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, Prague Film School, Prof. Martin Čihák, Prof. Udo Engel, ANDEC Filmtechnik Berlin**

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BY PRIYANKA SARKAR

YATRA, a transcended journey inwards, is an avant-garde short film inspired by the philosophy "Atman is Brahman", written in the Hindu Upanishads, which can be attained by the expansion of the soul through the seven states of consciousness. It is an exploration of consciousness, femininity, and the interconnectedness of the human experience..

SYNOPSIS

With ritualistic movements of trance which opens a room for improvisation by moving freely to become engaged in conversation, the film explores a sense of belonging in the reflection of one's own reality. This is done by simulating what can be perceived/felt as real while experiencing illusions. In this short, the characters are guided by their sensory awareness as they experience moments of calm, chaos, and aloofness in the city, at the trance party (Brahman), and in nature. The intention is for the audience to look deeper into having their own sense of reality. The film also celebrates the feminine with its all-female cast. It challenges fairytale-like narratives of being rescued. The protagonists take the initiative in their world and break their curse. By not conforming to such histories, it offers a fresh perspective on the portrayal of the feminine.

The non-narrative form of the film also takes the audience through the characters' states of being awake, sleeping, dreaming, and transcending to the cosmic path, where conditioned existence ends and the atman (soul, essence of an individual) tells them the outer world is an illusion. They start to move in temporal space to expand their sense of reality, intensifying their self-reflection and leading them into a path of unison with their own selves while experiencing these states of consciousness.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Yatra, a transcended journey inwards (Sanskrit: 'journey' or 'procession'). This is an extension to deepen my findings in Namaste, my first successful film, which empowered me and helped me start pursuing my interests.

The voyage began when I started to follow the **reflections** of sunlight on the river Vltava in Prague during my semester abroad. That led me to delve deeper into how **reflection** and **illusion** can **affect our sense of reality**.

The film's motivation remained my profound interest in **psychedelics** and to use **performative** ways of weaving the storyline. I wanted to connect to my roots and stumbled upon a **spiritual belief in Hinduism; that the "Atman is Brahman" which means that the individual soul is the same as the cosmic soul**.

Further, every individual **soul expands itself in the universe** and becomes larger than life, an experience only to be felt through attaining a **higher state of consciousness** to reach enlightenment through these seven stages. **The illusion that's felt as a sense of separatedness is "Maya"**. Maya reinforces the ego and defines our connection to the external world. It is only by shutting out the illusions of this external world through meditation that real truth is found.

With my actors, I used **experimental theater techniques to expand time** and **space** by touching upon non-chronological **temporal elements like slow motion, repetition, stillness, fast forward, and backward**. We conducted a few practice sessions to get familiar with the space, and together we formed choreographies.

Talking about dance and film, my all-time favorite filmmaker and artist is **Maya Deren**. Her work has been truly inspirational for me, especially in Yatra. For her, filmmaking was like dancing; in her third film, "A study in choreography for camera (1945)," she celebrates the **principle of the power of movement**. Starring Talley Beatty and his exceptional choreography, she used post-production technique and camera movements to travel in time and space.

Yatra is still a journey I am willing to continue while using performative techniques, pushing it beyond the screen.

