

# THE JUSTICE PROJECT

## The Justice Project Films

Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka



Contests over practices of justice in constitutional systems and publics that are placed on the margins or outside of such systems have and continue to shape the history and experience of democracy in the south Asian region. Especially in the last decade the theme of justice, in south Asia, has exploded as a major point of engagement and tension for governments, researchers and the public, with all three actors sorely unprepared for the speed with which the hydra headed theme of justice and restitution keeps emerging in different sites. While livelihood, health, ecology, agriculture, etc are some of the registers in which justice can be interrogated and its domains extended, violent conflicts is the express paradigm that overwrites and underscores all these registers. At the heart of the struggles, theorizing and action on justice is the constitutive power of Constitutional law in South Asia, its silences and complicity with various power structures. In other words, the quest for justice in the south Asian context is marked by a peculiar lacuna: social groups and collective practices emerge from the operations of law, even as they set themselves against the 'unjustness' of law.

While the south Asian Constitutions themselves may have gone through different journeys marked by suspensions, disappearances, dilutions as well as assertions, the ideas and the contours around which justice has been brought back repeatedly into focus in this region remains peculiarly similar and this includes international covenants and global justice regimes.

The Justice Project coordinated by Aakar, a Trust based in Delhi, aims to build a series of dialogues across the five project countries through films and research papers that will map a range of contests on the idea and practices of justice as they take shape in different sites of south Asia. In so doing it will both profile and interrogate the aims and goals of governance and security. The project has produced 14 research papers and five films. The project is supported by IDRC.

### **Film from Nepal:**

#### **CASTAWAY MAN | Kesang Tseten | 82 mins | 2015**

25<sup>th</sup> May 2015 | 6:30 PM | India International Centre



Dor Bahadur Bista, Nepal's most controversial intellectual in modern times, disappeared without trace in 1996. He became an anthropologist by assisting well-known anthropologist Furer Haimendorf, but was largely self-trained. Fatalism and Development controversially argued that Nepal didn't develop because of Brahminism, values of fatalism and hierarchy of the caste system. Stirring acrimony, he moved to remote Jumla to put into practice his ideas. Speculation over his disappearance include his high-caste enemies; his alleged affair with a young woman

under his mentorship; and his becoming a renunciate on the banks of the Ganges in North India.



**Kesang Tseten** is a Nepali of Tibetan origin, writer-turned filmmaker, is passionate about narrative art, slowly finding his voice with intelligent and culturally sensitive films from the margins. His films have shown at the most prestigious international film festivals and won several awards.

*We Corner People* won the Slovenia TV Award and the Special Jury Award at the '07 Slovenia International Mountain Film Festival and was selected for the New Asian Currents of the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival '07. *Who Will Be A Gurkha* premiered at the International Documentary Film Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA) as a selection in the feature length documentary competition and screened at the Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival. The film won the top award at the International category of KIMFF 2012 as well as the Audience Award, and had a theater run in several towns in Nepal.

### Film from Sri Lanka:

**SILENCE IN THE COURTS | Prasanna Vithanage | 57 mins | 2015**

27<sup>th</sup> May 2015 | 6:30 PM | India International Centre

Two women from rural Sri Lanka, sexually abused by a Judge nearly two decades ago, try in vain to seek justice. As their plea is turned down and subverted by the country's highest authorities, noted journalist Victor Ivan begins to write in-depth stories highlighting their plight, the state of the justice system and its lack of commitment to the downtrodden – to no avail.



This film traces stories of these hapless women and the journalist twenty years on, and attempts to understand this shocking miscarriage of justice and how the powerful can sometimes be above the law.



**Prasanna Vithanage**, one of the best known names in Sri Lankan film industry, directed his first film "*Sisila Gini Gani*" (Ice of Fire) in 1992. It won nine OCIC Awards (Sri Lanka) including Best Director, Best Actor and

Four years later in 1996 he wrote and directed his second film "*Anantha Rathriya*" (Dark Night of the Soul). The film won a Jury's Special Mention at the First Pusan International Film Festival and went on to win all the main awards at the 1996 Sri Lanka Film Critics Forum Awards (affiliated with FIPRESCI) including awards for Most Outstanding Film, Best Director and Best Screenwriter.

*"Pawuru Walalu"* (Walls Within), his third feature in 1997 won the Best Actress Award at the 1998 Singapore International Film Festival. It even won ten out of eleven awards including Best Picture and Best Director at the Sri Lanka Film Critics Forum Awards.

His fourth feature *"Purahanda Kaluwara"* (Death on a Full Moon Day) , 1997, which he wrote and directed w won the Grand Prix at the Amiens Film Festival. It is one of the most successful film in the more than half a century history of cinema in Sri Lanka.

Vithanage's film work stands at the intersection of violence, gender and social injustice.





**Film from Pakistan:**

**A WALNUT TREE | Ammar Aziz | 92 mins | 2015**

29<sup>th</sup> May 2015 | 6:00 PM | India International Centre



An old man reminisces about a distant homeland. He wants to return. The son and daughter in law argue with him. The grand children watch the tension rise. Internally displaced and forced to live in a

camp, the family is caught between memories of what life was, insecurity of the present and the bleakness of future. The sadness and tension is unbearable, something is about to happen.



**Ammar Aziz** is an independent documentary filmmaker and left-wing activist, based in Lahore, Pakistan. Featured in the Christian Science Monitor's '30 under 30' people from all over the world for his art and activism, he was the only Pakistani filmmaker to be selected for the Talent Campus of the Berlin International Film Festival in 2012. He has worked widely on labour-issues and his films have been shown at various international film and human-rights events.

Ammar is the founding director of SAMAAJ [Social Awareness Media and Art Junction], a recently formed, non-government, non-profit, organization committed to using media for creating rights awareness among the marginalized communities of the conflict-ridden areas in Pakistan.

**Film from India:**

**THE FACTORY | Rahul Roy | 132 mins | 2015**

30<sup>th</sup> May 2015 | 6:00 PM | India International Centre



147 workers of India's biggest automobile manufacturing company Maruti Suzuki are on trial for the murder of a senior manager and 2500 workers dismissed. It has been two and a half years and the case drags on. Their bail application has been rejected by the courts. On each hearing they are led to the court room by the police while families line up to catch a glimpse. The defence lawyers plan their strategy in the court canteen. Justice seems a dim hope. The film follows the fate of the under trial workers, families and dismissed workers to investigate the underbelly of industrial conflict and the elusive nature of justice.





**Rahul Roy** graduated from the Mass Communication Research Centre at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi in 1987 with a post graduate degree in film making. His films have travelled across the globe to various documentary film festivals and have won several prestigious awards. Rahul Roy's films explore the themes of masculinity and gender relations against the larger background of communalism, labour, class identities and urban spaces. His graphic book on

masculinities titled 'A Little Book on Men' was published published by Yoda Press.

Roy is the Director of Aakar, a Delhi based trust that works in the area of media, culture and research. Aakar has been engaged in several interventions on masculinities across the South Asian region for more than a decade now. He is the coordinator for The Justice Project.



## About Aakar

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Aakar is a registered Trust with its office in New Delhi, India. Aakar has initiated a series of regional projects on masculinities and prevention of violence against women that include production of documentaries, research, trainings, seminars, etc.

Aakar was set up in 1992 to conduct research, produce documentaries and other cultural materials to impact public and policy discourse on various themes including gender, violence, communalism, health, livelihood, culture, etc. Aakar designed and coordinated the Let's Talk Men 1.0 and 2.0 projects under which a series of documentaries have been produced in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India on the theme of masculinities. Besides media-related work, Aakar has also been working in the area of research, capacity development, networking, conducting workshops, designing interventions for civil society groups in different parts of South Asia. A regional travelling seminar on masculinities organised by Aakar in 16 universities across South Asia has established a new public sphere of debate and discussion involving universities, NGOs, activists, as well as independent scholars and writers. More than 120 academics, artists, media practitioners and activists from different parts of South Asia have been directly involved in the seminars as paper presenters and discussants.

The Justice Project is being coordinated and implemented by Aakar with support from International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

*For more information on the project:*

<https://justiceprojectsouthasia.wordpress.com/>