



WHO IS THE REAL ME?



RM RIYA MUKHERJEE
WORD PICTURES]

THE DISGUISE

DIRECTED BY
Sandeep A. Varma

FEATURING
Naomi Willow & Adriana Grigoriev



SYNOPSIS

The Disguise is an intimate film about the lives of two women in London. One is conservative, holding on to her native symbols and customs, while the other is liberal and assimilated into the western world. One day, an incident on the road, a hate crime, pushes matters to a head, and forces them to rethink their concepts of identity.

This film makes no attempt to arrive at any answers, and instead just leaves some questions hanging: what is culture? What is integration? What is acceptance? And who decides how we choose to live?



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When you live in a large multi-racial megalopolis, how much should you blend in and to what extent can you stand out? This premise of *The Disguise* is what attracted me — the subtle war between the ‘native’ and ‘migrant’.

Rabia wants to stay close to her conservative roots. But at a bus stop in London, something shocking happens that makes her question that. A local Londoner, Lena, helps her, and their stories intersect. But Lena only appears to be a ‘local’. What happens with both, internally and externally, is what this film is about.

Set at an ambling pace, and yet dramatic, capturing the inner streets of London, *The Disguise* is a personal intimate story that raises questions which have no definitive answers.



DIRECTOR'S PROFILE & WORK

Sandeep A. Varma is an award winning filmmaker. As a writer, director and producer he's won multiple accolades and recognitions. His feature film *Manjunath* won the Ramnath Goenka Award for cinematic excellence & the Best Screenplay at the Screen Awards 2015 apart from being nominated for the Best Debut Director Award.

His short film, *The Virgins*, has crossed 14 million views since its release in 2016. It has been felicitated at several festivals including Jio Filmfare, Delhi Shorts International & Noida International.

Sandeep has also written & directed *Kahanibaaz*, starring Ashish Vidyarthi, for Royal Stag Large Shorts. *Kahanibaaz* has been recognised at prestigious festivals including the 'Filmfare Awards', the 'Los Angeles Cine Fest' and the 'Pune international Film Festival'.

Apart from his filmmaking career, Sandeep is an experienced entrepreneur. He is the Managing Director of ICOMO, a Mumbai based boutique creative agency. He has recently co-founded Filmboard Movies, a film & tech based start-up that seeks to revolutionize the way content is created in this country.

An engineering degree from BITS PILANI, an MBA from FMS, along with rich corporate work experience, allow Sandeep to straddle these various roles with acumen and ease.

AWARDS & CITATIONS



RITWIK GHATAK BRONZE AWARD
FOR THE 3RD BEST SHORT FICTION:

'for an engaging drama involving the many facets of the burqa while exposing the present state of Islamophobia, supported by a well-written script!'

BEST WOMAN FILM MAKER



HONORABLE MENTION IN THE
BEST SHORTS COMPETITION 2019
HUMANITARIAN AWARDS!:

'Your production was hand selected by our judges and staff, from the entire pool of entries to the competition throughout 2019, as a film that represents both the spirit of humanitarianism combined with quality filmmaking craft.'

AWARDS & CITATIONS



AWARD OF EXCELLENCE:
LIBERATION / SOCIAL JUSTICE /
PROTEST



12 INDIVIDUAL AWARDS:

<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE SANDEEP VARMA "THE DISGUISE" ★★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>	<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE "THE DISGUISE" Riya Mukherjee ★★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>	<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE ADRIANA GRIGORIEV "THE DISGUISE" ★★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>
<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE ZED JOSEF "THE DISGUISE" ★★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>	<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE JENNIFER SCOTT MALDEN "THE DISGUISE" ★★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>	<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE NAOMI WILLOW "THE DISGUISE" ★★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>
<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE EZEQUIEL ROMERO "THE DISGUISE" ★★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>	<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE SANDEEP FRANCIS "THE DISGUISE" ★★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>	<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE ANUJ DANAIT "THE DISGUISE" ★★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>
<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE VINIT GALA "THE DISGUISE" ★★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>	<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF MERIT Riya Mukherjee "THE DISGUISE" ★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>	<p>SOUTHERN SHORTS AWARDS AWARD OF MERIT SANDEEP VARMA "THE DISGUISE" ★ AWARD CATEGORY: DRAMA - SPRING 2019</p>

OFFICIAL SELECTIONS





WRITER'S NOTE

Increasing religious intolerance across the globe is a truly distressing phenomenon. If there really IS a god it's not doing a very good job, is it?

But religion isn't just about gods. It's about rituals, habits, customs. Visual and audio symbols that start to become a part of one's identity. What does the sound of a church bell do to you? What significance does the colour saffron have in your life? What's your relationship with a kippah? Or with a burqa?

Exploring cultural nuances, habits, freedom, gender roles, parenting roles and individual choice is what the writer's journey in *The Disguise* has been about.



Stills from the film *The Disguise*

Same Difference

Short film *The Disguise* is about two women in London, with very different identities, but facing similar issues

PARTH KHATAU

AS ADRIANA GRIGORIEV got ready for her shot in one of London's most busy streets, something shocking happened. A man driving into a parking lot next-door, rolled down his windows and hurled racial abuses her way for wearing a burqa. A stunned Grigoriev burst into tears, running to her crew, standing a few hundred metres away.

"This was the first-time Adriana was dressed in a burqa in London and after reading the script initially, had argued with me that Muslim women aren't racially abused there," says Mumbai-

based Sandeep Varma, director of *The Disguise*, a short film that premiered in Kolkata on March 26.

"We often make claims about our society being clean. However, only those who face racism and discrimination know the reality," adds the 49-year-old, who has also written and directed *Kahanibaaz*, a short film starring Ashish Vidyarthi, while his other works include *Manjunath*, a film on an IIM-Lucknow student who was killed for standing up against corruption.

Grigoriev from Moldova is one of the two protagonists (the other one being Naomi Willow from the UK) in the film, which is about two women in London —

one who is conservative and holds on to her customs, while the other one is liberal and has assimilated into the Western world. One day, a hate crime pushes matters to a head, and forces them to rethink their identity. Willow plays a Muslim woman who has embraced the British culture and lives her life like any other Londoner. However, her perception of racism faced in Britain changes after an incident at a bus stop.

Riya Mukherjee, writer and producer of the 18-minute film, says, "I wrote it in early 2018 and felt the story was very timely, with the kind of mess the world finds itself in. I did not want to go through the process of pitching it to producers as that would've been time consuming and so, I decided to produce it myself." The 44-year-old founded Riya Mukherjee Word Pictures, with *The Disguise* being their maiden production.

On choosing London as the backdrop, she says, "I know London very well as a city; it is full of people from different cultures and ethnicities and racism unfortunately persists there, making me want to pick it as a place to shoot."



Film on cultural intolerance premieres at city festival

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: An 18-minute English film about the growing cultural intolerance all over the world was premiered at the ongoing South Asian Short Film Festival in the city on Tuesday. Titled 'The Disguise', the film was earlier selected for the Best Shorts Competition in California and The Bozeman Film Festival in Montana.

Set in London, the film narrates the personal story of two women and the subsequent choices they make because of the growing cultural insensitivity all around. Director of the film, Sandeep A Varma, said he was drawn to the story because of its "intimate" nature and "shelf life". An engineer by qualification with an MBA degree, Varma has already directed a feature film titled 'Manjunath'.

"When you live in a large multi-racial megalopolis, how much should you blend in and to what extent can you stand out? This premise of 'The Disguise' — the subtle war between the 'native' and 'migrant' — attracted me," Varma said.

The radio-funded short film, featuring Naomi Willow and Adriana Grigoriev, has been written by Riya Mukherjee, who is a music/radio consultant and a writer and original content creator. Talking about the project,

ALL ABOUT THE FILM

► **Name of film** | The Disguise

► **Duration** | 18 minutes

► **Director** | Sandeep A Varma

► **Writer** | Riya Mukherjee

► **Set in** | London

► It was earlier selected for the Best Shorts Competition in California and The Bozeman Film Festival in Montana



When you live in a large multi-racial megalopolis, how much should you blend in and to what extent can you stand out? This premise of 'The Disguise' — the subtle war between the 'native' and 'migrant' — attracted me

Sandeep A Varma | DIRECTOR

which she produced as well, Mukherjee said, "The film is about the lives of two Londoners. While one is conservative, the other is assimilated into the western world. One day, a hate crime on the road forces them to rethink their concepts of identity." The film has been deliberately left open-ended with both Varma and Mukherjee insisting on not attempting to arrive at any definitive answers.

On being asked why she chose to pen the script after 23 years of her work in broadcasting and music programming, Mukherjee said she had earlier worked on innovative films either as a conceptualiser, co-writer, lyricist or creative producer. Notable among them have

been short films titled 'The Virgins', 'Kahanibaaz' and 'Baarish' and the feature film titled 'Good Morning Sunshine'.

"The story of 'The Disguise' is very visual. Besides, it isn't a story that can be told on the radio," Mukherjee said.

Another very conscious choice was to set the film in London. "I could have shot it outside my house since all I needed was a bus stop. But I deliberately wanted to set it in a megalopolis in the western world because I didn't want the exotic third world problem tag. I needed Caucasians to be cast. I needed to draw attention to the fact that this is no longer just happening in our backyard," she concluded.

MEDIA

[Times of India, 27 March 2019](#)



Mirchi Bangla

26 March at 10:12 · 🌐



'The Disguise' is a crowd funded and self funded short film written and produced by Riya Mukherjee and directed by Sandeep Varma. It's about the growing racial and cultural intolerance across the globe today. Riya finished the film in November last year. The India premiere of the film is today, Tuesday @ 01:45 PM @ Nandan-III.

Watch the trailer:

<https://youtu.be/hb9tg6hSWPE> ✓



INDIA PREMIERE OF

RM RIYA MUKHERJEE WORD PICTURES

THE DISGUISE

MEDIA

[Mirchi Bangla's launch of the trailer, 26 March 2019](#)

[Sangbad Protidin, \(Bengali Daily\), 29 March 2019](#)



প্রশ্ন তোলে নজর কাড়ল 'দ্য ডিসগাইজ'

সোহিনী সেন

আজকের পৃথিবীতে মহামারীর আকার নিয়েছে সাম্প্রদায়িক বিভেদ। ধর্মের ভিতরে যে আর্থিক প্রশান্তি আর মানসিক স্থিতির

সম্মিত কোনও মেগালোপলিসে আপনি যখন থাকছেন, তখন ঠিক কতটা নমনীয় হওয়া উচিত আপনার? কতটাই বা নিজেকে আলাদা রাখা উচিত? সীমারেখাটা কীভাবে নিরূপিত হবে— এই প্রশ্নগুলোকে উসকে দিচ্ছে 'দ্য ডিসগাইজ'। আবার নতুন করে

AN ACT OF FAITH, AN ACT OF BRAVE...

Riya Mukherjee, Founder, Riya Mukherjee Word Pictures and Former EVP & National Creative Head, Radio Mirchi talks about the importance of breaking barriers to stand by one's beliefs



13 May, 2019
by RIYA MUKHERJEE



There I was sitting in the audience at this panel discussion on the sidelines of a film festival, nervously raising my hand, unsure and timid. "Gosh, how far had I come from that corner cabin, the badass impressive designation and that super fat pay cheque?" I thought to myself, as my hand remained ignored by the 'men of experience' on stage.

You don't expect to feel like a rookie after a career spanning two-and-a-half decades. And yet, there I was. Finally, one of them took pity on me. Gave me a benevolent big daddy smile and said, "Yes...?"

I began... already apologetic... "Uh.... My question is not actually about feature films... I've made a short film..."

And almost as if on cue, I saw it, the now all too familiar headshakes and exchanged grins. I ploughed on... "Uhh.... I am from Radio actually... been in Radio all my life..."

The highly-experienced-beenthere-done-that film-man on stage interrupted with a chuckle: "Aha! I have seen that whenever Radio people make films, all the characters tend to talk too much." A ripple of appreciative laughter went through the audience. The man on stage beamed. The moment passed. I sat back down, my question yet unasked.

And as I sat there, tuning out the knowledgeable people's knowledge and tuning into myself - as only a Radio person can do - I started to wonder: What had I done? Why had I gone and made a film, that too in London, with a Caucasian cast, at great personal cost - when I knew absolutely nothing about film-making? Was it because of what I read in the papers every day? The mindnumbing accounts of terrorist attacks on one hand and the gutsickening reportage of hate crimes on the other?

Was it because, as Gulzar sahab has said, "Every morning, the newspaper arrives at my doorstep, soaked in blood..."? Was it because I'd thought of a story that needed to be shown, and not told? And hence it couldn't be done on the Radio? Was it because my film guru, my script writing mentor and veteran film-maker Sandeep A. Varma, believed in this script, backed the vision, and agreed to direct the film: quite akin to a coach agreeing to bat in the middle with his protégé? Was it because when we started to crowdfund the project, we experienced such a show of faith from friends, family, work associates and even perfect strangers, that suddenly there was simply no turning back? Was it because I was bored and needed a new challenge? I think it was all of the above, and something else as well.

‘Violence is created in the head’

Short-film director Sandeep A Varma brings his English short about Islamophobia to the 14th Habitat Film Festival in Delhi.



MEDIA

[The Indian Express, 29 May 2019](#)

[The Hindu listing, 25 May 2019](#)



FILM

English short

As part of the HFF 2019, an English short film, *The Disguise*, will be screened. Written and produced by Riya Mukherjee, the film is directed by award winning filmmaker Sandeep A. Varma. It is about two women in London - a conservative and a liberal. One day a hate crime on the road forces both to rethink their concepts of identity.

VENUE: The Amaltas Hall, IHC

TIME: 6:30 p.m.



PRODUCER'S PROFILE

Riya is the founder & partner of **RMWP [Riya Mukherjee Word Pictures]**: a company committed to creating original audio video content for a thinking audience.

She is also a music & radio consultant as well as a writer and original content creator.

Having started her radio career in the early 90s and after 15 industry shaping years with Radio Mirchi as the National Creative Head, Riya became an independent consultant in November 2014. She advises media houses and agencies on how to create & curate content in the music and entertainment space.

In the past few years Riya has also been part of several innovative films either as a conceptualiser, co writer, lyricist or creative producer. Notable among them being the short films *The Virgins*, *Kahanibaaz* and *Baarish*, and the feature film *Good Morning Sunshine*.

The Disguise is her screenplay and the maiden production venture of RMWP.

CAST AND CREW



RABIA

Naomi Willow

LENA

Adriana Grigoriev

HASHIM

Zed Josef

LENA'S MOTHER

Jennifer Scott-Malden

DIRECTOR

Sandeep A. Varma

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Ezequiel Romero

EDITOR

Sandeep Francis

WRITER

Riya Mukherjee

ORIGINAL BACKGROUND SCORE

Anuj Danait

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

N Nancy Nisa Beso

UK LINE PRODUCER

Ajay Arora, Nodachi

A blurred city street scene. In the foreground, a black bicycle is partially visible behind a metal fence. A purple car is moving across the frame from left to right. In the background, a person is walking, a speed limit sign shows '30', and there are buildings and trees. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the upper part of the image.

ENQUIRIES

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