

MEIN, MEHMOOD

(I'M, MEHMOOD)

BEST FILM



A FILM BY

PRATAYA SAHA

DESIGN CHIRAG SHETTY



DC South Asian
Film Festival

Winner - Best Story
8 November 2022



River to River Florence
Indian Film Festival

Winner - Best Short Film
11 December 2022



Kolkata International
Film Festival

Winner - Best Short Film
22 December 2022



RECOGNITIONS

BEST STORY - DC SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL, USA

**BEST SHORT FILM - RIVER TO RIVER FLORENCE
INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL, ITALY**

**BEST SHORT FILM - KOLKATA INTERNATIONAL FILM
FESTIVAL**

**BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY - JAIPUR INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL**



MEIN, MEHMOOD

(I'M MEHMOOD)

Running Time:

11 minutes

Directed By:

[Prataya Saha](#)

Written By:

[Prataya Saha](#)

Producers:

[Black Book Media, UAE](#)

[Red Polka Productions, INDIA](#)

Genre:

Drama

Budget:

\$ 2,482

Location:

UAE

Audience:

U

BLACK BOOK MEDIA PRESENTS
IN CREATIVE COLLABORATION WITH RED POLKA PRODUCTIONS



MEIN,
MEHMOOD
(I'M, MEHMOOD)



WRITTEN BY
CHIRAG SHEETY

A FILM BY
PRATAYA SAHA

LOGLINE

Mehmood, an Asian immigrant in Dubai struggles to meet his monthly sales target due to his lack of skills in communicating in a popular language (in this case English) and thus risks losing his job while, a thousand miles away, his wife waits for him to send across the money for her daughter's education.

SYNOPSIS

"Mein, Mehmood" (I am, Mehmood) is a film that is dedicated to the life of hardworking immigrants all over the world. The film traces the life of Mehmood, a simple middle-aged immigrant from the Indian subcontinent who has left immigrated to Middle East to provide a better life for his family.

A tele-caller with a tourism company that is badly hit by the pandemic, Mehmood, struggles to meet monthly sales targets. His inability in speaking the English language limits his ability to converse with potential clients, thus putting his job in jeopardy. Back in a village in his country of origin, his wife waits for him to send across money for their daughter's education.

OFFICIAL TRAILER





REVIEWS IN THE PRESS

"Raising awareness through Mein, Mehmood has the potential to impact so many lives positively" ~ **Ravinder Kaur**, DesiBlitz, UK

"Prataya Saha's short film travels to Toronto" ~ **Shilpa Anandraj**, The Hindu

"Mein, Mehmood, an award-winning short film, throws light on how knowing English determines one's social status" ~ **Sravasti Datta**, The Times of India

"..this makes the movie a strong postcolonial work which investigates the persisting and ever continuing colonial hangover of the language for South Asians."

~ **Tooba Towsef**, Journalist, The Quint, Moneycontrol, Kashmir Observer

"Prataya Saha's new short film attempts to capture the challenging lives of immigrants"

~ **Ayesha Tabassum**, Senior Journalist, The Indulge Express

"The endnote of the film captures the plight of immigrants in one short phrase and urges you to rethink the purpose of language in our lives. Once again, Prataya spins a tale that is real, relatable, topical, and crisp."

~ **Ano Patel**, Feature Writer, Ex-Journalist, Storyteller & Editor

IN THE NEWS - FILMFARE DUBAI



Writing and movies are a passion for Ozair Abdul Aleem, who has been a part of the advertising industry for over two decades now. And while Ozair admits that scripting and filmmaking have always been on his wish-list, acting was never on the radar! Interestingly however, Ozair has made a stunning debut in moviedom as an actor and creating waves internationally with his performance in Prataya Saha's short film Mein Mehmood. Set and shot in Dubai, both - the film and the debutant's role - have received accolades and won honours at several prestigious film festivals globally. We caught up with the writer-actor in Dubai for a candid chat as he tells us his plans to create more content-driven and entertaining projects from Dubai. Excerpts



IN THE NEWS - AFTER WIN AT KIFF



LIFE IMITATING ART

Sharif Hashmi, more popularly known as JK from *Family Man*, talks about *Mission Majnu* and his journey into the industry

ACTOR SHARIF HASHMI, in real life, is as different from his portrayal of JK as you can get. He is a former IAS officer who has had a career in the civil service for over 15 years. He has a job that is as demanding as it is to his impeccable comic timing. The actor, who was last seen in *Vidyaan* in 2018, has a few films and web series in his kitty, this year, including the much-awaited *Mission Majnu*, *Choronzon*, *Ai Zehi*, *Shir Shastri Babbar*, *Conkar*,

and more. Our writer took him to his home in the suburbs of Kolkata and sat for hours and hours to get a sense of his life and how he developed the character.

How was your experience working with Rashmika and Sharif?

Well, I didn't have any scenes with Rashmika, but working with Sharif was a great experience. We were supposed to work together in *Shoronzon* as well, but my dates were clashing with the shoot of *Shir Shastri*. I couldn't be a part of *Shoronzon* and I think I will regret it throughout my life. But finally, we could work together in *Mission Majnu*, and we had lots of fun.

You have been acting for many years and now, as an actor, which role inspires you the most?

It would be acting, always. Acting has been my first love since my childhood. But I took a lot of time to get into it. I started acting when I was turning 20. Until then I was writing for non-fiction content on music channels. But for my acting career, being a writer has been quite beneficial in understanding my characters and carving them, giving them the final touches that they need. It means that things have become easier for me, but I have been successful.

Do you feel that your character in *Mission Majnu* is a departure from your previous work?

Not at all! I believe it depends on my wife's birthday. Also,

Rashmika's character is called *Nareen* in this film, which is my wife's name. There may be just more coincidences, but both a special place in my heart.

How was your prep for the character?

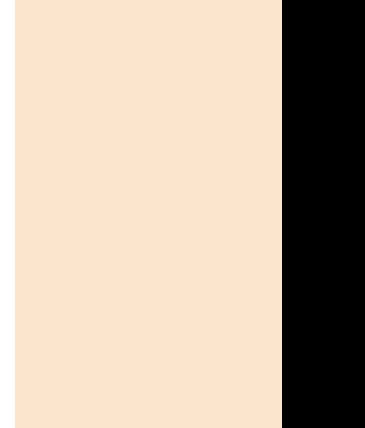
For the first time, as much effort has been given to create my look. The look has been created with minute details. Also, the character I play has a Punjabi dialect, so that I can say in that I am super excited, more so, because the film releases on my wife's birthday. Also,

he has also won the coveted *Golden Bengal Tiger Award* for Best Short Film at *Kolkata International Film Festival 2022*. We speak with him to learn more about *Mein Mehmood*.

What inspired you to make this film?

I have recently finished working on my first Bengali short film named *Choronzon*. *Choronzon* (The Golden Cage) featuring actor Ananta Bose, director Debajyoti Bhattacharya, and producer Soumik Sen Baral. The story is set against a backdrop of a 1980s where three people revelling in an old-world bazaar dispute over whether to preserve its heritage or turn it into an apartment complex. The film will be screened at several international film festivals across the globe soon.

Prataya Saha



Sharif Hashmi

Mother tongue tied

Filmmaker Prataya Saha talks about his short film *Mein Mehmood* that won the best short film award at KIFF '22



Prataya Saha

IT TOOK A while for Kolkata born filmmaker Prataya Saha to finally write on his passion for the art, after quitting his high paying job as a statistical analyst. He believes his film journey was quite accidental, yet it was something that was always meant to happen even his knock-out performance in the film festival never even amidst his busy schedule. It was in 2017, that he got access to the green room of an eminent theatre production in Bangladesh as a theatre photographer that subsequently inspired him to delve deep into the world of the short film.

After his cinematic debut with *Anno's Dilemma* in 2016, he went on to make 11 other short films based on various societal issues that are seldom touched upon. Having worked on topics like domestic abuse during pregnancy, societal conditioning of women in a patriarchal society and the lack of oral life communication that comes along with the over-reliance on social media, his recent work *Mein Mehmood* touches upon the alienation faced by an immigrant based out of India who isn't well versed in English. The film has not only won accolades at *South Asian Film Festival* and *River to River International Film Festival* but

AWARD-WINNING FILM

Filmmaker Prataya Saha talks about his KIFF win, love for Satyajit Ray and more

'Mein, Mehmood' was adjudged the Best Short Film

BY UDITA CHAKRABORTY PUBLISHED 11.01.23, 07:57 PM



Prataya Saha accepts the award for Best Short Film at the Kolkata International Film Festival
All images: Prataya Saha

IN THE NEWS

short film



Prataya Saha

LOST AT SEA

Prataya Saha's new short film attempts to capture the challenging lives of immigrants

WITHIN A SPAN of *11 minutes Mein*, Mehmood tries to capture the plight of innumerable immigrants who are working in different parts of the world. The short film by Bengaluru-based Prataya Saha who has made award-winning films such as *Just Another Day* and *The Good Wife*, explores this thought-provoking subject that affects millions of lives across the world.

Starring Ozair Abdul Aleem as Mehmood, the story follows this immigrant who works as a telecaller at a travel company. He has targets to achieve to ensure he retains his job and saves enough money to send back home to India for his daughter's education. Prataya wanted to write and make a film about such immigrants who work in the UAE ever since he started visiting the country in 2013 for work. "The Middle East is an amalgamation of so many different cultures. I have experienced this since I started visiting the

place many years ago. I have travelled by public buses and I have also lived in shared accommodations. This is where I have seen the problems of immigrants first hand. Since I know how to speak in Dhakai Bengali and also speak in Hindi, I was able to speak with many of these people. This is where I found my inspiration," says the director who wrote the script of the film at a coffee shop in Dubai within 10 hours, over a cup of coffee. This was soon after the first wave of COVID-19, and Prataya was visiting the country for a project. So there are references to the pandemic and also how people lost their jobs because of it.

The lead actor of the film, Ozair, has delivered an impressive performance. What comes as a surprise though is that he is not a professional actor. Yet, the realism that he brings to the screen is quite convincing. "He is a writer and used to work for *Sharjah TV* since 1994. Not being a professional actor

and as someone who has observed Dubai and life of immigrants so closely, he was able to perform as naturally as possible," explains Prataya. There are quite a few moments during the film that Ozair has improvised his lines, and



Ozair Abdul Aleem in a still from the film

this was a liberty given by the director. The film also explores how today younger professionals who know English are given preference over senior workers, and this is leading to the older workforce losing their jobs. The story also highlights how living away from family is emotionally draining for many workers who have no choice but to earn abroad.

The cinematography and colour tone of the film gives it a very international look and feel. Prataya says he watched several Mexican films. "I watched many references like the show *Narcos: Mexico*. Mexico has a desert, and Dubai also has one, so I felt the same kind of warm tones would work for it," he says. The film that has been screened at the UK Film Review Festival and has now been selected for a screening at one of the largest South Asian film festivals in North America. It will be released on a streaming platform in the near future.

— AT

IN THE NEWS

TH Prataya Saha's short film travels to Toronto

Prataya Saha's short film travels to Toronto

 Shilpa Anandraj

AUGUST 12, 2022 08:23 IST
UPDATED: AUGUST 12, 2022 14:14 IST



Prataya during the shoot of the film | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

The 11-minute film talks of the inhibitions caused by lack of fluency in English

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Prataya Saha talks 'Mein, Mehmood' & Independent Filmmaking

In an exclusive chat with DESIBLITZ, Prataya Saha discusses the main themes of 'Mein, Mehmood' as well as the praise the film has received.

📅 August 17, 2022



By RAVINDER KAUR 


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IN THE NEWS

Global_Indian

A hero's journey

Tuesday, July 26 2022

 English

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I took a calculated risk, there was no 'Gully Boy' moment: Filmmaker Prataya Saha

WRITTEN BY: DARSHANA RAMDEV

(July 26, 2022) "Sir, it's time to go, we're closing." Filmmaker Prataya Saha was snapped out of his reverie by an impatient janitor waiting to close the cafe at which he sat in Sharjah. Saha picked up his things, smiling – his job was nearly done. He called Ozair, an acquaintance from Bengaluru, who would also go on to star in the film. Their paths happened to cross in the UAE, where Prataya had been to shoot a music video for a UK label. "He asked me, 'why don't we do something here?' I had a flight out in two days but Ozair had promised to help get my visa extended if I could produce a script he liked," Prataya tells me, as he catches up with [Global Indian](#) on a rainy Saturday afternoon in July, one year later. As it happened, Ozair loved what he saw and *Mein, Mehmood* was born, in ten intense hours spent huddled with pen and paper at a Costa Coffee. Shot entirely in Dubai in 2021, *Mein, Mehmood* will premiere at the IFFSA in Toronto, North America's largest South Asian film festival, on August 15, 2022.

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Srinagar | Sunday | 12-06-2022 05



MOVIE REVIEW |

Of Mehmood, Angrezi and Immigrants

"Mei, Mehmood" succinctly explores the workings of this language capital and how the social prestige attached to it continues to plague the psyche of people

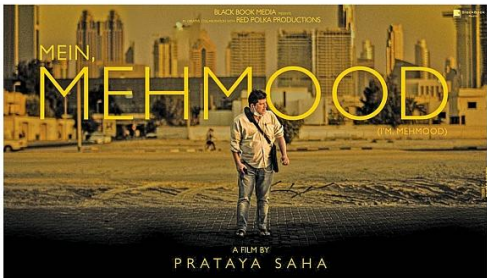
Tooba Tawfiq

When Mehmood finds himself with a basket full of rejection while his English-speaking counterpart bags profitable targets – the third-world audience can easily catch the central argument of Pratya Saha's short movie, "Mei, Mehmood". Indeed, English still remains a language of power in the postcolonial world. This is explored by Saha through the story of a middle-aged Indian immigrant working in Dubai.

Dubai is the new age's "happy getaway". It has taken over the night of the American skyscrapers and become luxury's first home. This is perhaps why it is inviting many for money and work. Even as the picture-perfect poster of this place sits symmetrically, it is interspersed with an unfamiliar crowd that often puts the co-learners into question.

This modern-day idyll is questioned in Saha's movie which unpacks the struggles of South Asian immigrants, one shot at a time. Saha's Dubai isn't warm and welcoming as it is in popular advertising's imagery. The tall skyscrapers aren't promising. They bring out the sublime irony of Saha's protagonist, Mehmood's helplessness.

Mehmood, who works as a tele-caller in a tourism company, is seen juggling to earn amidst the pandemic. He is seen rejecting monetary to achieve sales targets to assist money and send it to his family back in India. Mehmood's difficulty is primarily shown to be his inability to speak in English, even as his clientele are Hindi/Urdu speaking. This is a crucial point to understand the commentary on English that the story is trying to make. Unlike South Asian immigrants in US,



6 While struggling immigrants find quite a space in the aware critiques of the "American dream", how many have ventured to defate the bubble of the "green pasture" possibilities in places like Dubai? This enterprise throws open new questions to understand the status of the post-colonial world in new contexts.

where language barrier becomes a hindering factor, as Saha's movie English is dominantly attached to prestige. This makes the movie a strong postcolonial work which investigates the persisting and ever continuing colonial hangover of the language for South Asians.

Besides being the coloniser's language and enjoying power as a residue of the imperial legacy globally, English had been framed as a superior language by British colonisers. Additionally, when English was privileged as a medium of education in British India, a select group of elites were able to avail it. Moreover, English education also created a section of elite Babus, a class of fluent English-speaking people. This educated elite went on to become the future leaders of India and it is this first generation that also enjoyed most positions of power after

independence from foreign rule. In the Post-Colonial context, however, English continued to remain the language of power and of the "powerful". As such, it carried with it not only a connotation of social capital but also potentials of economic mobility. Perhaps this explains the many English language coaching institutes that have sprung up across the subcontinent. "Mei, Mehmood" succinctly explores the

workings of this language capital and how the social prestige attached to it continues to plague the psyche of people. That Mehmood fails to meet his monthly targets while his colleague finishes well in time, even as they had Hindi/Urdu speaking clientele, goes on to show the double standards that dictate our lives.

The movie brilliantly shows the interlinks between power, education, prestige and social capital. It is not just a lack of English education that creates hurdles in the way of Mehmood but also the element of prestige that he couldn't flaunt to his potential customers. It also explores the internalised colonial hangover that is not residual but quite unabashedly operational within our communities. To have a South Asian immigrant face problems at the hands of those who share the same ethnicity is a telling comment on

BEHIND THE SCENES



6 Unlike South Asian immigrants in the US, where language barrier becomes a hindering factor, in Saha's movie English is dominantly attached to prestige. This makes the movie a strong postcolonial work which investigates the persisting and ever continuing colonial hangover of the language for South Asians

the unscrupulous "progress" of people. It is this class of Brown Sahib's that Macaulay, the orientalist who had advocated English had set out to achieve. It is a pity that even after having access to education, people still thrive in the Babu complex and judge their own.

In relation to a telling comment on the irrational power attached to English, the movie shows the every day struggles of an immigrant. This is done in simple yet impactful scenes. It throws open a Pandora's box of issues that immigrants have to face. Not only do they struggle far from their roots but find themselves squeezed in more than one way. Identity, marriage, family and life – an immigrant risks all. The displacement affects every aspect of their life as they're left chasing after the promises of green pastures, from fake smiles to sombre days. "Mei, Mehmood" shows all in only 11 minutes.

The movie's success in laying a lot in less is to be credited to the lead actor Ozair Abid Aleem, who lends the role a depth that goes beyond expressions. Together with Pratya Saha's story and direction, the story stands as important and relevant as ever.

While struggling immigrants find quite a space in the aware critiques of the "American dream", how many have ventured to defate the bubble of the "green pasture" possibilities in places like Dubai? This enterprise throws open new questions to understand the status of the post-colonial world in new contexts.

The author is the Opinion Editor at Kashmir Observer

Global Indian

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@theglobalindian

In a candid interview with us, Prataya Saha talks about his passion for filmmaking, award-winning movies and much more...

globalindian.com/story/filmmake...

@prataya_saha #film #filmmakers #Dubai #India #filmmaker #awardwinning #Director #films #Creative #redpolkaproduction



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ANTHAI, EDAPPALLY, ERNAKULA

IN THE NEWS



Derek Masterson @DelMasterson · May 28

Had the pleasure of chatting with writer/director [@prataya_saha](#) about his upcoming film "Mein, Mehmood" this evening. It looks like an incredibly intense thriller from the trailer and I can't wait to see the finished film! Watch the trailer here: youtu.be/PPuGU771bY



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MOVIE REVIEW -- "Mei, Mehmood" succinctly explores the workings of the language capital and how the social prestige attached to it continues to plague the psyche of people " , writes Tooba Towfiq ([@tooba_tweets](#))



Media Infoline
@MediaInfoline

Red Polka Productions in association with Black Book Media dedicates its new venture 'Mein Mehmood' to immigrants

More : mediainfoline.com/alliances/red-...



Tooba Towfiq ✓
@tooba_tweets

"Mei, Mehmood" succinctly explores the workings of language capital and how social prestige attached to it continues to plague the psyche of people. It also explores the internalised colonial hangover that is not residual but quite unabashedly operational within our communities"

CELEBRITY REVIEWS



LUCKY ALI, RENOWNED SINGER & ACTOR



GULSHAN DEVAIAH, CELEBRITY INDIAN ACTOR

CELEBRITY REVIEWS



PRASAD BIDAPA, CELEBRITY FASHION STYLIST & CHOREOGRAPHER



SHANVI SRI, CELEBRITY INDIAN ACTOR

CELEBRITY REVIEWS

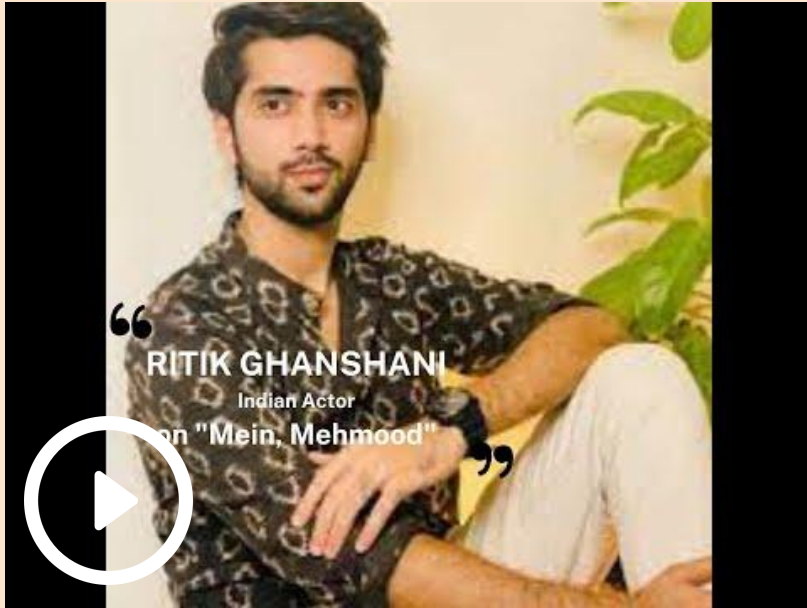


NEERAJ SHARMA, HON. CONSUL GENERAL



NASEEF YUSUF IZUDDIN, INDIAN DIRECTOR

CELEBRITY REVIEWS



RITIK GHANSHANI, BOLLYWOOD ACTOR



ABHISHEK IYENGAR, RESPECTED WRITER & PLAYWRIGHT

CELEBRITY REVIEWS



SOUNAK SEN BARAT, CELEBRITY DESIGNER

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW



UK Film Review Gave a Huge Thumbs Up to the film



AUDIENCE REVIEWS

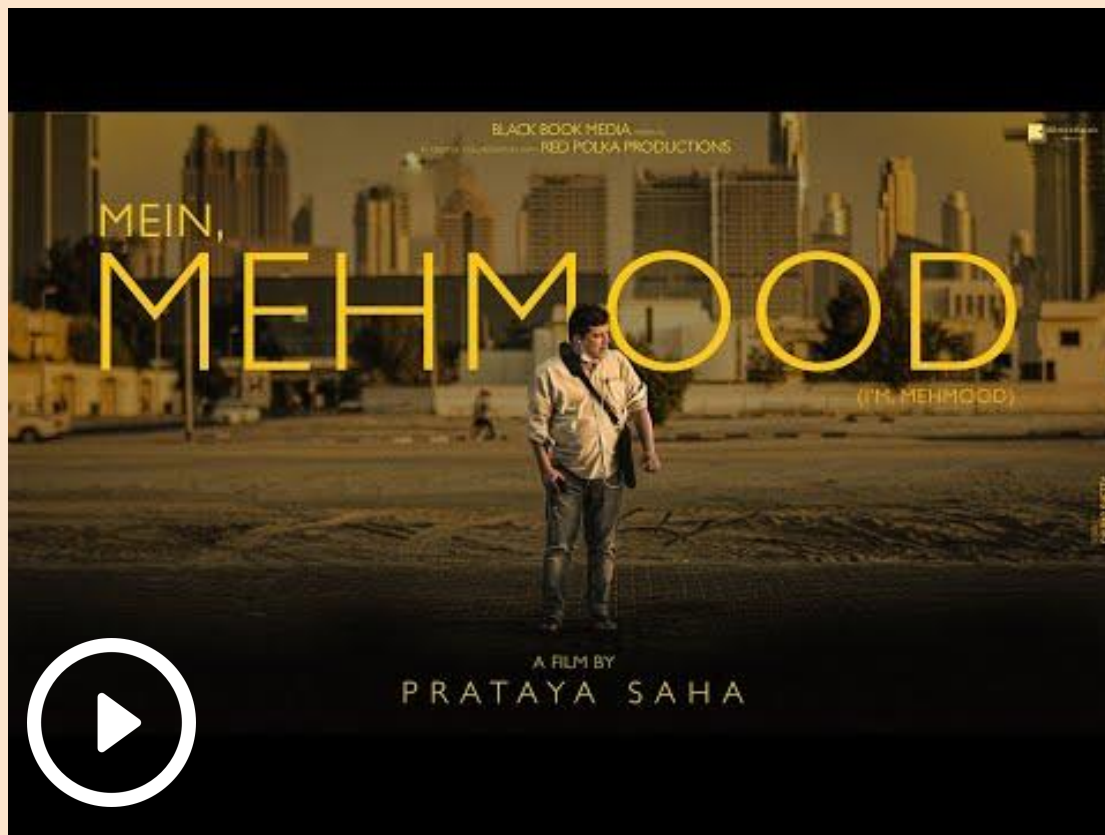
"It gives a voice to the voiceless and acts as a beacon of hope for accurate representation of minorities in art."

"Director Pratya Saha and crew deliver a remarkably accurate portrayal of the struggles faced by immigrants and the hardships they go through in a foreign land."

"The lead actor does a great job playing the titular character of Mehmood"

"Truly a must watch for everyone who respects the truth."

OST - MAIN THEME - 'THE IMMIGRANT'



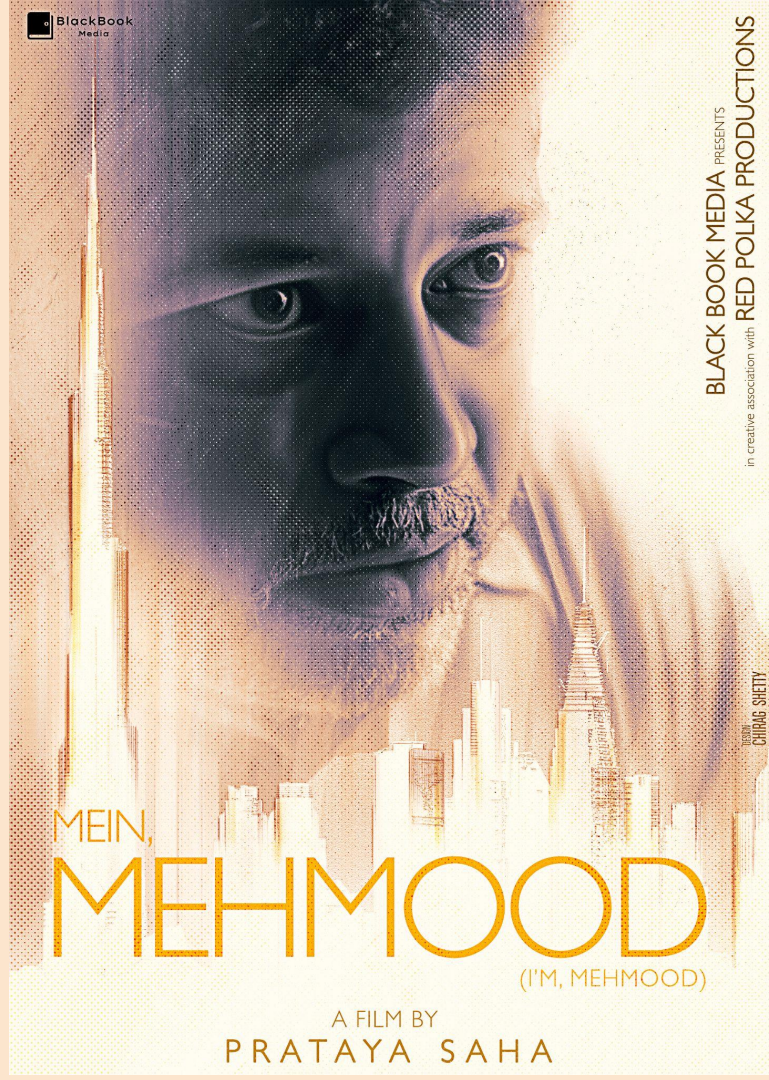
ABOUT US

Black Book Media:

Based out of Dubai, this is a group of entrepreneurs and passionate creative minds who are enthused by the art of storytelling, especially when it communicates a deep social message. A hybrid fusion of creativity and entrepreneurship is thus at the core of this enterprise. Their expertise ranges from making award-winning short films to state-of-the-art Corporate Films, Branding Videos, Advertisements and Documentaries.

Red Polka Productions:

Based out of Bangalore, India, Red Polka is a Bangalore based creative film production house that focuses on candid, powerful, moving and poignant storytelling, especially endeavouring to give our stories a human touch. Six of our films have been selected in 85 international film festivals, including Oscar Qualifying, BAFTA Qualifying and Canadian Award Qualifying festivals, winning 23 awards in 12 countries. They are also streaming on major OTTs like Disney+Hotstar, MxPlayer, Hungama Play, etc.



DIRECTOR, Prataya Saha

Prataya Saha is a multiple award winning independent filmmaker, Tedx performer, theatre director & photographer based out of India and UAE.

His films have been selected in 95+ film festivals worldwide, winning 27 awards in 14 countries, including the **Oscars, Canadian Screen Award & BAFTA Qualifying festivals**. Commercially, he has directed multiple digital ads and **two music videos for T-Series with 10M+ views**.

Alaska Airlines recently acquired his last film, "I am, Mehmood" as part of their in-flight entertainment. It also won the best film award at the prestigious Kolkata International Film Festival in 2022.

His films are streaming on Disney+Hotstar, MxPlayer, Hungama Play, Vidsee, etc.

He was featured on The Week, the leading news magazine, twice in 2021 and once on Filmfare Middle East in 2023.

Over the years his work has been extensively published in Times of India, The Hindu, Deccan Chronicle, Deccan Herald, The New Indian Express, The Telegraph & The Economic Times.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Growing up in the 90s in India was like being in a potpourri of different cultures. The advent of cable TV brought the entire world to the living room for most people who could afford a TV. Slowly, watching western pop culture, songs, sports and educational programmes largely promulgated in the English language became an integral part of life.

Little did I realize then, that this was not so for a huge number of people and the answer lay in the socioeconomic divisions in a still-developing country of the size of a subcontinent.

“Mein, Mehmood”, shot entirely in Dubai, is a tribute to all those who were “left behind” by not putting effort into learning a language whether by circumstance or intention. It is a very honest effort over a span of 36 hours, with the shoot spanning real locations as we wanted to be very authentic to the visuals.





Ozair Abdul Aleem as *Mehmood*

With over 25 years in the creative fields, Ozzy began his career as a copywriter in Sharjah. In 2009, he started his own marketing firm called 'Bizinfo Street' out of Bangalore, India. Later on, he's helped other creative people start their own firms. He also has written lyrics for a couple of Indian singers. In this period, he's also worked with the famous Indian singer 'Lucky Ali' and also on a collaboration between Lucky Ali and Israeli singer 'Eliazor Botzer'.



Anshulika Kapoor as *The Wife*

Anshulika Kapoor is a multiple award-winning Actor, Producer and Tedx Performer from Bangalore, India. She started her journey as an actor on stage more than a decade ago. Since then she has been involved in multilingual theatre in India and been part of productions in English, Hindi, Bengali and Urdu.

She mainly works in women centric films which have been screened in both national and international film festivals.



Sounak Sen Barat as *The Customer*

Sounak Sen Barat is a known name in the Indian fashion luxury and lifestyle industry.

The Design Director and Founder of House of Three, who has worn different hats in his 20 years of professional journey- from theatre, playback, voiceovers, jingles, art direction, collaborative musical shows with the likes of **Sabaa Azaad & Sanjeev Thomas**- and is also working on his first solo art show.

The celebrities House of Three has styled include South Indian superstar **Siddharth and Dulqer Salman, Samantha, Konkona Sen Sharma, Sabaa Azaad, Radhika Apte,, etc.**

From design, brand creation, styling, art direction, to campaign direction, lifestyle curation, sustainability advocacy, he's done it all.

CREDITS

Directed by

Prataya Saha

Written by

Prataya Saha

Director of Photography

Abhishekh Saravanan

Edit & Colour

Abhishekh Saravanan

Sound Design

Apurv Prasanna

Sound Engineer

Adrian Rodrigues

Original Score

Karthik Bhandare

VFX

Ishir N Mehta

PR

Neena Biswal



SUPPORTING CAST

The Wife

Anshulika Kapoor

The Office Employee

Prataya Saha

The Roommate

Mahammed Sabith Abbas

VO ARTISTS

The Customer

Sounak Sen Barat

Office Manager

Bidushi Roy

The Roommate

Madhavan Unni



BEHIND THE SCENES



FAQs

How did you choose the shoot locations?

We were very sure we wanted the film to have an in-depth realism in it and give a true reflection of society as is, without any filters. Thus, it was imperative we shoot in locations that are as close to reality as possible. Since the protagonist is an immigrant we shot the film in a building where real immigrants stayed. The interiors and items in the immigrant quarters were kept as is, including the bedsheets, the pillow covers, the earphones, and the utensils, without any manipulation or dramatisation to give a true understanding of their lives and their surroundings.

The outdoors too were chosen after thorough research on the places the immigrants visit frequently.

How did you decide to cast Mr. Ozair as the lead?

Ozair is a very creative person, having been a writer for Sharjah TV more than a decade back. Due to his panache for writing, he is very observant and has a lingering sensitivity to his emotions. Thus, although he was not a seasoned actor I decided that the gamble of casting him might work as he might be able to understand and portray the sensibilities of the character of Mehmood that I have written.

A couple of days of brainstorming and rehearsal before the shoot days and Ozair had already picked up the nerve of the character. The gamble paid off and I think he has been able to do justice to it.

FAQs

Who are your influences for this film?

I do not think I can pinpoint a particular filmmaker, personal experience or art form as my influences for this film as they are far too many. Overall I'd say the greatest influence of making this film has been very personal. I have been going to the Middle East region for work and leisure since 2014 and travelling by public transport made me come in contact with lots of immigrants who live and work there. Talking to many such amazing hardworking people on their way back home from their work and listening to their stories have helped shape this film.

Where do you see the future of Independent filmmaking?

I think that it is evolving in the right direction for quite some time now and the advent of streaming platforms mushrooming all over makes it far easier for independent filmmakers to showcase their work than a decade earlier. I believe independent films will continue growing and probably will be quite commercially viable in the next few years blurring the lines between them and mainstream commercial cinema.

Why should people watch Mein, Mehmood (I am, Mehmood)?

The film talks about a major subject that has not quite been talked about - how not being able to know a mainstream language like English is having a negative impact on the lives of immigrants, specifically Asian immigrants all over the world. The film has also been made with a lot of honesty and realism to paint a correct picture of the situation. I feel this subject should be talked about to bring out more inclusive conversations for a better future and watching the film and talking about it is a tiny step towards that.



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