

NAZAR

Press Kit





Logline

Set during the Mughal Empire in India, villagers accuse a woman of casting the Evil Eye (nazar) on their village, resulting in calls for her execution. King Akbar turns to his advisor, Birbal, to examine whether their fears are founded in reality or rooted in superstition.



Director Statement

As an Indian American filmmaker, I'm troubled by a concerning trend in both my home countries—marginalization and persecution of the "Other." This pattern ranges from eroding women's and LGBTQ rights to suppressing civil liberties for minorities. A rising fear of non-conformity is on the rise, often manipulated by those in power for their gain.

"Nazar" was born from these concerns. Early script drafts garnered insights from friends, family, and writers, revealing themes like superstition, moral hypocrisy, and oppressive patriarchy. Yet, a singular thread binds these themes together – the peril of fear.

Fear is the wellspring from which superstition, moral hypocrisy, and patriarchy emerge. In a world seemingly gripped by fear-mongering for self gain, "Nazar" paradoxically assumes the role of a horror film that condemns fear itself.

Akbar-Birbal stories have a long tradition of conveying moral lessons that present Birbal as an exemplar of wit and wisdom with King Akbar portrayed as a just ruler who appreciates Birbal's wisdom and witty banter. In reality, very little of the folktales seem to be grounded in history except for Birbal's unflinching loyalty to Akbar. While our story diverges from the lighthearted tone of the folktales, we maintain the emotional honesty of their friendship – for better and for worse.

We don't aim to recreate India's factual past. Instead, we employ heightened visuals to create an "Akbar-Birbal of the imagination" to create a shadow of suspense that informs us about our own present as much as our past. By doing so, we engage in a subversion that seeks to awaken audiences to the insidious nature of fear-based narratives.

During a time when religious tensions in both the United States and India seem to be at an all time high, it's important to note that our film does not reject any religion. Akbar's faith wasn't confined to Islam, and Birbal's religious identity evolved. We question whether power's custodians can truly dispense justice when incentives are skewed.

As we unravel the threads of history's fabric, I hope our audience not only sees our film as a historical recreation but also reflects on how it continues to cast its "nazar" on the present, urging us to confront our collective fears and question the structures that shape our lives.

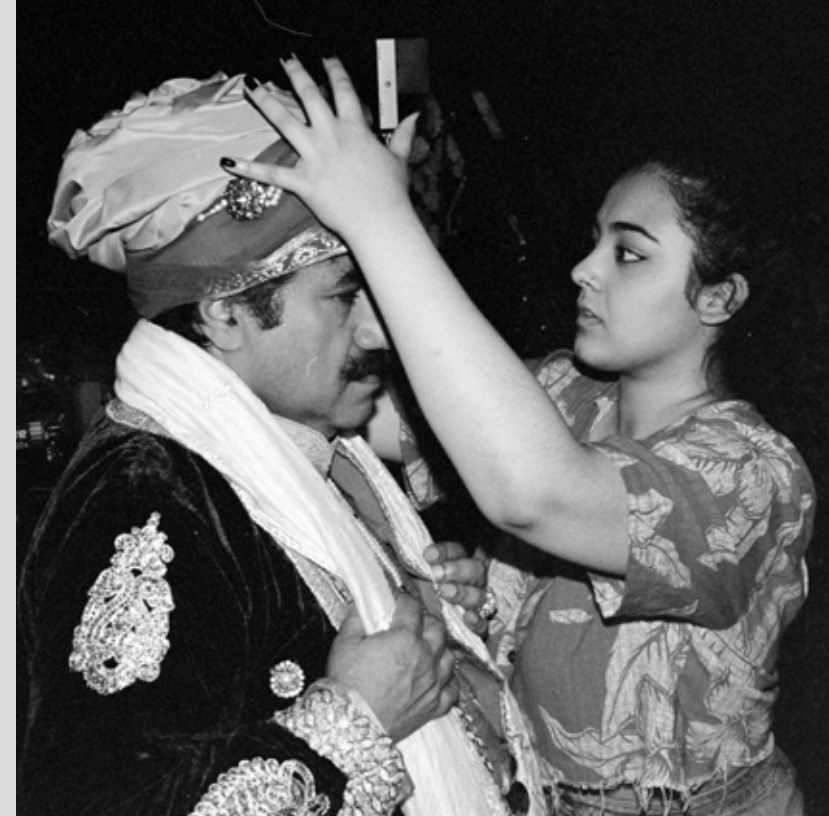
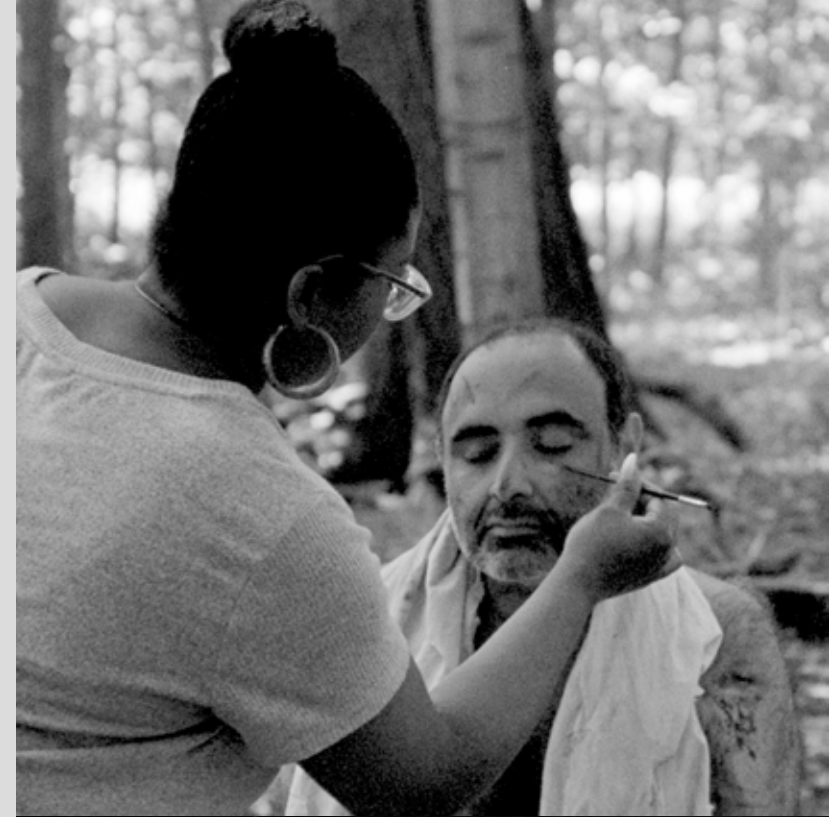
Production

Nazar owes its existence to the invaluable contributions of our community resources.

While the entire film was shot in Chicago and its surrounding suburbs, its narrative transported audiences to a heightened recreation of Mughal-era India. The lush forest scenes found life in the picturesque DuPage County Forest Preserves, while the foreboding indoor black void scenes unfolded within the confines of a local black box theatre.

Central to the realization of our production was the collaboration with Mandi Theater, a Chicago-based Hindi theater group dedicated to producing the classics of Indian dramatic literature. From translation to casting, and even down to the intricate details of production design, Mandi Theater's support played an integral role.

While the specificity of our story was mirrored in our cast being exclusively South Asian, the film's universal themes deeply resonated with our department heads. This group, predominantly comprising women and first- or second-generation immigrants from India, Mexico, Morocco, and Canada, found a connection to the universality of the narrative.





As long as there is fear in people's heart, it does not matter whether this woman's gaze is cursed or not.

Download film stills and trailer [here](#)

Team



IG: @seanraju_

Sean Sankalp Raju

Writer, Director

Sean Sankalp Raju is an Indian American writer-director whose work is steeped in telling socially conscious stories through traditional genre forms. His work has been screened on Oscar-qualifying film festivals, major airlines, and won awards at noteworthy festivals such as the Austin Film Festival and the Indapuram International Short Film Festival. Raju was born in India, raised in America, and is influenced by international filmmakers such as Akira Kurosawa from Japan, Satyajit Ray from India, and Andrey Zvyaginste from Russia.

Devon Gulati

Producer

Devon Gulati is a 1st generation Indian filmmaker who grew up in the Sikh religion. He is now a Corporate BDR at Frame.io who produces short and feature films. He started making content as a kid and recently graduated with his MBA. Before Adobe, Devon owned his own production company in Chicago, Abrupt Arts which operated in the branded content space. Now, Devon lives in LA and focuses on producing diverse films with a love for South Asian content.



IG: @producedbydevon

Team (contd.)



IG: @mandi_theater

Alka Sharma

Associate Producer

Alka Sharma is the Founder and Director of Mandi Theatre, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promote Indian theater to the American community at large. Passionately immersed in the world of theater, she has won several acting accolades as an amateur artist both in India and abroad.

Carlos Reyes

Director of Photography

Carlos, a Mexican born and raised self taught Photographer & Cinematographer based in Chicago for the last twelve years, decided to leave his 9-to-5 day job to focus full-time on his passion. Through his style, he uses distinct color pallets in all his work to evoke a sense of wonderment and dreaming that he hopes viewers feel. He works to produce breathtaking imagery for all mediums be it; commercial, narrative, film & more.



IG: @wonder.boyyy

Team (contd.)



IG: @moss.art26

Rewa Shani

Production Designer

Rewa Shani is a sophomore at Savannah College of Art and Design on track to receive a BFA in Production Design. “Nazar” is her first film and she cannot wait to share it with everyone.

Mimi Wilcox

Editor

Mimi Wilcox is a Brooklyn-based editor & filmmaker. Her editing credits include upcoming docuseries for Netflix and STARZ, as well as feature documentaries including THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE (Showtime, SXSW 2020) and shorts premiering at CPH:DOX and Tribeca. She directed and edited the upcoming documentary SEBASTOPOL SYNDROME, and her first short film ALPHA MARE was a 2021 Vimeo Staff Pick. Mimi is a 2022 Karen Schmeer Film Editing Fellow and member of the Alliance of Documentary Editors.



IG: @mimimw

Team (contd.)



IG: @notiagomusic

Nick Gallagher

Composer

Nick has an eclectic musical background. Growing up in New York, he learned classical piano and played in jazz and rock bands. Since 2020, Nick has released music under the No Tiago moniker, which continues to serve as his main project for independent compositions. 2022 saw the first E.P. released under the No Tiago heading, entitled Mezcla Man. Nick is constantly exploring the world of music in an effort to reimagine the possibilities of composition.

Mandi Theater

Casting

As a powerful medium for social integration and upliftment, Mandi Theatre aims to use theater to connect with people on various social issues. With its performances, Mandi Theatre's focus is on using theatre as an effective vehicle to increase awareness of various social issues. We are also dedicated to producing the classics of Indian as well as International literature including works by most notable playwrights from around the world.



IG: @mandi_theater

Cast

<i>The Woman</i>	Richa Koundel
<i>Akbar</i>	Paul Chopra
<i>Birbal</i>	Rahul Vaidya
<i>Bhola</i>	Jasraj Singh
<i>Fisherman</i>	Jayanta Mukherjee
<i>Bansi</i>	Aarit Perswal
<i>Jhuniya</i>	Jiya Pandey
<i>Father</i>	Mohan Rawat
<i>Salim</i>	Shirowid Sharma
<i>Dinner Guest</i>	Justin Gulati
<i>Whispering Man</i>	Skyler Gulati

Crew

<i>Associate Producers</i>	Alka Sharma Sonali Shani Pednekar Shweta Perswal Varsha Visal Sam Vaghani
<i>Art Directors</i>	Rewa Shani Sonali Shani Pednekar
<i>1st Assistant Director</i>	May Malone
<i>1st Assistant Cameras</i>	Thea Kinner Miles Anderson Devon Gulati
<i>Gaffer</i>	Nicklas Hendrickson

Crew (contd.)

<i>Production Sound Mixers</i>	Jacob Brown Kelly Askam
<i>Key Makeup & SFX</i>	Kelli Kolors
<i>Key PA & Grip</i>	Kevin Tang
<i>Production Assistants</i>	Houston Weatherly Skyler Gulati Justin Gulati Frazad Hossain Shilpi Basu
<i>Set Construction</i>	Brian Koehler
<i>Script Translation</i>	Shweta Perswal
<i>Birbal Script Translation</i>	Rahul Vaidya
<i>Caption Translation</i>	Sonali Shani Pednekar
<i>Colorist</i>	Ryan Moser
<i>Costumes & Props</i>	Arti International Kalash Costume Rental
<i>Post Production Sound Services</i>	Noisefloor Ltd
<i>Post Sound Supervisor</i>	Cory Coken, MPSE
<i>Re-Recording Mixer</i>	Stosh Tuszynski
<i>Dialogue Editor</i>	Noelle Daniels
<i>Sound Designer</i>	Ian Farthing
<i>Sound Editor</i>	Joseph Vnuck
<i>Foley Artist</i>	Katie Waters, MPSE
<i>Music Editor</i>	Devin Delaney
<i>Post Sound Producer</i>	Travis Spicer



Film Information

Film Title

Nazar

Contact Information

*Raju Films LLC
1726 N Wood St, 2R
Chicago, IL 60622*

Technical Info

*Country: USA
Language: Hindi, Urdu
Genre: Horror, Drama
Run Time: 21:42 min
Aspect Ratio: 4:3
Shooting Format: Digital
Color: B&W*

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Raju Films LLC
SeanRajui@gmail.com