

Avaḡunthan

A FILM BY DHANI JHANKAL



PRESS KIT



LOG LINE

A Young married woman from the singing community of Jaisalmer , Rajasthan suffers the consequences of societie’s narrow minded evil traditions when she tries to dream as big as a man about singing in public without her veil.

SYNOPSIS

A talented singer, Akla Bai belonging to the singing community of Rajasthan sees the dream of becoming a famous singer who sings without her ails. Her biggest roadblock is the community she belongs to who is intolerant towards women ever discarding their veil or singing in public.

She, along with her husband, Nazar apply to a singing contest that they get selected for and make a plan to run to Mumbai. The night before they are about to leave, they get caught by their aunt , Grushma Bai, who gives her blessings to Nazar but stops Akla Bai from going as she has suffered the consequences of seeing a similar dream .

Supported by soulful authentic Rajasthani folk music, the movie is about women who dare to dream but have their wings cut off by the unjust and cruel traditions of society, that hasn’t moved forward even though the world has seen tremendous progress in all other spheres. Unless the society makes a change and breaks a generational cycle, this tradition will continue from one generation to another and we will continue losing the voice of these women to these customs.



DIRECTORS NOTE

In the vast rich unexplored culture of India, there also lies another thing unexplored and rather suppressed since centuries- the voice of a woman in the deserts of Rajasthan. I hope to bring forth the reality that it is not women who don't dare to dream, it's our society who cuts off the wings of these women who sadly go on to pass on this haunting curse through generations in a cycle of suppression that never ends. While reality is dark and grim and we would rather look the other way, the solution lies in acknowledging what's real today so we can amend our deeply ingrained mentally fixed biases and change into a better reality for the future generations.

With this film I hope to do the same- make the better part of this world realize the unnecessary and painful sacrifices women have to make in this world because of the regressive mindset that society has laid in our fabric of being.

APPROACH

Shot over 3 nights, in the remote villages of Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, what the film has tried to capture is the simplicity and reality of these villages, its women and its singing community.

After conducting thorough research, where the team went and lived for several nights in the homes of this community in the village, understanding their lifestyle, music, mannerisms and mindset, the sets, the costumes and the script was laid out. The actors shadowed the women of the village, picking up their mannerisms and understanding their mindset, thought and emotions to bring authenticity to their performances. The writer/director met with several musicians to shape the script as well as handpick the music out of their heritage, to be used in the film. The film was in fact shot in the home of one of these villagers using their possessions.

One point worthy of mentioning is that the music of the film has been done by the musicians of these villages where authentic folk songs of the singing community accompanied by local instruments that is specific to only that region has been used.

CREW

WRITER/DIRECTOR- Dhani Jhankal

Avagunthan is Dhani's debut film as director and writer. She began her film career by assisting some of the big directors of the Hindi Film Industry like Shoojit Sircar and Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury on critically and commercially acclaimed films like PINK and OCTOBER .

Having done her training in classical dance - Kathak and theatre, stories that are rooted in culture appeal to her. She hopes to bring about a change by her movies by targetting subjects that deeply influence our society.



DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY- Vierendrra Lalit

Vierendrra lalit has a variety of work under his belt , having shot over 38 feature films, 700 Ad Films and more than 200 music videos, Corporates, serials and Documentaries.

Some of his most noted work include famous films like Kaho na Pyaar hai, Taal,. Commercials for Tat Nano, India gate Basmati Rice, Lucknow Metro amongst hundrerds of others.



ASSOCIATE PRODUCER- Satish Sharma

Satish Sharma has served as the Executive Producer and Line Producer on more than 10 films including notable films like Shyam Benegals Mujib, Subhash Chandra Bose and commercial hit films like 7 Khoon Maaf, Khuda Hafiz amongst many others.



CREATIVE DIRECTOR- Aaryan Sen

Aaryan Sen was a creative producer and director with extensive experience at Jio Creative Labs, where he played a key role in building profiles like Vantara, NMACC, and Reliance Corporation. He has managed celebrity social media for Ranveer Singh and Shraddha Kapoor, shaping their digital presence. He has also worked on major events featuring artists like Dua Lipa and 50 Cent



EDITOR- Aseem Sinha

Aseem Sinha is one of the most experienced editors of the Hindi film industry. He is a trained editor from FTII and has edited more than 50 feature films, a number of TV serials, corporate films and ads. His most prominent work in films includes that in Shyam Benegal's Mammo, Sardari Begum, Zubeida, Welcome to Sajjanpur, Well Done Abba; A. K. Bir's The Last Vision; Punkuj Parashar's Beneras; Kalpana Lajmi's Darmiyaan and Mehreen Jabbar's Ramchand Pakistani.



SOUND DESIGNER- Manas Choudhury

Manas Choudhury, a graduate of FTII with a specialisation in Sound Recording, is an acclaimed sound designer in the Hindi film industry. With 30 years of experience, he has worked on over 70 feature films, including "Pathaan" (2023), "Chak De! India" (2007), and "Dhamaka" (2021). His portfolio also includes "Mujib - The Making Of A Nation," "Teen Deewarein," "Firaq," "Tere Bin Laden," "Luck By Chance," "Dum Maaro Dum," "Jamtara," "Saina," "Rashmi Rocket," "Shamshera," and "Dhak Dhak."



SOUND DESIGNER- Subir Kumar Das

Subir Kumar Das is a highly sought after and experienced sound designer and composer. He has been a part of some of the most noted films like Paan Singh Tomar, Ra. One and Ghajini. Besides that he has worked in over 200 films and has also received a nomination in Beeston Film Festival for the best sound for the movie Mum.



PRODUCERS NOTE- Anita Ordia

Dance has been my language of expression for decades, a medium through which I have conveyed emotions, stories, and traditions. Learning Kathak from my guru, Pt. Birju Maharaj ji, and performing across India and the world, I have always believed in the power of art to communicate beyond words. My years in Mumbai introduced me to the world of cinema, where I worked with filmmakers as a choreographer and artist, deepening my understanding of this powerful visual medium.



When Dhani Jhankal shared her research on the singing community of Rajasthan, I was deeply moved. Having always admired their music, I was surprised to learn about the struggles and silenced voices of the women in this tradition.

As a woman and an artist, I have personally experienced the constraints imposed by society. Avagunthan is not just a film; it is a reflection of these realities, an attempt to bring forth a truth that deserves to be seen and heard. Hence, I decided to come on board as a producer for the first time and enter the world of cinema

Producing this film is an organic extension of my artistic journey. Just as Kathak has been my way of storytelling, cinema now allows me to express narratives that demand a larger canvas. Designing the costumes and art for this project has been a deeply personal experience, connecting my creative vision to a cause that resonates with me. Avagunthan is a step towards giving voice to the unheard, and I am honored to be part of this cinematic journey.

KEY CAST

RAVI JHANKAL

Ravi Jhankal is an Indian television, stage and film actor. Having a career spanning across almost four decades, Ravi Jhankal has been a part of almost 90 films, 1000 television episodes and theatre. He's an extremely well known, respected and popular member of the film fraternity. He's a graduate from the prestigious National School of Drama and has worked with some of the biggest directors of the Hindi film industry like Shyama Benegal, Rakesh Roshan, Kunal Kohli to name a few. He's been a part of many critically and commercially acclaimed films like the epic Discovery of India by Shyam Benegal, Agneepath, Welcome to Sajjanpur, Samar, Rudaali, NH10 and many more.



SUNITA RAJWAR

Most recently short listed for an Oscar Nomination for her supporting role in the film Santosh, which was an official selection for Cannes Film Festival, Sunita Rajwar is an Indian actress graduated from the National School of Drama (NSD) from New Delhi in 1997.

A perfectionist in her craft and meticulous & painstaking in her preparation of her roles, Sunita turned out a string of highly acclaimed performances in films like 'Ek Chalis Ki Last Local', 'Kedarnath', 'Stree', 'Bala', 'Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan', 'The Great Weddings Of Munnes'. Web Series 'Gullak', Panchayat, The Railway man.

Sunita nominated for Filmfare Award an astonishing 4 times and won Filmfare OTT award 2021 for Best Actor In Supporting Role for web series 'Gullak' & Iconic Gold Award for Panchayat in 2023.

Sunita Rajwar played a pivotal role in feature film Kaphal - The Wild Berries produced by Children's Film Society, India (CFSI) that won the best children's film award in the 61st National Film Awards.



ANNAPURNA SONI

Annapurna Soni is an Indian actress known for her work in cinema and theatre. She is an Acting graduate from National School of drama, new Delhi in India. Annapurna's debut was Rangbaaz Webseries. She won the Best Actress Award at kasargod International Film Festival of India in 2021 for cheepatakdumpa. She is known for her versatile performances in Sunflower, The Railway Men, Chhapaak, Rangbaaz, Class of 83, Goodbye, Cheepatakadumpa, Delhi Crime 2 and many more



BASU SONI

Basu Soni, a graduate from national School of drama began his career by doing theatre with a theatre company in Delhi. From there he moved to Mumbai where he acted in movies like Kedarnath, Madhuri Talkies, Raktanchak .



INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR (FAQ)



Q. How was this film born?

A. I have grown up in Rajasthan and have always been fascinated by the music, dances and colourful culture there. The folk music in particular intrigued me but I always wondered why the ladies never sang. These singing communities do not go anywhere to learn music its in their genetics, so why do the ladies not sing? It's the 21st century and I was shocked to see the regression that exists, because these are some talented ladies. I was even more shocked to learn that till date there has been only one female singer to come out of this community who faced such extreme consequences for choosing to sing in public. Something so basic as seeing dreams was not allowed for these women. That's when I knew I had to make this film.

Q. Since this is your debut, what was the experience like?

A. It was truly a learning experience. I have assisted on a number of sets but nothing was close to this. My learning actually began way before we started shooting. Since this was a small budget home production, I had to play multiple roles and even though it was hectic, it taught me so much right from A to Z. What I truly enjoyed was learning the meaning behind choosing a shot, playing with the psyche of the characters while writing and the research. I definitely have a long way to go but I would say this is one of the best start anyone could've asked for.

Q. How did you pick your cast?

A. Well that was actually very simple. I was looking for someone who could understand the character. I felt if someone can truly understand these characters without judging them, they will be able to justice to them. Luckily I had such polished and fine actors with me who understood what I wanted.

Q. What was the toughest thing during filming and how did you handle it?

A. Honestly speaking, this was the smoothest shoot anyone could ask for, however one thing that was tricky was the light. Since it's a desert in Rajasthan, the light literally changes every 15 mins. My DOP Vierrendra Lalit and I had tactfully planned out every single shot to make the most out of the light over there. Other than that shooting in bare minimum conditions in a village is always challenging, but that's what the beauty of the shoot is.



Q. What methods did you apply to film your movie in a unique manner

A. A few things. I wanted the camera movement to be very steady to create a sense of stillness because that's what the life of the village is like. I was also very particular about the music of the movie. I got actual folk musicians from the village to sing their authentic songs using instruments that are specific to their region. I inculcated use of imagery to get across points without actually saying them. However, I think what makes the film extremely unique is the authenticity of everything that we have used and shown.

Q. How did you manage budget and resources for this film?

A. Since the budget was limited, we had to limit our crew as well as the days of shoot. This film has been shot in just 3 and a half days with one camera. There was a lot of different roles taken up by each person to conserve the amount of people in our crew. Everything was planned down to the very last detail to avoid any delays. The minute planning is what helped us to complete the shoot within budget. Our schedules were extremely tight.

Q. What do you hope that people should take from this film?

A. What I hope to do, is start a dialogue. To make people realise that ignoring an issue doesn't mean it doesn't exist. It is up to us as a society to bring about change whether through journalism, movies, awareness, whatever be the medium, it is time to speak up. I also hope that people realise that in remotest corners of the world lies a treasure trove of art and talent in a way you've never seen before. I hope people feel enticed to explore more than just what meets the eye.

Q. What are you working on next?

A. I am in the process of working on a feature film. I have a rough draft of the script ready, however, I would like to do some more research in the topic before I write the next draft of the film.

Q. What is your advice to someone like you who's starting out on their own in the field of film making?

A. Well, I am myself still figuring out the way. I've literally just taken the first step but that is exactly my advice. Yes, there are uncertainties but just take the step. Read books on the craft of film making, attend master classes, watch great cinema and learn from each of them and improve and grow. The most important thing is to take the first step even if you're scared. Just to do it anyway, despite the fear. It will definitely lead you somewhere good, I promise.

GALLERY







CREDITS

- **FORMAT**- Short Film, Digital RED
- **RATIO**- 2.39:1
- **DURATION**- 23 Mins 12 seconds
- **GENRE**- Drama
- **LANGUAGE**- Hindi with English subtitles
- **LOCATION**- Jaisalmer, Rajasthan (India)
- **DIRECTED AND WRITTEN BY** - Dhani Jhankal
- **CASTING BY**- Smriti Silwal
- **MUSIC BY**- Kajal Ghosh
- **BACKGROUND SCORE** - Satya Manik
- **CO PRODUCER**- Rajendra Singh Shekhawat
- **PRODUCER**- Good Boii Productions, Anita Ordia

CONTACT

- **ANITA ORDIA (PRODUCER)** -
+919982202486
- **GOOD BOII PRODUCTIONS (PRODUCER)**-
+918369450931
goodboiiproductions@gmail.com
- **DHANI JHANKAL (DIRECTOR)**-
+917506377237
dhanijhankal@gmail.com