

Between the Sacred and Profane: The Cinema Of Jamil Dehlavi



BFI Southbank, 11-12 August – including onstage events with the director

Monday 2 July 2018, London.

BFI Southbank will spotlight the work of leading Pakistani filmmaker, **JAMIL DEHLAVI**, with a special focus – **BETWEEN THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE: THE CINEMA OF JAMIL DEHLAVI** – taking place throughout the weekend of **10 – 12 August**. Dehlavi will be in conversation on **Saturday 11 August** as well as introducing all the screenings of his films over the weekend. Dehlavi has a remarkable body of work, which stands out for its originality and engagement with the social and political questions of his time. Following decades of instability he is part of an emerging new wave of filmmaking in Pakistan, capturing the diversity and power of both the religious and the secular in everyday life.

The weekend curated by Timothy Cooper and Ali Nobil Ahmad kicks off with Dehlavi introducing ***The Blood of Hussain*** (1980), an allegorical tale of revolutionary struggle against injustice and oppression. The film was, and still is, banned in Pakistan and resulted in Dehlavi's exile to the UK. This is a rare screening and it precedes the film's release on BFI Blu-ray and DVD on **Monday 22 October**. Whilst living in the UK Dehlavi directed ***Born of Fire*** (1987), a mix of horror and the avant-garde, this film is steeped in Islamic mysticism and layered with hallucinatory set-pieces. Dehlavi returned to Pakistan in the late 1980s and made ***Immaculate Conception*** (1992); set in Karachi, the film follows a Western couple desperately looking for a miracle. Struggling to conceive a child, they visit a shrine run by a transgender community and find themselves caught in a world of fantasy and exploitation. Exploring a key moment in the relations between Islam and the west, Dehlavi shows us a Pakistan rarely seen or understood.

The weekend comes to a close with Dehlavi's later epic work ***Jinnah*** (1998), a biopic of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, which attempted to redress what Dehlavi thought was a negative portrayal of Pakistan's founder in Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi*. This epic biography starring Sir Christopher Lee as Jinnah explores one man's role in the birth of Pakistan and the bloodshed that followed the partition of India. *Jinnah* unflinchingly explores the sacrifices and allegiances made in the creation of a new nation.

Also during the weekend the season's co-curator Dr Ali Nobil Ahmad will present a richly illustrated talk exploring the cultural, artistic, and political background to the inspiration and career trajectory of Jamil Dehlavi. Dehlavi will take part in an on-stage interview on **Saturday 11 August**, which will include extensive clips tracing his work, beginning with the early experimental ***Towers of Silence***. *Tower of Silence* will also be screened in full as part of the **Jamil Dehlavi Shorts Programme**, which the director will also introduce.

– ENDS –

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Press Contacts:

Elizabeth Dunk – Junior Press Officer

elizabeth.dunk@bfi.org.uk / 020 7957 8986

Liz Parkinson – Press Officer, BFI Southbank

liz.parkinson@bfi.org.uk / 020 7957 8918

SEASON LISTINGS:

The Blood of Hussain + intro by Jamil Dehlavi

Pakistan-UK 1980. Dir Jamil Dehlavi. With Salmaan Peerzada, Kika Markham, Jamil Dehlavi, Durriya Kazi. 112min. Digital. EST

The annual mourning procession for the murdered Hussain, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, serves as the setting for this allegorical tale of revolutionary struggle against injustice and oppression. Banned by successive military regimes in Pakistan, the film has attained legendary status in its country of origin. This rare screening comes before the DVD/Blu-ray release scheduled for Mon 22 Oct.

FRI 10 AUG 18:10 NFT3

Between the Sacred and the Profane

TRT 90min

In this richly illustrated talk, season co-curator Dr Ali Nobil Ahmad will explore the cultural, artistic, and political background to the inspiration and career trajectory of Jamil Dehlavi, a leading figure in world cinema. Looking in particular at the films in this retrospective, Dr Ahmad will also attempt to place Dehlavi's work in the wider film history of Pakistan.

SAT 11 AUG 11:00 NFT3

Jamil Dehlavi in Conversation

TRT 90min

Filmmaker Jamil Dehlavi joins season co-curator Timothy Cooper for an on-stage interview with extensive clips from his filmography, beginning with the early experimental *Towers of Silence*, through to *The Blood of Hussain*, which resulted in his exile to the UK, where his output included *Born of Fire*. Cooper will also look at *Immaculate Conception*, made on Dehlavi's return to Pakistan in 1988, and his later epic work *Jinnah*, a film that attempted to redress the previous negative portrayal of this momentous figure in Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi*.

SAT 11 AUG 13:45 NFT3

Jamil Dehlavi Shorts Programme + intro by Jamil Dehlavi

TRT 108min

Weaving together scenes of Zoroastrian funerary rituals – in which bodies are consumed by vultures – with glimpses of armed insurrection, *Towers of Silence* (1975, 54min) juxtaposes traumatic landscapes of sex, death, and faith. This landmark screening is followed by *Qâf* (1985, 25min), an homage to a volcano, and *Passover* (1995, 29min), a collaboration between the director and Flamenco legend Paco Peña.

SAT 11 AUG 16:30 NFT3

Born of Fire + intro by Jamil Dehlavi

UK 1987. Dir Jamil Dehlavi. With Peter Firth, Suzan Crowley, Stefan Kalipha, Nabil Shaban. 84min. 35mm

Mixing horror and the avant-garde, *Born of Fire* is a tale steeped in Islamic mysticism and layered with hallucinatory set-pieces. In 1980s London a classical musician learns of the mysteries surrounding his father's death. His journey takes him to the spectacular rocky terrain of Cappadocia in Turkey to find the 'Master Musician' who bewitched his father.

SAT 11 AUG 19:15 NFT3

Immaculate Conception + intro by Jamil Dehlavi

UK 1992. Dir Jamil Dehlavi. With James Wilby, Melissa Leo, Shabana Azmi, Zia Mohyeddin. 123min. Video. 15

Set in Karachi, Pakistan, *Immaculate Conception* follows a Western couple desperately looking for a miracle. Struggling to conceive a child, they visit a shrine run by a transgender community and find themselves caught in a world of fantasy and exploitation. Exploring a key moment in the relations between Islam and the west, Dehlavi shows us a Pakistan rarely seen or understood.

SUN 12 AUG 12:45 NFT3

Jinnah + intro by Jamil Dehlavi

UK-Pakistan 1998. Dir Jamil Dehlavi. With Christopher Lee, James Fox, Maria Aitken, Shashi Kapoor. 110min. Digital. 15

This epic biography of Mohammad Ali Jinnah explores one man's role in the birth of Pakistan and the bloodshed that followed the partition of India. Awaiting his judgment in the afterlife, Jinnah revisits key moments in his life as he builds the case for his defence. *Jinnah* unflinchingly explores the sacrifices and allegiances made in the creation of a new nation.

SUN 12 AUG 15:20 NFT3

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work

- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £12.65, concs £10.15 including Gift Aid donation. Members pay £2.20 less on any ticket - www.bfi.org.uk/southbank.

Young people aged 25 and under can buy last minute tickets for just £3, 45 minutes before the start of screenings and events, subject to availability - <http://www.bfi.org.uk/25-and-under>.

Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment

BFI Shop

The BFI Shop is stocked and staffed by BFI experts with over 1,200 book titles and 1,000 DVDs to choose from, including hundreds of acclaimed books and DVDs produced by the BFI.

BFI Reuben Library

BFI Southbank is home to the BFI Reuben Library which holds the world's largest collection of books, journals and digitised material about film, television and the moving image. The library is free to access and hosts a year-round programme of talks and events.

'Not just for movie nerds - this huge collection of film and TV books, periodicals, scripts, stills and posters is full of inspiration for anyone involved in the creative arts' – Evening Standard Magazine

The BFI Reuben Library is open 10:30-19:00, Tuesday-Saturday.

The benugo bar & kitchen

Eat, drink and be merry in panoramic daylight. benugo's décor is contemporary, brightly lit and playful with a lounge space, bar and dining area. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip on a cocktail.

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

BFI Mediatheque

Free to access BFI Mediatheques offer users an opportunity to explore the digital collections drawn from the BFI National Archive and partner collections, at select UK-wide locations.

***** PICTURE DESK *****

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank can be found via the link below:

<https://bfi.sharefile.com/d-s3f51db7a0e04db49>