

REVIEW

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Swara Mandal - A singer's life sketch

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New Delhi, Jan 13: The 5000-year-old tradition of passing on the Hindustani music from one generation to another has fascinated Rajan Khosa, who has come out with his maiden feature film *Swara mandal* (Hindi). Set in New Delhi, *Swara Mandal* has been co-produced by NFDC, UK, Germany, Holland and Switzerland.

In *Swara Mandal* which has been subtitled and given an English title, *Dance of the wind*, Rajan's protagonist is a young singer (brilliantly played by model-turned actress Kitu Gidwani) whose successful professional life comes to a sudden halt after the death of her mother and guru. (Dr. Kapila

Vatsayan was specially requested by the director to play this role).

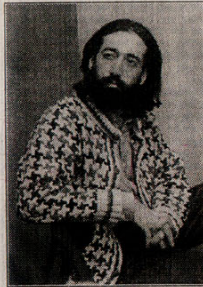
The film traces the downfall, depression and recovery of this young singer with the help of her mother's guru and a mysterious little girl.

The young singer Pallavi Seghal, after the death of her mother, feels there is a vacuum in her life.

She loses her voice, her career, her students, and finally her family life.

It looks as if she is on her way to losing her mental balance, the only treatment for her could be the pure music she once heard as a child from her mother.

STRANGE MENDICANT: A strange mendicant appears at the hour of her mother's death, accompanied by a young girl Tara who sings with a voice of angelic beauty. Pallavi is haunted by the child's voice but she proves to be as elusive



Rajan Khosa

and disappears into the shadows.

Slowly she learns that the old man is actually her mother's guru who renounced the world when he came to know that she had started giving commercial concerts after her wedding. He hates the commercialisation of music and takes

a vow not to speak or sing during the rest of his life.

With perseverance and help from the little girl, she reconstructs her life and career and discovers a voice in herself which she has never heard before.

"I had to run from pillar to post to get finance for this film", says Rajan who is very bitter about the way the bureaucrats treated his project in Delhi. "I was in Germany and five bureaucrats sitting in the same office here would not talk among themselves but call me every time in Germany and I, in turn, will have to call each of them. Finally, after running around the corridors of power, I lost hope and went back to Germany."

PILOT FILM: Kaul Barnagater, the well-known German producer took the plunge. They first made a 15-minute pilot film on video tape and it won the Hubert Bals award at

the Rotterdam International Festival in 1991. Later Kaul took it to Venice, Berlin and Cannes film markets.

"Finally, after a lot of effort we could raise the finances from 13 different sources from six different countries and NFDC is one such minor partner. So, I could begin shooting in 1996. This is my first feature film though I have made a few shorts and I am aware that it is not a fully satisfying work," Rajan says.

The music has been composed by Shubha Mudgal, the leading Indian classical singer and Kitu Gidwani spent six months learning classical music.

The 96-year-old renowned Indian painter Prof B. C. Sanyal played the role of the guru who doesn't speak a word in the film. "If I begin to speak, then you cannot sing", he tells Kitu Gidwani through written message.

MUDGAL'S ROLE: Shubha Mudgal says she found the story to be so absorbing and also true to life that she did everything from research to training the actors.

Piyush Sheth, one of the leading cinematographers of the country, captures the various images brilliantly, and these include the lush green outdoor scenes in the old Delhi.

The film was premiered in the Venice Film Festival in the official critics' week in September 1997 and in November, at the London Film Festival, it received the most favourite film-audience award.

It also won the most favourite film as well as the best actress award at the Nantes, France festival in December.

Born in India, Rajan studied Visual Communications at the National Institute of Design, and film direction at Pune FTII.