

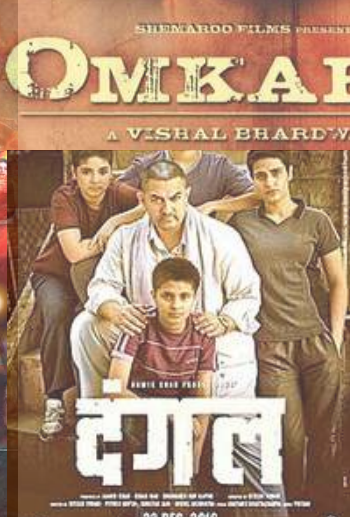
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THE WEEKLY RURAL NEWSLETTER



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Cinema and Literature Special Edition





About the Cinema and Literature-Special Edition



Picture credit: Hamon JP/Wikicommons

The **Cinema and Literature special edition** of the Newsletter is a compilation born from reflection essays by the **Rural Sociology (UG3)** batch. Each essay delves into portrayals of rural life, examining how cinema and literature capture the social fabric and challenges of rural communities. By selecting two cinematic or literary works—or a mix of both—students analysed issues that confront rural society such as gender dynamics, caste hierarchies, class disparities and exploitation, migration, displacement, deprivation, indebtedness, and the tragic persistence of farmers' suicides. These portrayals are examined through a sociological lens, enriched by relevant scholarly literature.

This special edition puts together these thoughtfully chosen works along with a brief description for the readers. It invites them to engage with these stories and give their OTT algorithms an unexpected twist!



NOW SHOWING
Anne With an E



Year: 2017 - 2020

Directors: Niki Caro, John Kent Harrison, Stephen Dunn, Norma Bailey, and Helen Shaver

Where to watch: Netflix

Depiction of the rural— Anne with an E vividly portrays the struggles of rural life in early 20th-century Canada, highlighting a stark lack of access to healthcare. The show frequently addresses the difficulties residents face due to isolation and limited medical services. When illness strikes, characters often turn to home remedies or depend on the knowledge of community members rather than professional care, underscoring the lack of resources and support. This theme illustrates how rural communities were left vulnerable, relying on one another for survival, resilience, and a deep sense of communal care.

NOW SHOWING

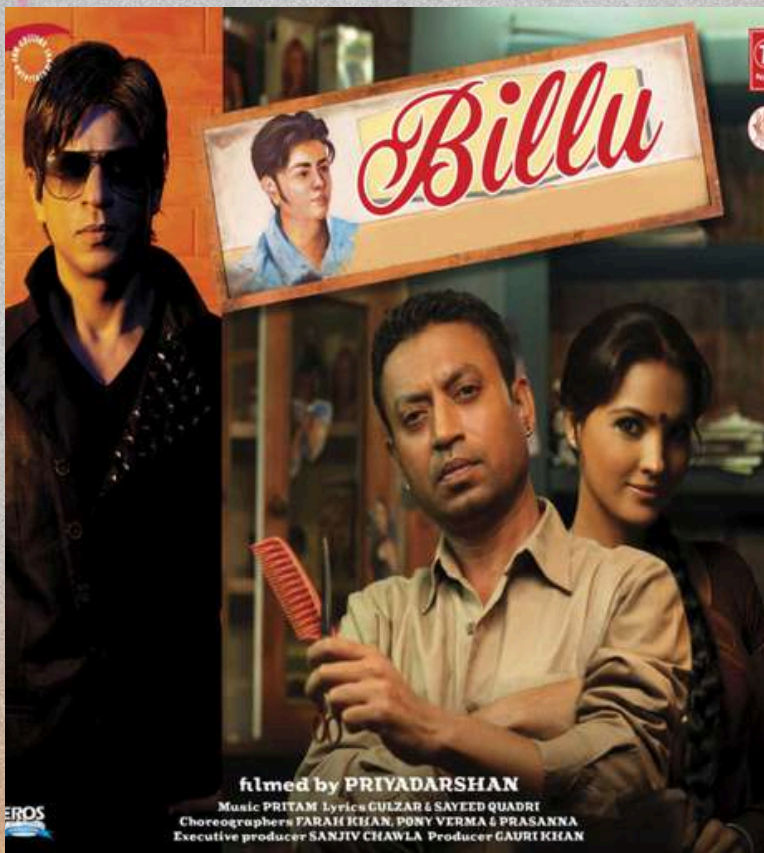
Billu



Year : 2009

Director : Priyadarshan

Where to watch : Netflix



Depiction of the rural—The film Billu romanticises the rural. It clearly portrays traditional collectivist values with shared bonds and simplicity. Furthermore, it emphasises specifically the rural-urban divide and interaction. The protagonist in the film is a barber who struggles to earn his livelihood, along with many other individuals working hard to meet their needs. The film portrays how Billu's connection with a film star elevates his social status within the village. The film depicts how urban infiltration changes rural life as it also results in the capitalistic ideology stepping into rural regions and the over-exploitation of villagers in terms of resources and labour for a meagre income that in turn widens the economic divide making the rich urban richer and the poor poorer.



NOW SHOWING
Do Bigha Zameen



Year : 1953

Director : Bimal Roy

Where to watch : Youtube

Depiction of the rural— The film presents a complex rural landscape disrupted by industrialization during British colonial rule. Through Shambhu's story, it portrays the devastating impact of industrial capitalism on farming communities. The narrative captures the systematic exploitation of farmers through moneylending practices, forced land acquisition, and industrial development projects. The film powerfully illustrates class-based oppression, where bourgeois industrialists wield power over proletariat farmers. It authentically depicts rural displacement, resulting in urban migration where farmers like Shambhu face new forms of exploitation as urban wage labourers.



NOW SHOWING

Fandry

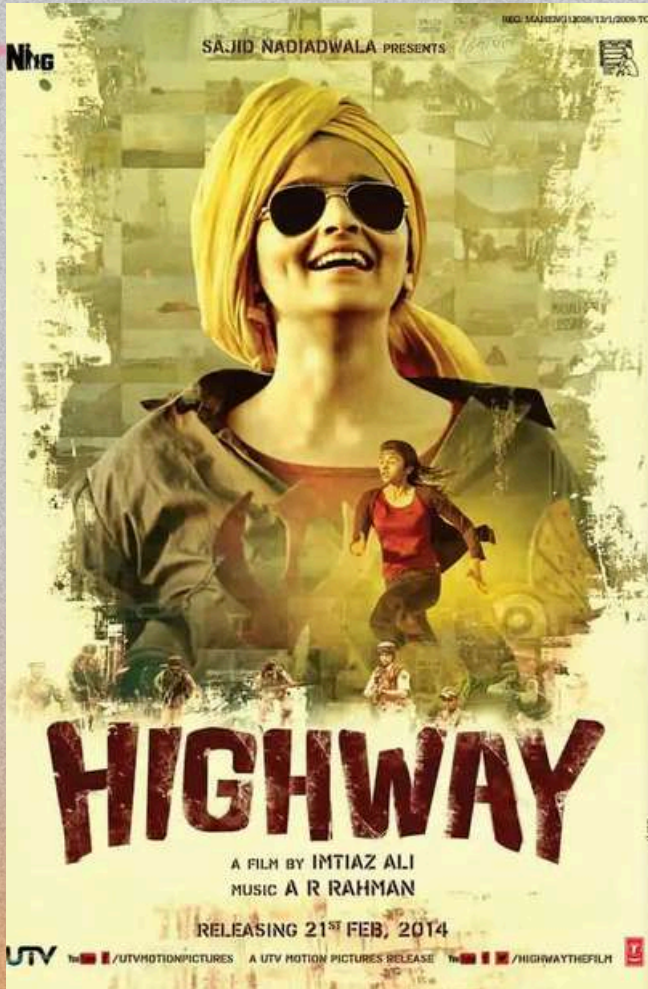


Year: 2013

Director: Nagraj Manjule

Where to watch: Zee5

Depiction of the rural— Fandry presents a stark depiction of rural life in Maharashtra, focusing on caste discrimination and the harsh realities faced by the Kaikadi community. The protagonist, Jambhuwant (Jabhya), experiences the oppressive nature of caste segregation, living in a separate hut and facing bullying at school. His community is relegated to menial labor, often equated with pigs, highlighting the deep-seated untouchability norms. The film also addresses the rigid institution of marriage, where dowry demands lead to familial struggles. Fandry exposes the cruelty of social hierarchies and the humiliation endured by marginalized groups within rural settings.



NOW SHOWING
Highway



Year- 2014

Director Name- Imtiaz Ali

**Where to watch -
Amazon Prime, YouTube**

Depiction of the rural— Following the journey of Veera, a woman of an upper caste and class society, who is kidnapped. There is a use of a romanticized lens when depicting the rural. The film shows Veera feeling trapped in her urban setting but while traveling through the mountains and rural landscapes of India, she can breathe and be free. There is not a lot of focus on the issues that govern rural society in India. The film showcases the rustic charm of India while opposing to the harsh realities that govern life. The poetic shots of rural India are central to the narrative surrounding the discourse on rural India in the film.



NOW SHOWING
Laapataa Ladies



Year- 2023

Director Name- Kiran Rao

Where to watch - Netflix

Depiction of the rural— The rural landscape in the movie is shown to be a tight-knit community with an attention to detail. The essence of village life is captured in the film. From the hustle and bustle of the market to the humble homes of the villagers. The values and social norms that dictate life in the village are accurately portrayed. The film showcases the patriarchy and gender norms that govern village life, through a feminist lens. The idea of female autonomy, expectation and conformity are brought to question.



NOW SHOWING
Matrubhoomi
A nation without Women

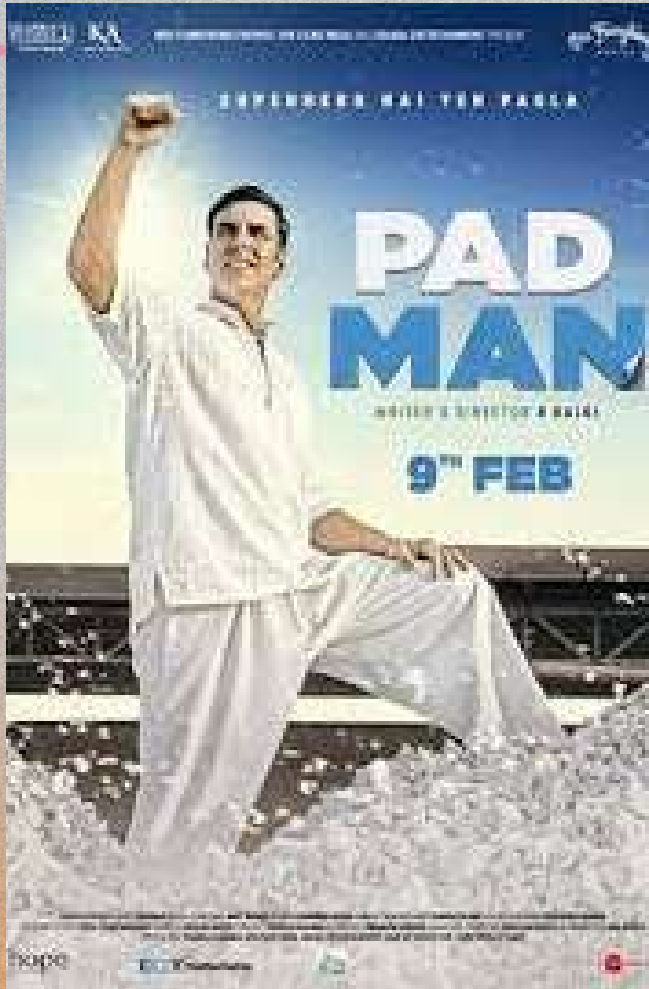


Year : 2003

Director : Manish Jha

Where to watch : Google Play

Depiction of the rural— Matrubhoomi presents a stark portrayal of rural life in a patriarchal society, highlighting the devastating consequences of female infanticide. By depicting the painful and trapped life of Kalki as the sole female in a town ridden with female infanticide, the film serves as a cautionary tale about a future where women are systematically eradicated, reflecting deep societal issues and the urgent need for change. The film also serves as a call to action, for the persistent challenges of female infanticide, sexual harassment, and the blatant disregard for the choices women want to have, especially in the matters of love.



NOW SHOWING
Pad Man



Year: 2018

Director: R. Balki

Where to watch: Netflix

Depiction of the rural— Pad Man sheds light on rural India's healthcare challenges, particularly regarding menstrual hygiene, which is often overlooked due to stigma and lack of resources. The film follows the journey of Lakshmi, who strives to make affordable sanitary pads for women in his village. His efforts reveal how deeply ingrained taboos and limited healthcare access impact rural women, leading to health issues and social alienation. Through Lakshmi's perseverance, the movie emphasizes the need for awareness, accessible healthcare, and education to improve rural health and empower women.



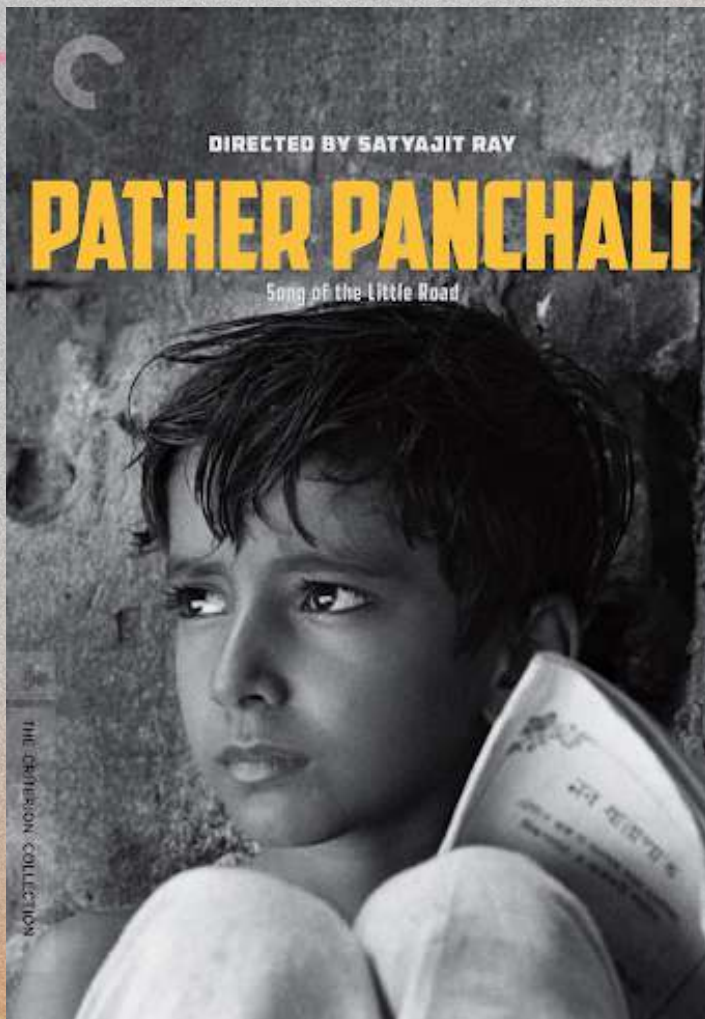
NOW SHOWING
Panchayat

Year: 2020

Director: Deepak Kumar Mishra

Where to watch: Prime Video

Depiction of the rural— Panchayat is set in Phulera, a fictional village, exploring rural life through Abhishek Tripathi, an urban graduate working as village secretary. With wit and humor, it highlights political hurdles, lack of development, and the slow, close-knit village lifestyle. While Abhishek initially struggles with limited amenities, he gradually finds belonging among the villagers. However, the show reinforces power hierarchies by centralizing the Pradhan's family as uncontested leaders, sidelining opposition and simplifying rural governance. Upper-caste dominance subtly sustains caste hierarchies, overlooking marginalized communities' struggles, reducing rural politics' complexity for dramatic appeal, and missing a nuanced portrayal of rural India.



NOW SHOWING
Panther Panchali

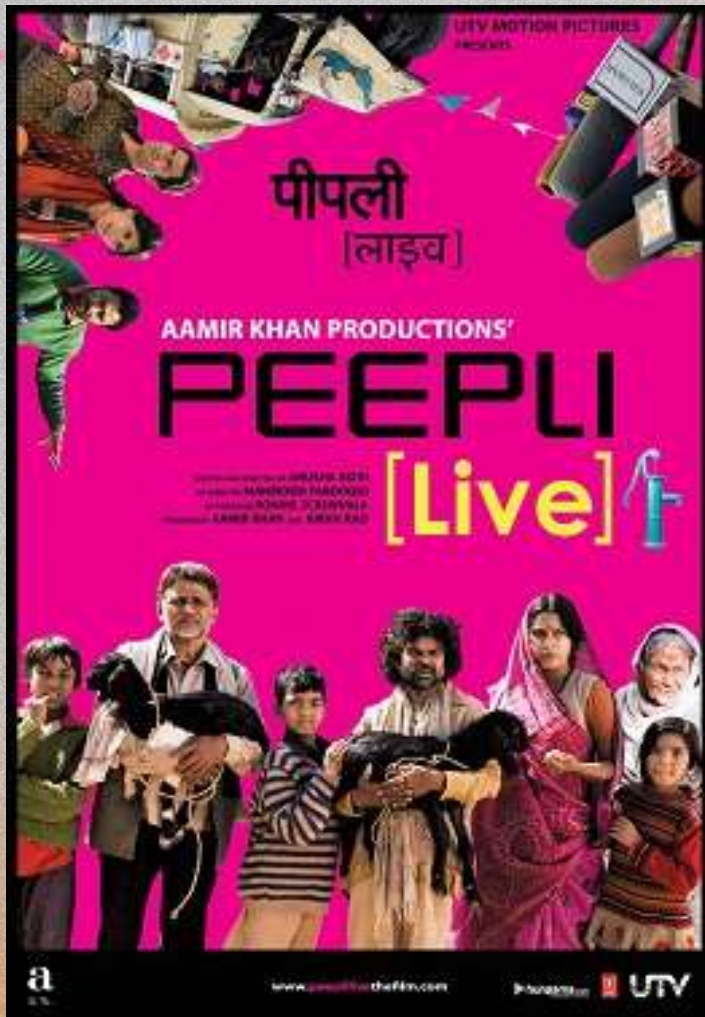


Year : 1955

Director : Satyajit Ray

Where to watch : Prime Video; YouTube

Depiction of the rural— Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* beautifully captures the essence of rural life in early 20th-century Bengal, illustrating the struggles of a poor family through the eyes of children Apu and Durga. Using slow-moving frames of Apu, and Durga and their relation to their parents, nature, and the typical formulation of rural life, the film intertwines the natural landscape with human emotion, creating a poignant narrative highlighting the beauty and hardship of village existence. The cinematic themes of life, existence, reality, economic struggle, and the forms in which grief can overtake humans in the most interesting ways, make this film deeply centered on the rural, as an extension of the deeply human.



NOW SHOWING
Peepli Live



Year: 2010

Director: Anusha Rizvi

Where to watch: Netflix

Depiction of the rural— In Peepli Live, rural society is portrayed through satire, highlighting institutional neglect and media exploitation of farmers' suffering. The story follows Natha, a debt-ridden farmer, whose possible suicide becomes a media spectacle. This reflects the disconnect between urban centres and rural realities, where the struggles of rural life are commodified for entertainment. The film critiques how the media, government, and politicians exploit rural distress for their own gain, rather than addressing the underlying agrarian crisis. The movie underscores how rural struggles are rendered invisible, turning genuine hardships into farcical narratives in the face of urban indifference.



NOW SHOWING
Ramaiya Vastavaiya

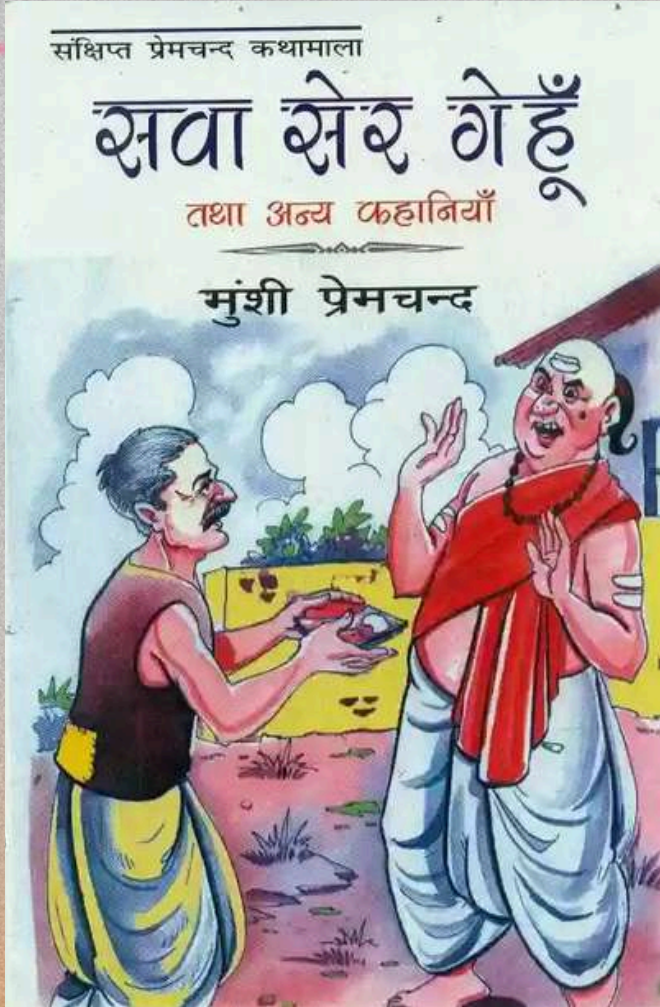


Year: 2013

Director: Prabhu Deva

Where to watch: Zee5

Depiction of the rural— Ramaiya Vastavaiya depicts rural life through a romanticized lens, focusing on the love story between Sona, a poor rural girl, and Ram, a wealthy urban boy. The film highlights patriarchy and feudalism, showcasing Sona's struggles with her family's debts after their father's abandonment. Despite their initial hardships, Sona and her brother achieve success in farming, yet patriarchal norms dictate Sona's marriage prospects. The film contrasts rural simplicity with urban wealth, portraying rural women as hardworking but ultimately reinforcing stereotypes when Sona attempts to mingle with the upper class. This idealized portrayal obscures deeper social issues within rural settings.



NOW SHOWING
Sava Ser Gehu

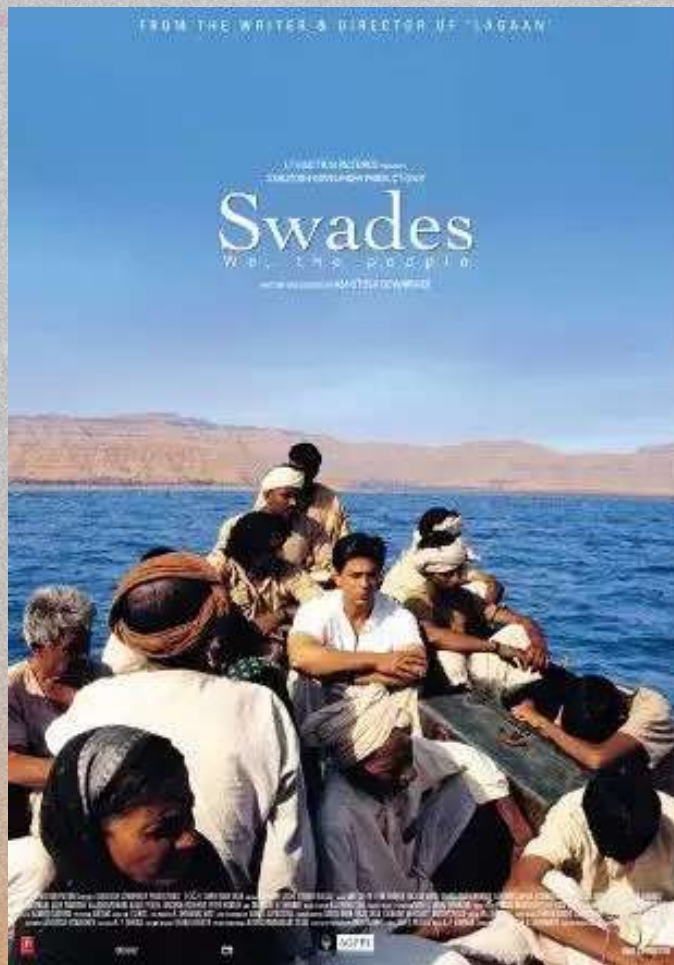


Year : 1910

Author : Munshi
Premchand (Later aired
by Doordarshan)

Where to watch : Youtube

Depiction of the rural— The short film portrays pre-independence rural India, focusing on feudal exploitation and caste hierarchies. It depicts how wheat and millet were central to farmers' livelihoods, while their relationship with land was controlled by feudal hegemony. Shankar's story, it exposes how upper-caste pandits and zamindars maintained control over resources, trapping farmers in debt cycles. The film illustrates how caste-based power dynamics and social exchange systems forced farmers into submissive relationships with upper-caste members, perpetuating intergenerational inequalities.



NOW SHOWING
Swades



Year : 2004

**Director : Ashutosh
Gowarikar**

Where to watch : Netflix

Depiction of the rural— The film Swades has a classical representation of a strong traditional rural aesthetic - portraying the problems in accessing basic necessities, caste-based discrimination being one of the cardinal aspects of the film, the film also delves into issues relating to illiteracy. The divide between the rural and the urban is emphasised based on the facilities and convenience that are present in the urban and absent in the rural. The film majorly focuses on the division between rural and urban and how the protagonist who's an NRI faces these issues and tries to solve them through his urban connection.



NOW SHOWING

12th Fail

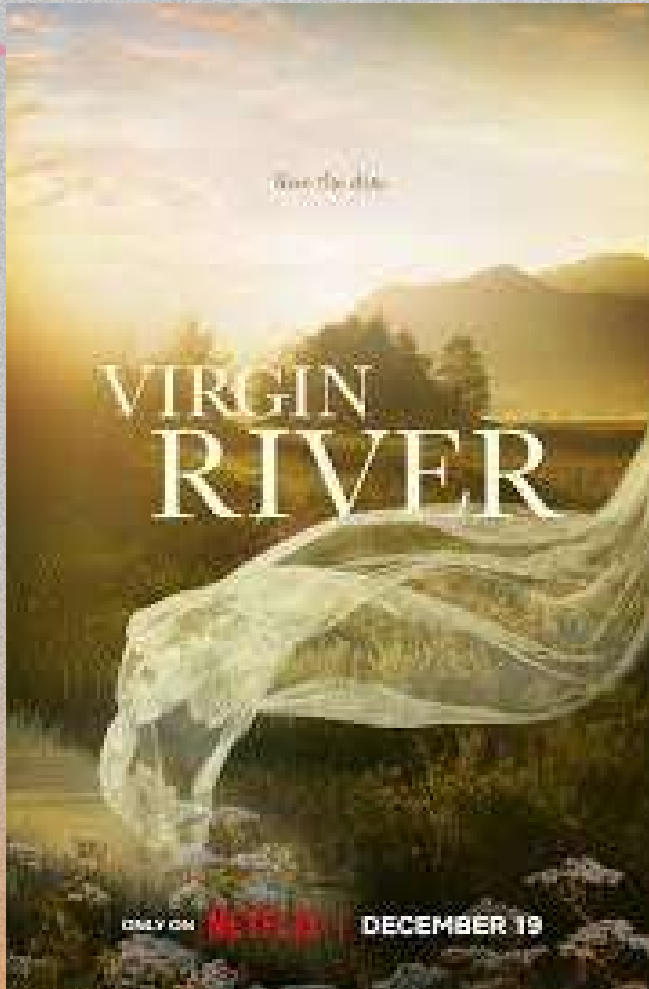


Year: 2023

Director: Vidhu Vinod Chopra

**Where to Watch:
Disney+Hotstar**

Depiction of the rural— 12th Fail is a biographical film about Manoj Kumar, an IPS officer who came from Chambal. After an honest DSP officer inspires Manoj, he faces many struggles and successfully becomes an IPS officer. The movie's depiction of the rural is limited. However, it criticises institutions such as the school and the police for their corrupt nature. There is no advancement, no hope, and no place for honesty. The village depicted in 12th Fail is a nest of poverty and victimhood. However, while these faults are often attributed to caste in many works, all the criticisms of Manoj's village focus on a class perspective. As such, there is an erasure of the caste hierarchy in villages in the movie.



NOW SHOWING
Virgin River



Year : 2019-2024

Director : Multiple directors, with key direction by Martin Wood

Where to watch : Netflix

Depiction of the rural— "Virgin River" subtly highlights the dynamics of rural politics, with a particular focus on the role of women as central figures within the community. Mel Monroe, the protagonist, brings her urban skills and education to Virgin River, navigating a tight-knit community where traditional values often intersect with modern expectations. Through characters like Mel and Hope, the town's strong-willed mayor, the series explores the unique leadership roles women hold in rural politics. Hope's character exemplifies the influence women wield in decision-making and community mediation, often balancing progress with long-standing local values. The series also touches on challenges women face in gaining respect and authority in a male-dominated setting, revealing the nuances of power, tradition, and gender roles in rural governance.

RUSKIN BOND

The Blue Umbrella



NOW READING

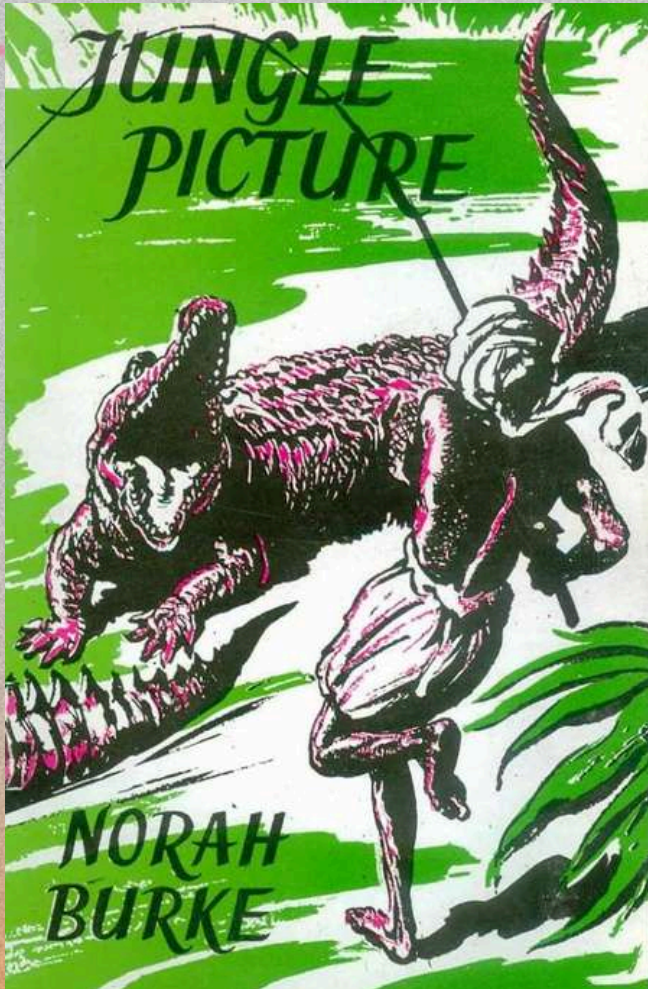
The Blue Umbrella

Year: 1980

Author: Ruskin Bond

Where to Read: Short stories published by Rupa Publications

Depiction of the rural— In "The Blue Umbrella," Ruskin Bond vividly depicts rural life in a small hilly village, emphasising its simplicity. Through the character of Binya, a young girl who acquires a beautiful blue umbrella, Bond explores themes of innocence, envy, and generosity. The village setting serves as a backdrop for interaction. The narrative highlights the beauty of rural existence while addressing the complexities of desire and deprivation, making it a poignant reflection on the human condition within a pastoral landscape.



NOW READING
The Blue Bead

Year: 1953

Author: Norah Burke

Where to Read: 'Jungle Picture' or 'Treasure Trove Collection of ICSE Short Stories'

Depiction of the rural— In "The Blue Bead," Norah Burke vividly portrays rural life through the character of Sibia, a young village girl. The depiction emphasizes the harsh realities of poverty, as Sibia's family struggles for basic necessities while living in a mud house near a river inhabited by a crocodile. Burke highlights the resilience and industriousness of rural women, who engage in laborious tasks like collecting grass for sale. The story reflects their daily hardships and the constant negotiation with nature, illustrating a life marked by both struggle and an enduring spirit of hope, as seen in Sibia's desire for a blue bead.



CONTRIBUTORS

Ananya Mahadevan
Deshna Kamdar
Kanoopreiya Vatsa
Kimberly Roy
Noor Das

Nritu Luthra
Mishita Thapar
Presth Bhardwaj
Ritika Verma
Rujula Talloo
Snehal Khurana



**EDITOR OF THE WEEK &
NEWSLETTER DESIGN**
Rujula Talloo