



## RECOGNITIONS

BEST STORY - DC SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL,
USA

BEST SHORT FILM - RIVER TO RIVER FLORENCE INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL, ITALY

BEST SHORT FILM - KOLKATA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



## MEIN, MEHMOOD

(I'M MEHMOOD)

11 minutes

Directed By:	<u>Prataya Saha</u>
Written By:	<u>Prataya Saha</u>
Producers:	Black Book Media, UAE Red Polka Productions, INDIA

Genre: Drama

Running Time:

*Budget:* \$ **2,482** 

Location: UAE

Audience: **U** 



## **LOGLINE**

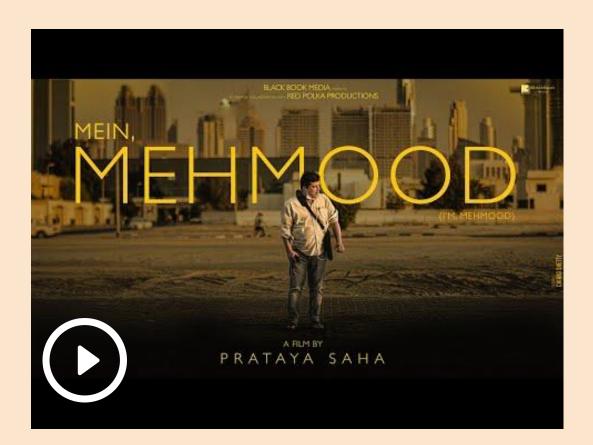
Mehmood, an Asian immigrant in Dubai struggles to meet his monthly sales target due to his lack of skills in communicating in a popular language (in this case English) and thus risks losing his job while, a thousand miles away, his wife waits for him to send across the money for her daughter's education.

## **SYNOPSIS**

"Mein, Mehmood" (I am, Mehmood) is a film that is dedicated to the life of hardworking immigrants all over the world. The film traces the life of Mehmood, a simple middle-aged immigrant from the Indian subcontinent who has left immigrated to Middle East to provide a better life for his family.

A tele-caller with a tourism company that is badly hit by the pandemic, Mehmood, struggles to meet monthly sales targets. His inability in speaking the English language limits his ability to converse with potential clients, thus putting his job in jeopardy. Back in a village in his country of origin, his wife waits for him to send across money for their daughter's education.

# **OFFICIAL TRAILER**





















SOUNAK SEN BARAT, CELEBRITY DESIGNER

# **PROFESSIONAL REVIEW**



UK Film Review Gave a Huge Thumbs Up to the film



## **REVIEWS IN THE PRESS**

"Raising awareness through Mein, Mehmood has the potential to impact so many lives positively" ~ Ravinder Kaur, DesiBlitz, UK

"Prataya Saha's short film travels to Toronto" ~ Shilpa Anandraj, The Hindu

"Mein, Mehmood, an award-winning short film, throws light on how knowing English determines one's social status" ~ Sravasti Datta, The Times of India

"..this makes the movie a strong postcolonial work which investigates the persisting and ever continuing colonial hangover of the language for South Asians."

~ Tooba Towsef, Journalist, The Quint, Moneycontrol, Kashmir Observer

"Prataya Saha's new short film attempts to capture the challenging lives of immigrants"

~ Ayesha Tabassum, Senior Journalist, The Indulge Express

"The endnote of the film captures the plight of immigrants in one short phrase and urges you to rethink the purpose of language in our lives. Once again, Prataya spins a tale that is real, relatable, topical, and crisp."

~ Ano Patel, Feature Writer, Ex-Journalist, Storyteller & Editor



## **AUDIENCE REVIEWS**

"It gives a voice to the voiceless and acts as a beacon of hope for accurate representation of minorities in art."

"Director Pratya Saha and crew deliver a remarkably accurate portrayal of the struggles faced by immigrants and the hardships they go through in a foreign land."

"The lead actor does a great job playing the titular character of Mehmood"

"Truly a must watch for everyone who respects the truth."

#### short film



# LOST AT SEA

Prataya Saha's new short film attempts to capture the challenging lives of immigrants WITHIN A SPAN of 11 minutes Mein, Mehmood tries to capture the plight of innumerable immigrants who are working in different parts of the world. The short film by Bengaluru-based Prataya Saha who has made award-winning films such as Just Another Day and The Good Wife, explores this thought-provoking subject that affects millions of lives across the world.

Starring Ozair Abdul Aleem as Mehmood, the story follows this immigrant who works as a telecaller at a travel company. He has targets to achieve to ensure he retains his job and saves enough money to send back home to India for his daughter's education. Prataya wanted to write and make a film about such immigrants who work in the UAE ever since he started visiting the country in 2013 for work. "The Middle East is an amalgamation of so many different cultures. I have experienced this since I started visiting the

place many years ago. I have travelled by public buses and I have also lived in shared accommodations. This is where I have seen the problems of immigrants first hand. Since I know how to speak in Dhakai Bengali and also speak in Hindi, I was able to speak with many of these people. This is where I found my inspiration," says the director who wrote the script of the film at a coffee shop in Dubai within 10 hours, over a cup of coffee. This was soon after the first wave of COVID-19, and Prataya was visiting the country for a project. So there are references to the pandemic and also how people lost their jobs because of it.

The lead actor of the film, Ozair, has delivered an impressive performance. What comes as a surprise though is that he is not a professional actor. Yet, the realism that he brings to the screen is quite convincing. "He is a writer and used to work for Sharjah TV since 1994. Not being a professional actor

and as someone who has observed Dubai and life of immigrants so closely, he was able to perform as naturally as possible," explains Prataya. There are quite a few moments during the film that Ozairhas improvised his lines, and



this was a liberty given by the director. The film also explores how today younger professionals who know English are given preference over senior workers, and this is leading to the older workforce losing their jobs. The story also highlights how living away from family is emotionally draining for many workers who have no choice but to earn abroad.

The cinematography and colour tone of the film gives it a very internationallookandfeel, Prataya says he watched several Mexican films. "I watched many references like the show Narcos: Mexico. Mexico has a desert, and Dubai also has one, so I felt the same kind of warm tones would work for it," he says. The film that has been screened at the UK Film Review Festival and has now been selected for a screening at one of the largest South Asian film festivals in North America. It will be released on a streaming platform in the near future.



Prataya Saha's short film travels to Toronto

#### Prataya Saha's short film travels to Toronto



Shilpa Anandraj

AUGUST 12, 2022 08:23 IST UPDATED: AUGUST 12, 2022 14:14 IST



The 11-minute film talks of the inhibitions caused by lack of fluency in English





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### Prataya Saha talks 'Mein, Mehmood' & Independent **Filmmaking**

In an exclusive chat with DESIblitz, Prataya Saha discusses the main themes of 'Mein, Mehmood' as well as the praise the film has received.

August 17, 2022







### Global\_Indian

**English** 

A hero's journey
Tuesday, July 26 2022

E STORIES Y YOUTH PURPOSE Y BLOGS Y FUN FACTS Y GALLERY Y OPPORTUNITIES Y JOIN US PUBLISHER

### I took a calculated risk, there was no 'Gully Boy' moment: Filmmaker Prataya Saha

WRITTEN BY: DARSHANA RAMDEV

(July 26, 2022) "Sir, it's time to go, we're closing." Filmmaker Prataya Saha was snapped out of his reverie by an impatient janitor waiting to close the cafe at which he sat in Sharjah. Saha picked up his things, smiling – his job was nearly done. He called Ozair, an acquaintance from Bengaluru, who would also go on to star in the film. Their paths happened to cross in the UAE, where Prataya had been to shoot a music video for a UK label. "He asked me, 'why don't we do something here?' I had a flight out in two days but Ozair had promised to help get my visa extended if I could produce a script he liked," Prataya tells me, as he catches up with *Global Indian* on a rainy Saturday afternoon in July, one year later. As it happened, Ozair loved what he saw and *Mein, Mehmood* was born, in ten intense hours spent huddled with pen and paper at a Costa Coffee. Shot entirely in Dubai in 2021, *Mein, Mehmood* will premiere at the IFFSA in Toronto, North America's largest South Asian film festival, on August 15, 2022.

Think Opinion Analysis Essays

KASHMIR OBSERVER Srinagar | Sunday | 12-06-2022

Unlike South Asian immigrants in the

US, where language barrier becomes a

hindering factor, in

the movie a strong postcolonial work

which investigates the

persisting and ever

continuing colonial

language for South

hangover of the

the uncritical "progress" of people. It is this class of Brown Sahib's that Ma-caulay, the orientalist who had advocated

English had set out to achieve. It is a pity

that even after having access to education

people still thrive in the Babu complex and judge their own.

In addition to a telling comment on th

irrational power attached to English, the

Saha's movie English is dominantly attached to prestige. This makes



### Of Mehmood, Angrezi and Immigrants

"Mei, Mehmood" succinctly explores the workings of this language capital and how the social prestige attached to it continues to plague the psyche of people

When Mehmood finds himself with a basket full of raisessing V V his English-speaking counterpart bags profitable targets - the third-world audience can easily catch the central argument of Pratya Saha's short movie, "Mein, Mehmood", Indeed, Fnelish still remains a language of power in the postcolonial world. This is explored by Saha through the story of a middle-aged Indian immi-grant working in Dubai.

Dubai is the new age's "happy" getaway It has taken over the might of the Ameri-can skyscrapers and become luxury's first home. This is perhaps why it is inviting many for merry and work. Even as the picture-perfect poster of this place sits mmetrically, it is interspersed with an unfamiliar crowd that often puts the colours into question.

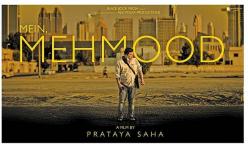
This modern-day idyll is questioned in

Saha's movie which unpacks the struggles of South Asian immigrants, one shot at a time. Saha's Dubai isn't warm and welcoming as it is in popular advertiser's imagery. The tall skyscrapers aren't promising. They bring out the sublime irony of Saha's pro-

tagonist, Mehmood's helplessness.

Mehmood, who works as a tele-caller in a tourism company, is seen juggling life amidst the pandemic. He is seen repeating monotony to achieve sales targets to earn money and send it to his family back in India. Mehmood's difficulty is primaril shown to be his inability to speak in English, even as his clientele is mostly Hindi/ Urdu speaking. This is a crucial point in understanding the commentary on English that the story is trying to make. Unlike South Asian immigrants in US.





While struggling immigrants find quite a space in the aware critiques of the "American dream", how many have ventured to deflate the bubble of the "green pasture" possibilities in places like Dubai? This enterprise throws open new questions to understand the status of the post-colonial world in new contexts

here language barrier becomes a hinder ing factor, in Saha's movie English is dominantly attached to prestige. This makes the movie a strong postcolonial work which nvestigates the persisting and ever continuing colonial hangover of the language

or South Asians. Besides being the coloniser's language and enjoying power as a residue of the imperial legacy globally, English had been

framed as a superior language by British colonisers. Additionally, when English was privileged as a

medium of educa-tion in British India, a ucation also created a section of elite Babus a class of fluent English-speaking people. This educated elite went on to become the future leaders of India and it is this first generation that also enjoyed most posi-

ndependence from foreign rule In the Post-Colonial context, however, English continued to remain the language of power and of the "powerful". As such, t carried with it not only a connotation of social capital but also potentials of omic mobility. Perhaps this explain the many English language coaching institutes that have sprung up across the sub-

"Mei. Mehmood" succinctly explores the

and social capital. It is not just a lack of English education that creates hurdles in BEHIND THE SCENES the way of Mehmood but also the element of prestige that he couldn't flaunt to his potential customers t also explores the

internalised colonial hangover that is not residual but quite unabashedly operational within our communities. To have a South Asian immigrant fao problems at the hands of those who shar the same ethnicity is

movie shows the every day struggles of workings of this language capital and how an immigrant. This is done in simple yet the social prestige attached to it continimpactful scenes. It throws open a panues to plague the psyche of people. That dora's box of issues that immigrants have Mehmood fails to meet his monthly tarto face. Not only do they struggle far from gets while his colleague finishes well in their roots but find themselves uprooted time, even as they had Hindi/Urdu speak in more than one way, Identity, marriage ing clientele, goes on to show the double family and life - an immigrant risks all. The displacement affects every aspect of standards that dictate our lives. The movie brilliantly shows the intertheir life as they're left chasing after the links between power, education, prestige promises of green pastures. From fake

smiles to sombre days, "Mein, Mehmood shows all in only 11 minutes. The movie's success in saying a lot in less is to be credited to the lead actor Ozair Abdul Aleem, who lends to the role a depth that goes beyond expressions. Togethe with Prateek Saha's story and direction, the story stands as important and relevant

While struggling immigrants find quite a space in the aware critiques of the "Ameri-can dream", how many have ventured to deflate the bubble of the "green pasture" possibilities in places like Dubai? This enterprise throws open new questions to understand the status of the post-colonial world in new contexts

The author is the Opinion's Editor at

#### Global Indian

@theglobalindian

In a candid interview with us, Prataya Saha talks about his passion for filmmaking, award -winning movies and much more...

globalindian.com/story/filmmake...

@prataya saha #film #filmmakers #Dubai #India #filmmaker #awardwinning #Director #films #Creative #redpolkaproduction





#### Derek Masterson @DelMasterson · May 28

Had the pleasure of chatting with writer/director @prataya\_saha about his upcoming film "Mein, Mehmood" this evening. It looks like an incredibly intense thriller from the trailer and I can't wait to see the finished film! Watch the trailer here: youtu.be/PPuGU77I1bY



#### Kashmir Observer™ 📀

@kashmirobserver

MOVIE REVIEW -- "Mei, Mehmood" succinctly explores the workings of the language capital and how the social prestige attached to it continues to plague the psyche of people ", writes Tooba Towfiq (
@tooba tweets)



Red Polka Productions in association with Black Book Media dedicates its new venture 'Mein Mehmood' to immigrants

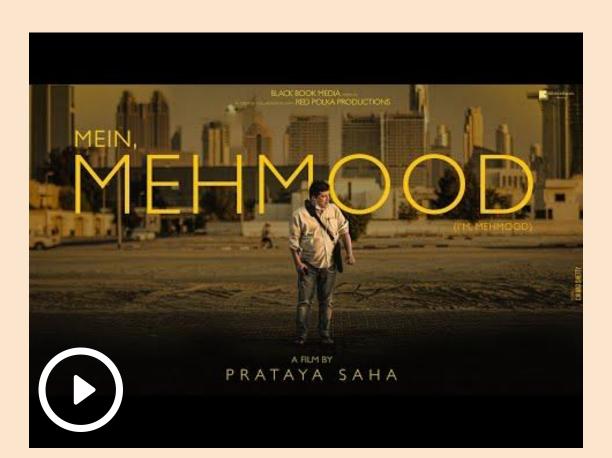
More: mediainfoline.com/alliances/red-...



Tooba Towfiq <a>
</a>
@tooba\_tweets

"Mei, Mehmood" succinctly explores the workings of language capital and how social prestige attached to it continues to plague the psyche of people. It also explores the internalised colonial hangover that is not residual but quite unabashedly operational within our communities"

## **OST - MAIN THEME - 'THE IMMIGRANT'**



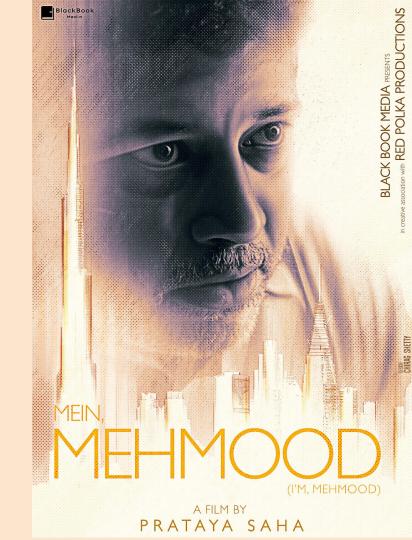
## **ABOUT US**

#### **Black Book Media:**

Based out of Dubai, this is a group of entrepreneurs and passionate creative minds who are enthused by the art of storytelling, especially when it communicates a deep social message. A hybrid fusion of creativity and entrepreneurship is thus at the core of this enterprise. Their expertise ranges from making award-winning short films to state-of-the-art Corporate Films, Branding Videos, Advertisements and Documentaries.

#### **Red Polka Productions:**

Based out of Bangalore, India, Red Polka is a Bangalore based creative film production house that focuses on candid, powerful, moving and poignant storytelling, especially endeavouring to give our stories a human touch. Six of our films have been selected in 85 international film festivals, including Oscar Qualifying, BAFTA Qualifying and Canadian Award Qualifying festivals, winning 23 awards in 12 countries. They are also streaming on major OTTs like Disney+Hotstar, MxPlayer, Hungama Play, etc.



## **DIRECTOR**, Prataya Saha

Prataya Saha is a multiple award winning independent filmmaker, Tedx performer, theatre director & photographer based out of India and UAE.

Prataya's directorial debut was 'Anna's Weekend' in 2016. Since then, he has made 12 short films with his films selected in 100+ film festivals around the world, winning around 26 awards, including the prestigious New York Asian Film Festival, Oaxaca Film Fest, IFFSA Toronto, VSAFF Vancouver, Cardiff International Film Festival, Chicago South Asian Film Festival, Oscar Qualifying festivals like Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival, Bengaluru International Film Festival, etc.

He was featured on The Week, the leading news magazine, twice in 2021.

Over the years his work has been extensively covered and published in most National Newspapers including Times of India, The Hindu, Deccan Chronicle, Deccan Herald, The New Indian Express & The Economic Times.



## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

Growing up in the 90s in India was like being in a potpourri of different cultures. The advent of cable TV brought the entire world to the living room for most people who could afford a TV. Slowly, watching western pop culture, songs, sports and educational programmes largely promulgated in the English language became an integral part of life.

Little did I realize then, that this was not so for a huge number of people and the answer lay in the socioeconomic divisions in a still-developing country of the size of a subcontinent.

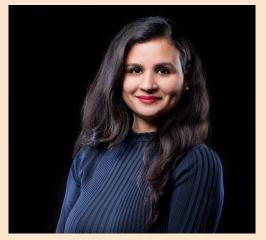
"Mein, Mehmood", shot entirely in Dubai, is a tribute to all those who were "left behind" by not putting effort into learning a language whether by circumstance or intention. It is a very honest effort over a span of 36 hours, with the shoot spanning real locations as we wanted to be very authentic to the visuals.





#### Ozair Abdul Aleem as **Mehmood**

With over 25 years in the creative fields, Ozzy began his career as a copywriter in Sharjah. In 2009, he started his own marketing firm called 'Bizinfo Street' out of Bangalore, India. Later on, he's helped other creative people start their own firms. He also has written lyrics for a couple of Indian singers. In this period, he's also worked with the famous Indian singer 'Lucky Ali' and also on a collaboration between Lucky Ali and Israeli singer 'Eliazor Botzer'.



### Anshulika Kapoor as *The Wife*

Anshulika Kapoor is a multiple award-winning Actor, Producer and Tedx Performer from Bangalore, India. She started her journey as an actor on stage more than a decade ago. Since then she has been involved in multilingual theatre in India and been part of productions in English, Hindi, Bengali and Urdu.

She mainly works in women centric films which have been screened in both national and international film festivals.



#### Sounak Sen Barat as *The Customer*

Sounak Sen Barat is a known name in the Indian fashion luxury and lifestyle industry.

The Design Director and Founder of House of Three, who has worn different hats in his 20 years of professional journey- from theatre, playback, voiceovers, jingles, art direction, collaborative musical shows with the likes of **Sabaa Azaad & Sanjeev Thomas**- and is also working on his first solo art show.

The celebrities House of Three has styled include South Indian superstar **Siddharth** and **Dulqer Salman**, **Samantha**, **Konkona Sen Sharma**, **Sabaa Azaad**, **Radhika Apte**,, etc.

From design, brand creation, styling, art direction, to campaign direction, lifestyle curation, sustainability advocation, he's done it all.

## **CREDITS**

Directed by

Written by

Director of Photography

Edit & Colour

Sound Design

Sound Engineer

Original Score

VFX

PR

Prataya Saha

Prataya Saha

**Abhishekh Saravanan** 

**Abhishekh Saravanan** 

**Apurv Prasanna** 

**Adrian Rodrigues** 

**Karthik Bhandare** 

**Ishir N Mehta** 

Neena Biswal



## **SUPPORTING CAST**

The Wife

The Office Employee

The Roommate

**Anshulika Kapoor** 

Prataya Saha

**Mahammed Sabith Abbas** 

## **VO ARTISTS**

The Customer

Office Manager

The Roommate

Sounak Sen Barat

**Bidushi Roy** 

**Madhavan Unni** 



# **BEHIND THE SCENES**









# **FAQs**

#### How did you choose the shoot locations?

We were very sure we wanted the film to have an in-depth realism in it and give a true reflection of society as is, without any filters. Thus, it was imperative we shoot in locations that are as close to reality as possible. Since the protagonist is an immigrant we shot the film in a building where real immigrants stayed. The interiors and items in the immigrant quarters were kept as is, including the bedsheets, the pillow covers, the earphones, and the utensils, without any manipulation or dramatisation to give a true understanding of their lives and their surroundings.

The outdoors too were chosen after thorough research on the places the immigrants visit frequently.

#### How did you decide to cast Mr. Ozair as the lead?

Ozair is a very creative person, having been a writer for Sharjah TV more than a decade back. Due to his panache for writing, he is very observant and has a lingering sensitivity to his emotions. Thus, although he was not a seasoned actor I decided that the gamble of casting him might work as he might be able to understand and portray the sensibilities of the character of Mehmood that I have written.

A couple of days of brainstorming and rehearsal before the shoot days and Ozair had already picked up the nerve of the character. The gamble paid off and I think he has been able to do justice to it.

# **FAQs**

#### Who are your influences for this film?

I do not think I can pinpoint a particular filmmaker, personal experience or art form as my influences for this film as they are far too many. Overall I'd say the greatest influence of making this film has been very personal. I have been going to the Middle East region for work and leisure since 2014 and travelling by public transport made me come in contact with lots of immigrants who live and work there. Talking to many such amazing hardworking people on their way back home from their work and listening to their stories have helped shape this film.

#### Where do you see the future of Independent filmmaking?

I think that it is evolving in the right direction for quite some time now and the advent of streaming platforms mushrooming all over makes it far easier for independent filmmakers to showcase their work than a decade earlier. I believe independent films will continue growing and probably will be quite commercially viable in the next few years blurring the lines between them and mainstream commercial cinema.

#### Why should people watch Mein, Mehmood ( I am, Mehmood)?

The film talks about a major subject that has not quite been talked about - how not being able to know a mainstream language like English is having a negative impact on the lives of immigrants, specifically Asian immigrants all over the world. The film has also been made with a lot of honesty and realism to paint a correct picture of the situation. I feel this subject should be talked about to bring out more inclusive conversations for a better future and watching the film and talking about it is a tiny step towards that.

