

In a remote Bihar village, an outcast family struggles with poverty and discrimination. The father worked as a daily labourer, earning just enough to keep hunger away. One day, seeing no other way, he left the village to find work in the city, leaving behind his young wife and their newborn son. The mother, alone in the broken house, battling the heavy sadness of new motherhood, was unable to feed their baby. The baby's cries became harder to bear, and loneliness wrapped around her like a snake.

Their lives became tied to a crematorium worker, tormented by guilt after burning an unnamed body for a few coins. Unable to live with his mistake, he longed to wash away his sins and find forgiveness. In the end, when all three cross paths, their broken lives crash into one another and what follows is a storm of pain, anger, and regret that spares no one.



Set against the backdrop of Bihar, "Swaha" captures the region's rich cultural heritage and contemporary challenges. The film delves into broader themes of poverty, caste discrimination, and the quest for dignity. My personal association with Buddhist ideas significantly shaped the narrative, allowing for a deeper exploration of suffering, compassion, and the path to enlightenment.

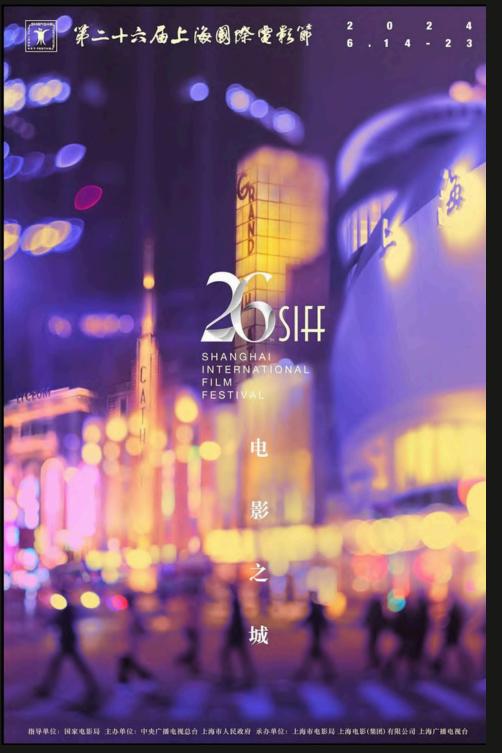
I chose a stark black-and-white visual style to reflect the harsh realities faced by the characters. The narrative structure weaves together moments of hope and despair, mirroring the protagonist's tumultuous journey. Through sound design, I aimed to create a psychological space where pain often masquerades as fear, adding depth to the emotional landscape.

Creating "Swaha" has been a transformative journey, deepening my understanding of resilience and hope. This film stands as a testament to the human spirit's capacity to endure and transcend, marking a significant milestone in my career as a filmmaker.

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Abhilash Sharma is an independent filmmaker from India, known for creating emotionally powerful and socially rooted stories. With a background in theatre and a passion for visual storytelling, Abhilash has directed a range of short films, documentaries, and feature projects that explore human emotions, culture, and social issues. His film Swaha won the prestigious Golden Goblet Award at the Shanghai International Film authentic storytelling, Abhilash believes in using connect deeply with audiences.







26<sup>TH</sup> SIFF - 2024



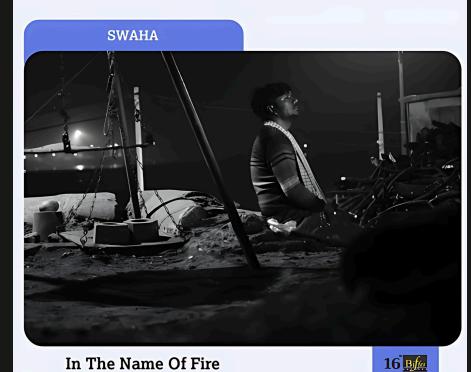


IN THE NAME OF FIRE/SWAHA By Abhilash Sharma Magahi | India | 2024 | 99 Min

INDIAN CINEMA NOW









Director: Abhilash Sharma

India | Hindi 99 min | 2024 Indian Cinema

Competition





## AWARDS



BEST DIRECTOR: ABHILASH SHARMA



BEST ACTOR: SATYA RANJAN



SPECIAL MENTION AWARD



THIRD BEST INDIAN FILM





BEST ACTRESS: SONALLI SHARMISSTHA

### HESTIVAL ACCLAIM

- Shanghai International Film Festival (Winner)
- Lucca Film Festival (International Competition)
- Kerry International Film Festival (Official Competition)
- Kolkata International Film Festival (Unheard India)
- International Film Festival of Kerala (Indian Cinema Now)
- Ajanta Ellora International Film Festival (Indian Competition)
- Pune International Film Festival (India Showcase)
- Bengaluru International Film Festival ( Winner )
- Cinequest Film Festival (International Competition)
- Moscow Asian Film Festival (Official Competition)
- Festival Internazionale Del Cinema Di Salerno 2024 (Official Competition )
- Dhaka International Film Festival 2025 (Winner)
- SR Socially Relevant Film Festival, New York ( Winner )
- Panchajanyam International Film Festival 2025- Contemporary Indian Cinema
- Guwahati Asian Film Festival- India Showcase
- Kodaikanal International Film Festival (Winner)
- Eikhoigi Imphal International Film Festival- Montage Section
- Internationale Filmfestspiele Karlsruhe (International Competition)
- Habitat Indian Film Festival, New Delhi
- New York City Independent Film Festival (International Competition)
- ImagineIndia Film Festival, Madrid
- Independent and Experimental Film Festival of Kerala, Calicut (India Focus)
- Da Nang Asian Film Festival (Asian Cinema Competition)





## CRITICAL ACCLAIM

"His film brims with myriad symbolic implications, weaving ancestral elements documentary, and drama into a whole"

-Lila Avilés, Mexican Filmmaker

"Sharma structures this sort of double narration in a game of sounds, between imposing silences and anguished cries, and of lights and shadows that reflect the harsh reality"

-Gaia Parrini, Italian Art Critique

"An outstanding film, all the way"

-Shoma A Chatterjee

"Director Sharma brings to Swaha, in subtext and visual imagery, themes of religions, Buddhism in particular, from themes of compassion, sacrifice, redemption, retribution, forgiveness and a newfound purpose, to the image of Rukhiya seated beneath a Banyan tree, like Buddha awaiting enlightenment."

-Tanushree Ghosh

# CASIA CRIM

### **CAST**

SONALLI SHARMISSTHA
SATYA RANJAN
CHANDRA SHEKHAR DUTTA
BULLOO KUMAR
MUKESH CHOUDHARY
KUNAL KUMAR
CHANCHAL KUMAR
KUNAL SINHA
SARBIND KUMAR
DHARMENDRA DHARAM
SRIPARNA CHAKRAVARTHY
RAVI KUMAR
KARU SINGH

### **CREW**

WRITER: ABHILASH SHARMA, SHILPEE BHARDWAJ

CINEMATOGRAPHER: **DEVENDRA GOLATKAR** 

EDITOR: SURESH PAI, ABHILASH SHARMA

SOUND DESIGNER: MOHANDAS P.V.

ART DIRECTOR: NILESH S. GORAKSHE

MUSIC: **DEVARSHI** 

COLORIST: XAVIER JOSEPH

COSTUME: KRISHNA KARMAKAR

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR: ANNIL K BHANJA

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: LYLE PEARSON

PRODUCTION CONTROL: RAHUL PANDEY

CREATIVE PRODUCER: **ASHES VATS** 

CO-PRODUCERS: ACHALA TOMAR, SHILPEE BHARDWAJ

PRODUCED BY: VIKASH SHARMMA

DIRECTED BY: **ABHILASH SHARMA** 





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