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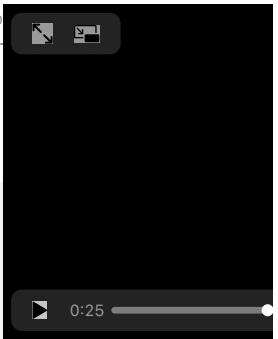
NFDC Film Bazaar: 'Withering' And 'Alpha Beta Gamma' Focus On Acceptance, Reconciliation



A still of actor Ramanujam T V V in the film 'Withering'.

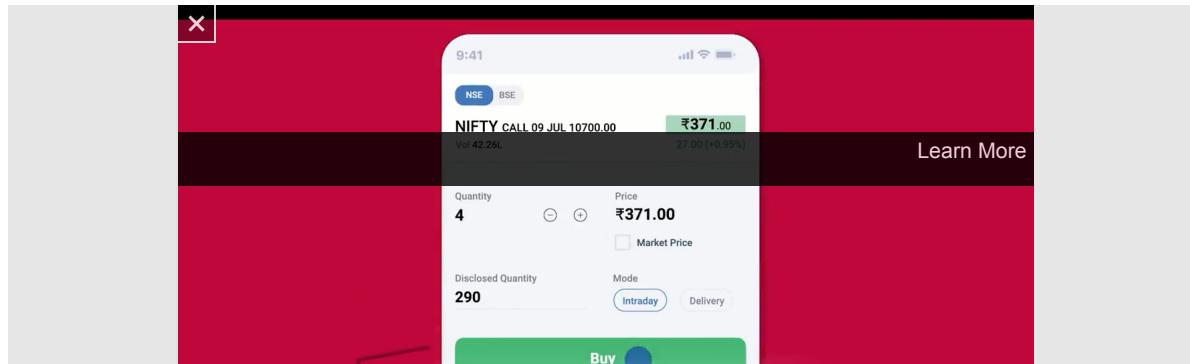
Withering tackles an interesting concept of how grief can last, sometimes for years, engulfing one in a state of near hallucination; Shankar S gives us another novel concept in Alpha Beta Gamma.

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A couple of movies on acceptance and reconciliation were virtually screened at the ongoing Film Bazaar, organised by the National Film Development Corporation of India. Withering or its Tamil translation, Sarugugal, (part of the Industry Screenings), helmed by Harshini S L, takes us to a man just retired and grieving over the death of his wife. He is Krishnamoorthy (played with superb subtlety by Ramanujam T V V), who feels awfully guilty about having neglected his wife's stomach pain, leaving her alone, and going away on his official assignment. She suffers a heart attack and passes away before he could return.

A year later, he is with his son, Shiva (Sashi Kumar Subramony), and his wife Renu (Yasmin Ponappa). Both are busy professionals and many of Krishnamoorthy's ways are irritating. He does not want to let go of his wife's belongings, and that includes a 40-year-old mechanical watch which he gifted her during their wedding. And when the watch stops, the man searches all over Chennai to find its spares. He also lives with memories and, more importantly, a sense of deep regret. He keeps telling his son how he had been callous to her needs, never fulfilling any of them. It is a life, he feels, wasted because he has been oblivious to his partner's existence. "I did not even notice her", he rues.





Withering does finally reach closure with Krishnamoorthy letting go of the past. Although finely performed, the movie stretches and could have been tighter. Ponappa and Subramony are fairly good in supporting roles, with their characters hardly ever losing their cool despite a difficult man at home, who is psychologically a wreck stubbornly resisting to move on.

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near hallucination. Acceptance becomes a major issue here.

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Shankar S gives us another novel concept in Alpha Beta Gamma (Hindi/English). It is Mumbai and a lockdown is in force with the Coronavirus pandemic raging. Chiranjee Vashisth (Amit Kumar Vashisth) comes to visit Mitali (Reena Agarwal), a wife he has been separated from for two years. At her flat, he finds her boyfriend, Raviroy Varma (Nishan Nanaiah). Minutes later, the building where Mitali lives is sealed, because two cases of Covid 19 have been discovered there. Nobody can get into or exit from the complex.

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Indeed, Shankar turns a frightfully difficult situation into one dotted with hilarity. When Raviroy from Kerala sits in the drawing room with just his dhoti on, Chiranjee is aghast. Why is he naked, he wants to know. And in a tit-for-tat step, he strips himself to his underpants! He also insists that the three sleep in the living room. "I do not feel comfortable imagining you and your boyfriend on our bed", he admonishes Renu. She and her estranged husband had been sweethearts from school, a relationship soured 20 years into their marriage.

The actors are good, turning an unpleasant situation into one that is gripping and easy flowing. Mitali, Raviroy, and even Chiranjee learn to accept reality, giving up wishful thoughts. But somehow, the end seems rather tame, rather predictable. I expected fireworks, kept waiting for them, but they never arrived. I think a perfectly compelling work looks insipid at the very end.



(Author, Commentator, and Movie Critic Gautaman Bhaskaran has been covering the Film Bazaar for many years)

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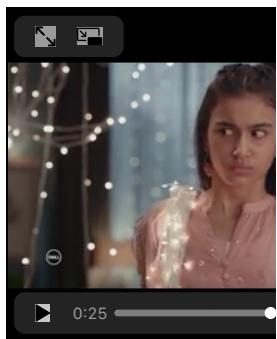


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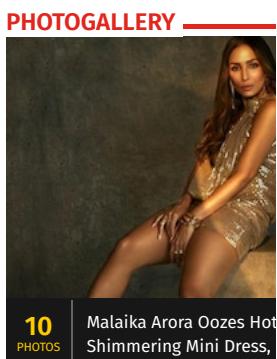


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