

HAF 25 The Catch



COUNTRY/REGION: India

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:

Drama, Comedy | Digital Format | Gujarati, Hindi, English | 100mins

DIRECTOR:

Rishi CHANDNA

PRODUCER:

Dina DATTANI

HAF GOALS:

Funds, Co-producers

TOTAL BUDGET: US\$425,000

SECURED BUDGET: US\$140,000

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

First Feature Director

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

On the polluted coast of Gujarat, a poor Muslim fisherman becomes a millionaire after catching the precious Ghol fish — only to find spending his money more trouble than he imagined.

SYNOPSIS

Hussain Mirza (50s) was once a passionate trawler fisherman in the ocean. However, when he strayed across the unmarked marine border into Pakistani waters, he was imprisoned for years while his family was killed in the 2002 Gujarat pogrom. Widowed and impoverished, he now canoe-fishes in the polluted estuary near his village in Gujarat, where his nets always come up with more garbage than fish.

Hussain's fate changes when he catches a shoal of the rare Ghol fish, precious in global industries for its organs. But instead of being jubilant, he is secretly anxious with the windfall. Because as much as he longs to again own a trawler and fish in the deep seas, he is plagued by fears of getting lost in the ocean once more.

Thus, Hussain sets out to squander his fortune to ensure he does not have money left for a trawler — he gives liberally to the village, fulfills his repressed desires, and even holds a grand banquet. Yet, the more he splurges, the lesser his chances become of escaping the garbage-laden river and rebuilding a life of dignity, especially against the looming communal prejudices of his world.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I first heard of the Ghol fish when a Gujarati Muslim fisherman caught five tonnes of it and made a fortune. Meeting him and other Ghol catchers, not only did I see the catch had given them wealth, but it also exacerbated their anxieties about the declining marine life that would push them deeper into the sea. In their desperate search for fish, they are always at risk of straying into Pakistani waters and potential imprisonment which would see them exiled from their homes, given the growing Hindutva nationalism. All of this is happening as India sleepwalks towards an environmental and ethnic holocaust while the scars of the 2002 Gujarat pogrom have yet to fade.

In *The Catch*, the protagonist's inner struggle to cross the border between the refuse-laden river and his rightful place in the ocean, is a metaphor for the apprehensions of Indian-Muslims who have suddenly become aliens in today's Hindu-first nation. But this story is best told in a deadpan satirical tone, using dark comedy to make a scathing commentary on our decaying world. The overall effect is one in which an older, gentler time is at odds with a new, ruthless, mechanised, globalised environment.

DIRECTOR

Rishi CHANDNA

A Mumbai-based filmmaker. His debut short, *Tungrus* (2018), travelled to over 150 film festivals (including Hot Docs, BFI London Film Festival, IDFA), won 28 awards, qualified for the Oscars after winning at Slamdance, and released on New York Times Op-Docs and Criterion Channel. His next short, *Party Poster* (2020), is a satire about religious fervour in India.

Rishi was the first filmmaker featured on film critic Anupama Chopra's "Artist to Watch for" series. His first fiction feature film, *The Catch* (Ghol) is selected at the 2021 Sundance Screenwriters Lab and NFDC Film Bazaar Co-Production Market 2021.

PRODUCER

Dina DATTANI

Set up Fox (India) as the broadcast network's Legal & Business Affairs Head, overseeing films such as *Slumdog Millionaire* (2009), *Life of Pi* (2012) and *Avatar* (2009). She has been an ardent supporter of independent cinema and was Consultant on Anurag Kashyap's *Dev D* (2009), *That Girl in Yellow Boots* (2011) and BAFTA winning documentary *Terror in Mumbai* (2009). She was Executive Producer of *Hotel Salvation* (2016) (Biennale Award, Venice Film Festival) and Associate Producer on Netflix's first Indian original film, *Brahman Naman* (2016). Dina is currently co-producing a series with Gaumont and an anthology of horror features with Blumhouse.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Furaha Pictures Limited

Dina Dattani is an independent producer, having worked in the UK, India and the US for over 15 years. Whilst having worked with a studio on major Oscar & BAFTA winning productions (*Slumdog Millionaire*, *Life of Pi*, *Terror in Mumbai*), her independent productions and co-productions (*Hotel Salvation*, *Brahman Naman*) have also received both critical and commercial success. She will be setting up a UK-based company under the name Furaha Pictures Limited. Furaha in Swahili means joy and happiness.