

## Tribute to the beautiful Smita Patil at Tofifest.

**Smita Patil not only fought for the rights of Indian women, but was also a true icon of the ambitious Indian cinema and a tragic figure. The first ever retrospective of the films with Smita Patil will be presented during the 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of the IFF Tofifest. Her sister, Manya Patil, will be a special guest of the festival.**

Smita Patil is one of the most fascinating and tragic figures of the Indian cinema. She died in 1986, when giving birth to a child. She was only 31. It was a true mockery of fate. For Smita Patil spent her entire life fighting actively for equal rights of Indian men and women and her film characters reflected the struggle to bring down the existing stereotypes. The retrospective of her films prepared in cooperation with the Embassy of India becomes an inherent part of the “rebellious” vein of the programme of the IFF Tofifest – this festival is created and managed by a woman, which has its significance.

Patil was an icon of the ambitious Indian cinema and a true star of the Indian New Wave. She never played in any lachrymatory “Bollywood” films. The films she starred in were all focused on problems of women. She was a feminist, who was deeply involved in the issue of women’s rights in the traditional Indian society. Her unique talent was honoured with the Indian equivalent of the Oscar – **Filmfare Award** and two times with the Indian Film Award. She was also awarded the Padma Shri award by the federal government of India. In 2011, Smita Patil was described as the second most renowned Indian actress of all time, in one of Indian websites.

Together with Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah and Om Puri, she was part of the most influential cinema quartet of the New Wave, i.e. the period in which Indian cinematography was developing artistically. Indian traditionalists responded very negatively to her film characters, as they were unable to recognise any emancipation of women. In the famous **Umbartha** (1982) by Jabbar Patel’s Marathi she portrayed a guardian in a women’s prison, who found the courage to abandon an unfaithful husband, who indulged himself with prostitutes. Her performance in **Mirch Masala** by Ketan Mehta (1985) was one of the most memorable feminist characters – she played a woman living in a very small village, who was harassed by aggressive soldiers and had to fight for her dignity.

Such characters may not be seen as profoundly “revolutionary”, when looking from the European perspective. One must bear in mind though that Patil lived in a country, which was listed as the fourth country in the world that couldn’t guarantee safety and security for women. It is also a country in which approximately 12 million girls have been aborted in the last 30 years (according to a report by the Thomson Reuters Foundation), resulting in the situation that India is under-populated with women, by more than 30 million. And last but not least, it is also a country where traditionalists do not see women as worthy of any rights.

Smita Patil worked temporarily as a TV announcer, before entering the cinema industry. Her very first film appearance was a role in **Manthan** by Shyam Benegal, an Indian candidate for Oscar, which brought Patil immediate recognition of film critics. She gave an outstanding performance in **Bhavni Bhavai** by Ketan Mehta and the position of a versatile actress was consolidated by the role in **Bhumika** (The Role) by Shyam Benegal, for which she received the National Film Award. As Elliot Stein, a famous American film critic, once put it: *“Smita was the queen of the Indian New Wave, same as Anna Karina is an icon among European directors. Patil was not a classic beauty, but a lady that attracted attention. Her film characters were never false.”*

**The official opening of the Smita Patil’s retrospective** will take place on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012, at the Tofifest Festival Centre in Baj Pomorski Theatre, at ul. Piernikarska 3, in Torun.

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Interesting links:

[http://www.feminoteka.pl/readarticle.php?article\\_id=1067](http://www.feminoteka.pl/readarticle.php?article_id=1067)  
<http://www.psz.pl/tekst-17916/Kobieta-w-Indiach-kulturowy-wizerunek-tradycyjne-role-spoeczne-i-ich-wspolczesne-konsekwencje>  
<http://czytatnik.wordpress.com/2012/05/12/byc-kobieta-w-indiach-czesc-1/>

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The **10<sup>th</sup> IFF Tofifest** festival will take place in Torun, from **20<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> October 2012**.

Information about Tofifest: [www.tofifest.pl](http://www.tofifest.pl)

Tofi on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/tofifest>

You will find information about Torun at [www.torun.pl](http://www.torun.pl) or [www.visittorun.pl](http://www.visittorun.pl)

Send us a return email message, if you do not want to receive Tofifest Newsletter in your mailbox.

### **Our friends:**

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