

## Press Kit

### EKAMATH EKA RATEKA

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*Once Upon a Time*

A faceless fantasy  
dipped in scheming life  
journeying across endless time  
in search of a silver screen  
to unfold the story of one woman and two men.  
Based on Emile Zola's short story  
***Pour une nuit d'amour***  
***(For A Night Of Love)***  
tucked away somewhere, sometime  
with an undefined destiny.  
An extra-ordinary take ; of an ordinary life !

**A film by Sanath Gunatilake**  
**Produced by Janaka Ramanayake**

EKAMATH EKA RATEKA

# శుభలత శుభ రుద్రా... *Once Upon a Time*

## **Synopsis :**

The film EKAMATH EKA RATEKA (*Once Upon a Time*) is based on the story *Pour une nuit d'amour* written by the French novelist Emile Zola (1840-1904).

The young ravishing girl from an elite family whose strong character and headstrong behaviour make her parents unhappy. They send her abroad to complete her studies hoping that it would change their daughter's strange behaviour for the better. The young girl and the nanny's son who becomes a lawyer later on with the help of the noble family, build a strong friendship from childhood. The parents are trying to find a suitable partner to their young daughter who has come back after completing her studies. The young girl and nanny's son are falling in love. The nanny's encouragement and the blessings strengthen the young couple's love. Meanwhile the young girl falls in love with the music played by a hideous looking middle aged man who lives in the neighborhood. Her passion for the music leads her to a magnificently melodramatic climax as this man imagines that this young girl loves him and his entire existence builds around the young girl's love. As a result of this misunderstanding, the young couple confront with many difficulties. But one day the young girl beckons the hideous man to help her to dispose her lover's dead body.

EKAMATH EKA RATEKA

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## Once Upon a Time

### Biography and Filmography of the Director Ekamath Eka Rateka

#### SANATH GUNATILAKE

Sanath Gunatilake born in the hill capital, Kandy, in Sri Lanka on October 27, 1955. He studied at Kingswood College in Kandy. After studies he became a tutor specializing in Science subjects, especially in Chemistry. Sanath who could not be confined to his parents ambition to become a doctor, venture unto the motion picture business. His life changed. He turned a new page in his life as well as in the Sri Lankan film industry in 1978. He made his debut as an actor with a well known director, Vijaya Dharmasiri's *Situ Kumariyo*. He has performed in 150 films upto today. *Sisila Gini Ganee* is his maiden production and scriptwriting. After 30 years of his cinematic life *Ekamath Eka Rateka* (Once Upon A Time) is his maiden direction which is based on French novelist Emile Zola's *Pour une nuit d'amour*.

#### Successful Acting Career

The turning point in the life of Sanath as an ambitious actor became realistic when he portrayed the character in the film *Ganga Addara* directed by **Mrs. Sumithra Peries**, who is the wife of globally renowned film maker **Lester James Peries**. The success of this movie took Sanath to great heights as an actor. His brilliant performance in an array of leading roles in movies such as *Viragaya*, *Kedapathaka Chaya*, *Palama Yata*, *Sisila Gini Ganie*, *Dorakada Marawa*, *Rajaya Sevaya Pinisai*, *Sudu Kaluwara* , *Sakman Maluwa* gave him the Best Actor Award at many film festivals held in Sri Lanka.

Sanath is someone who is very ambitious and keen on studying local and international cinema. He used to take part in local and international film festivals, film forums, workshops from the the start of his career. He discovered, gained knowledge and experience, and also learnt by discussing with celebrities, actors, critics whom he met during the International Film Festivals. In 1982, He was lucky to meet to **Omar Sherif** who was the chief guest of the Cairo International Film Festival.

As a result of these meetings, discussions, participations helped him to play successfully the role of Aravinda of *Viragaya* directed by Tissa Abeysekera, which was a challenging role and which can be considered as a landmark in his acting career. In 1982, Sanath met **Sir Richard**

**Attenborough**, director of the biographical film *Gandhi* at the Manila Film Festival and got a great opportunity to discuss and to discover how Mr. Attenborough prepared methodically and scientifically **Ben Kingsley** to play the role of Gandhi.

Sanath attended to all the workshops, seminars, press conferences initiated by Sir Richard Attenborough. He immersed more into the role by studying the script very carefully and understanding the role. His excellent performances, commitment to this role provided an ideal opportunity to display his versatility as an actor and the vitality of his performances and he was often praised by national and international critics, producers, directors: Dr. Lester James Peries, the master of the Sri Lankan film industry states that *Sanath is to be complemented on giving us so adventurous and accomplished films.*

**Mr. Tadao Sato, Director** of Fukuoka International Film Festival writes that *the performance by Sanath Gunatilake who acted as Aravinda is really wonderful, although he is still a young person. He acts in the last part of the story in an actual condition of reduced weight, hollowed eyes and thinned hair which he purposely gained after 5 months effort of reducing his weight with the instruction of a medical doctor. This earnest disposition of Mr. Gunatilake to his own character gave his acting much solemnity.*

According to Sanath, **Mr. Chidananda Dasgupta** who is an eminent Indian film critic and **Miss Arunawasudevi** who gave the best comment on his role Aravinda. He has met them during the Hawaii International Film Festival

**Donald Richie** is an American born author who has written a number of books about Japanese cinema commented on his role “Willie” in *Palama Yata* (Under the Bridge) directed by HD Premarathne: *I’m impressed by an actor brave enough to play against type and to sacrifice surface attractiveness for inner strength, and further states that this ability is a mark of a true actor.*

Mr. Tadao Sato, director of the Fukuoka International Film Festival writes that *Sanath Gunatilake, who acted as Aravinda the incarnation of non variciousness in Buddhist sense, also vividly performed a role of a rouge in the slums in the film “Palama Yata”. His ability to play such a variety of roles is really amazing.*

During his 30 years cinematic career, he has associated and shared his experience with globally well known celebrities in the cinematic world: **Robert De Niro, Robert Duwal, Christian Slater, Amithab Bachan, Kabir Beedie, Sunil Datt, Shyam Benegal, Shaji Karon.** Sanath mentions that the landmark meeting with **Bernardo Bertolucci** who is the director of the film *Last Tango in Paris* would remain the most memorable moment in his memory.

### **Sanath as an award winning producer**

Having played a multitude of roles under various Directors, Producers, he has established a successful cinematic career. Sanath moved on to take up the challenge the elements of script writing and film production: *Sisila Gini Gani* is his first movie scripted and produced by Sanath Gunatilake, was directed by well known award winning Prassana Vithanage and released on 17th of January 1991. His dedication and commitment was the great success of his first production won him the Best Producer Award at the Swarna Sanka Film Festival which is also significant that this award has not been yet received by any another actor in Sri Lanka. His maiden production *Sisila Gini Gani* won several awards such as Best Film, Best Direction, Best Actress, Best Actor during the film festivals held in 1992. The main roles were performed by Sanath Gunatilake, Sabeetha Perera, Tony Ranasinghe,

Veena Jayakody, Jayalath Manorathne, Chandani Senevirathne. The music direction by Dr. Premasiri Khemadasa, camera by Suminda Weerasinghe, art direction by Roby Neris, make up by Ebert Wijesinghe, edited by Elmo Haliday and Nilendra Deshapriya was the First Assistant director of *Sisila Gini Gani*. *Sisila Gini Gani* revolves around an lawyer who is married and a father of a mentally retarded son. He starts a clandestine love affair with a lady called Anette. Their love leads to the murder of his son.

### **First Time Director – “Ekamath Eka Rateka”**

After 30 years of his cinematic life as a veteran actor, producer, Sanath Gunatilake has turned director. His maiden cinematic venture *Ekamath Eka Rateka* (Once Upon A Time) is based on *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour*, a short story written by French novelist Emile Zola. The story scripted by Sanath Gunatilake revolves around a young girl and two men. One is a young, handsome while the other is ugly, deformed and innocent. Nirosha Perera, Sanath Gunatilake, Roshan Ravindra, Chandani Senevirathna and others play the key roles. Maestro Premasiri Khemadasa has composed the music.

Added to all this, his charm and attraction as an actor and his dedication and commitment to what he does is enhanced by what the former President of Sri Lanka, HE Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumarathunga to whom he worked as Media Consultant had to say : *Mr. Gunatilake possesses a rare combination of talents as an excellent cinema actor and also an effective manager of the various responsibilities he has undertaken, together with the even rarer quality of unquestionable honesty and integrity.*

## **Filmography**

### ***Director***

2008 *Ekamath Eka Rateka* (Once Upon a time)

### **Scriptwriter :**

2006-7 *Ekamath Eka Rateka* (Once upon a time)

1989 *Sisila Gini Gane* (Ice on Fire)

### **Producer :**

1989 – 90 *Sisila Gini Gane* (Ice on Fire)

1991- 92 *Sasara Sarisaranathek* (1991-92)

### **Co-Producer**

1982 *Charitha rangalee*

2008 *Ekamath Eka Rateka*

2009 *Kawulu Dora* (to be released)

### ***Awards and Honours***

#### **“Sarasaviya” Awards**

2003 Best Actor *Sakman Maluwa*

1990 Best Actor *Palama yata*

1989 Best supporting actor *Kadapathaka Chaya*

1989 Popular Actor

1987 Best actor *Viragaya*

1985 Merit Award *Maya*

### **OCIC Awards**

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 2003 | Best Actor <i>Sakaman Maluwa</i>        |
| 2003 | Best Actor <i>Sudu Kaluwara</i>         |
| 2000 | Best Actor <i>Rajaya Sevaya Pinisai</i> |
| 1998 | Best Actor <i>Dorakada Marawa</i>       |
| 1992 | Best Actor <i>Sisila Gini Ganee</i>     |
| 1990 | Best Actor <i>Palama Yata</i>           |
| 1989 | Best Actor <i>Kadapathaka Chaya</i>     |
| 1987 | Best Actor <i>Viragaya</i>              |

### **Swarna Sanka Awards**

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 1989 | Best supporting actor <i>Kadapathaka Chaya</i>   |
| 1987 | Best actor <i>Viragaya</i>                       |
| 1990 | Best actor <i>Palama Yata</i>                    |
| 1992 | Best Producer Award for <i>Sisila Gini Ganee</i> |

### **Presidential Awards**

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 2003 | Best Actor <i>Sakman Maluwa</i>                          |
| 2000 | Creative Performance <i>Rajaya Sevaya Pinisai</i>        |
| 2005 | Presidential Honorary Award for the field of Arts        |
| 1983 | Top 10 Award for Most Outstanding Young Man (for cinema) |

### **Workshops attended :**

- 2008 March (10 – 13) Workshop on film criticism organized by Embassy of France and conducted by Jean-Philippe Tessé
- 2004 - 5 days workshop on film appreciation organized by American Centre
- 1998 & 2000 Film Appreciation course organized by National Film Corporation and conducted by Pune Film Institute in India

### **Participation in International Film Festivals:**

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 2004 | Fukoka International Film Festival <i>Sakman Maluwa</i>  |
| 2004 | Malaysian Film Festival <i>Sakman Maluwa</i>   |
| 1999 | Cairo International film festival 1999 film as lead actor <i>Duwata Mawaka Misa</i> directed by <i>Sumithra Peiris</i> |
| 1999 | London Film Festival <i>Duwata Mawaka Misa</i>   |
| 1997 | London Film Festival <i>Dorakada Marawa</i>  |
| 1994 | Fukokoka Film Festival <i>Viragaya</i> (way of the lotus), <i>Palama Yata</i> (under the bridge), <i>Kaliugaya</i> ,   |
| 1982 | Manila Film Festival film <i>Deveni Gamana</i>   |
| 1988 | London Film Festival <i>Viragaya</i>   |
| 1987 | Moscow International Film Festival <i>Viragaya</i>   |
| 1987 | Hawaii International Film festival <i>Viragaya</i>   |
| 1982 | Cairo International Film Festival <i>Deveni Gamana</i>   |

**Other :**

- 2007 Member of the Selection committee of the Maldives Film Festival  
2005 Chief Guest - Nepal Film Festival

**Professional Experience**

- 1995 – 2000 Media Consultant to the former President in Sri Lanka HE  
Chandrika Bandaranayake Kumarathunge*
- 2001 *Chairman, Sri Lanka Rupavahini Coporation*
- 1985 –1989 Media Consultant for late Minister Gamini Dissanayake, Minister of Mahaveli  
Development
- 1993 *Cultural Committee Advisor*
- 1993 Western Province Council member Cultural committee advisor
- 1992 Member of National Film Corporation Film Advisory Committee
- 2009 Member of National Film Corporation Film Advisory Committee

Ekamath Eka Rateka

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*Once Upon a Time*

### **Director's note – About the Film**

*“This story would have happened or could happen at any place, in any country, at anytime to any human being. The human mind is inconsistent and ephemeral, nothing is enduring or permanent which is the reality of this story.”*

**Sanath Gunatilake, Director**

#### **Why I selected a short story of Emile Zola?**

The film *Once upon a time* is based on the short story *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour* written by Emile Zola (1840-1902), a French novelist, critic and political activist who was the most prominent French novelist of the late 19th century.

I have chosen this short story, not merely because it was written by a great writer, known for his masterpieces like *Germinal*, *Nana*, *The Beast in Man*, *Drunkard*, but because of the universal nature of the theme behind in this story : I think this same story or a similar story could take place or could have taken place at any time anywhere in the world.

This story transcends space and time because there is something common to the nature of all human beings living in this world.

I feel that the human nature represented in this work symbolizes those characteristics that are commonly accepted as human weaknesses or human qualities. In other words, I believe that this story constitutes a true reflection of humanity. Emile Zola's very realistic approach to the philosophy of life inspired me to bring this story to the screen.

I was also impressed by Emile Zola's strong personality and his genuine belief that truth will eventually triumph. This led me to make this cinematic adaptation of one of his powerful narratives : the famous essay he wrote in 1898 - *I accuse!* is an illustration of his frankness. His criticism of the Government the forces, the officers and the clergy resulted in Zola gaining recognition as a major figure in the political liberalization of France. This article unraveled the profound corruption that lay at the very core of French political and military life. He proved in this article that one day the truth will come out. Zola died in 1902. Nevertheless, it was not until around 1950 that the real value and complexity of Zola's literary work began to be appreciated. This fact also made a great impact in my mind.

## **The nature of the characters and the teachings of Buddha:**

Through his characters Zola explores the ways in which social and individual reality can be most appropriately and most accurately represented and those are very ordinary characters depicted from real life.

My first attempt was to transform the characters of his story into holistic individuals. The character of these individuals is primarily influenced by them being mortals and not as a result of their background, their ethnic origins or religion.

Throughout this story, I have aimed at portraying the true essence of humaneness reflected through the different characteristics in individuals, such nobility, callousness and other flaws and strengths. The virtues and remorse of a person and their influence on humanity are brought out and enhanced through the narration of *Once Upon A Time*.

She was wealthy, came from an aristocratic family and spent her childhood seeking satisfaction by being nasty to the maid's son who was of the same age. Her father decides to send her away so that she obtained a good education, and learned morals and values as well. Meanwhile, the maid's son finishes his education and, despite all the hardships that he faces, becomes a lawyer. The young lady also completes her education by this time and returns home. The young lawyer makes a deliberate attempt to get closer to the young girl who had once treated him like a slave. Why? Could it be her beauty? Or her greed for power? Or to maintain his link with a rich, aristocratic family? Could it be part of the struggle to get back the male ego she had shattered during their childhood?

She gets closer to him willingly. Would her reasons be to gain some satisfaction by hurting him like she had done in the past? Who is the ugly, innocent stranger coming in between them? According to the law of the society one can be considered him as a "good" and "polite" person?. Is he also someone who satisfies himself by admiring beautiful objects as he has realized his ugliness? Does he understand his own self and his status as a repulsive human? Or is there a demon which lies in him in disguise? Isn't it evident that he also possesses human characteristics such as self esteem, self advancement? Doesn't he shed his veneer of innocence, goodness and politeness when he seeks to fulfill these ambitions which are part of human nature?

Who suffers ultimately? Is it the dead or the living? Or is it the human beings living in this world struggling to give life to the dead?

A man leading a lonely, innocent life according to certain principles and policies could become an opportunist when a more powerful man in misery kneels in front of him asking for help. He would be led to betray his own principles despite all, his weaknesses to gain a personal advantage.

One becomes the victim of another's discretion willingly or unwillingly in a similar way. Once faced by its cruel reality one lets go of one's own pride thus transforming his or her life. Men and women betray their own principles and go ahead with no hesitation to seek help

from people who they may have once rejected. It is all an attempt to gain advantage and have things on their stride. Such men and women are not rare in this world.

The nature of human feelings and needs are diverse. It is not something that can be easily predicted by anyone. It is rather strange and surprising the way Emile Zola has understood the multiple human feelings which are free from all barriers be it cast, creed or power.

The behavior of the human characters in this film reminds me of the teachings of the Buddha. The human mind cannot keep still; it wanders all the time and more so in the case of those affected by uncontrollable passion. The characters behave in accordance with the impulses and drives of human nature. According to the Buddha's preaching, every conditioned existence is inconstant and in flux. I saw that Zola's *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour* embodies the Buddha's doctrine of impermanence.

With reference to the "Kusa Jataka", a tale taken from "Pansiya Panas Jathaka Potha" (The book of Five hundred birth stories of Buddha) which relates the relationship between an ugly King Kusa and a pretty Queen named Pabavathi, King "Kusa" refuses to wed Pabavathi as he is conscious of his ugliness. The behavior of this ugly prince is similar to Julien's character in *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour*. In the meantime, I ask myself the question as to whether Emile Zola's personal life influenced him in this story.

### **Cinema, an autobiographical act**

The Francophone and the experts in French Language and Literature may not however agree with my point of view. I will not oppose them if they say that the message or the meaning behind this story interpreted by Zola is a different one (They may argue that I haven't understood it). It's important to state here that the way I have interpreted the story or the way I have decoded the message depends on my personal view as an Asian or a Sri Lankan. It's up to you to accept it or not.

In brief, François Truffaut, one of the major figures in the French Film industry, one of the founders of the French New Wave, who won the award for *400 BLOWS* at the Cannes Film Festival, in 1959, declared that film making and writing is profoundly personal: "*Tomorrow's film appears to me as even more personal than an individual and autobiographical novel, like a confession or a diary*". I fully agree with his statement and would also say the same thing about my own autobiographical work. My film *Once Upon a Time* is freely adapted from Zola's *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour*. The word "free" is appropriate insofar as it is an accepted truth that a short story or a novel is one media and the motion picture is another. My sole effort is to point out that the story is not limited to French literature but embodies an eternal truth.

My research into the life of Emile Zola, revealed that he had met Jeanne Rozerot, a girl of twenty who was a linen keeper at his home, in 1888 when Zola was going through a period of utter discouragement. From that time he started to live a double life caught between his wife and this young girl. I could not keep this fact out of my script. So, being greatly influenced by Emile Zola's personal life, I included a beauty who earns her living by ironing clothes.

I never think of Emile Zola as an innocent. I see him as a man with a certain sense of pride and a significant egoistic self. I picture Zola as a man who listened to others but gave priority to his own opinion. I hold the view that the good qualities of the disabled person in the film

combine with Zola's own self. The outward appearance of a man named "Boniface" who played the mouth organ in my home town, Kandy gave me the instinct to create the main character of my film. But there was no ego in him. He was an innocent man who believed in God and opened himself to God.

Emile Zola, in his novels proves very effectively an everlasting truth. Although the characters are all hypothetical, I feel that there are people with natural human values with characters full of life. I don't see these characters as spontaneous or impulsive. I feel this story which can occur or which could be occurred in somewhere at anytime in this universe. This is my heartfelt struggle to awaken your souls to the everlasting faces of change and uncertainty by showing you the sentiment, the behavior, the desires and feelings of the woman and two men in this story. Although this is a film made in Sri Lanka, when taking the story into closer consideration, it becomes evident that this type of a scenario could take place anywhere in the world. The picture language depicted by the scenes in this film can be openly understood by anyone, regardless of the language in use, be it native or alien.

But this film would hold an extra importance in countries and states where the official language is French because it is based on a short story written by a famous French writer. Even though the original story took place in France, their curiosity will be raised as it appears in a third world country because of the "universality" of its theme.

We leave it to all of you who are truly interested and admire Sri Lanka and its natural location to make this film a stepping stone to bring together France and Sri Lanka in a mutually enriching experience, with interesting future prospects.

# ಕೆಲವು ಕಥೆಗಳು.. *Once Upon a Time*

## **Emile Zola - (1902-1940)**

Emile Zola was an influential French novelist and a leading figure of French literary naturalism. His novels were attacked and even banned for their frankness and sordid detail, and caused quite a bit of controversy in their day.

Zola was born on 2nd April 1840 in Paris. He was the only child of an Italian engineer who died when Zola was 7 years old. Paul Cezanne and Baptisian Baille were his friends and schoolmates at the college Bourbon in Aix-en Provence. In 1858 Zola returned to Paris. Zola spent a very poor, sad, difficult time in Paris.

Before his breakthrough as a writer, Zola worked as a clerk in a shipping firm, and then in the sales department for a publisher (Hachette). He also wrote literary and art reviews for newspapers. As a political journalist, Zola did not hide his dislike of Napoleon III, who had successfully run for the office of President under the constitution of the French Second Republic only to misuse this position as a springboard for the Coup d'Etat that made him emperor.

In 1864, he published *Contes à Ninon* which could have been inspired by Alfred Musset as he was a great admirer of him. In November 1865, he published *La Confession de Claude*.

Zola's main literary work was *Les Rougon-Macquart*, a monumental cycle of twenty novels about Parisian society during the Franco-Prussian War. The novel is partly an origin story, with a huge cast of characters swarming around - many of whom become the central figures of later novels in the series - and partly an account of the December 1851 coup d'état which created the French Second Empire under Napoleon III as experienced in a large provincial town in Southern France.

He married to Alexandrine Meley in 1870.

*La Fortune de Rougon, La Curée, Le ventre de Paris, La Conquête de Plassans, La Faute de l'abbé Mouret et Son Excellence Eugène Rougon* were published during 1871 and 1876.

Zola and the painter Paul Cezanne were friends from childhood and in youth but broke in later life. Zola's fictionalized depiction of Cézanne and the bohemian life of painters in his novel *L'Oeuvre* (The Masterpiece) published in 1886.

*L'Assommoir* (Drunkard) published in 1877, is the seventh novel in Émile Zola's twenty-volume series *Les Rougon-Macquart*, usually considered one of Zola's masterpieces, the novel—a harsh and uncompromising study of alcoholism and poverty in the working-class districts of Paris—was a huge commercial success and established Zola's fame and reputation throughout France and the world. Zola undertook a huge amount of research into the language of the street for his most realistic novel to date, using a large number of obscure contemporary slang words and curses to capture an authentic atmosphere. His shocking descriptions of conditions in working-class 19th Century Paris drew widespread admiration for their realism, then as now, and the novel remains one of the most powerful in the French language. It was taken up by temperance workers across the world as a tract against the dangers of alcoholism, though Zola always insisted there was considerably more to his novel than that. The novelist also drew criticism from some quarters for the depth of his reporting, either for being too coarse and vulgar or for portraying working-class people as shiftless drunkards. Zola rejected

both these criticisms out of hand; his response was simply that he had presented a true picture of real life.

In 1878 he published *Une Page d'Amour* and *Nana* in 1879. *Nana* represents the underclasses, a prostitute and "devourer of men" who rises among the Parisian elite as a destructive and wholly powerful figure who disrupts conventions and comes to represent the downfall of the Second French Empire.

Emile Zola published five new novels between 1882 and 1884 : *Pot Bouille*, *La Capitaine*, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, *La joie du vivre*, *Nais Micoulin*. Then *Germinal* in 1885. Zola himself descended mineshafts in his methodically intense approach to writing *Germinal* (1885). Set in the 1860s it deals with the struggle of the proletariat and the inhumane working conditions of striking coal miners in Northern France and inspired numerous film and television adaptations. Although *Germinal* was written in the mid-1880's, its main action takes place in the mid-1860's. References within the text to the Mexican war and to the cholera epidemic make it possible to date the incidents which take place in the novel fairly precisely to the years 1866 to 1867.

In 1888, when Zola was 49 years old, he had met Jeanne Rozerrot, a girl of twenty as mistress who was the linen-keeper at his house. Jeanne Rozerrot, setting her up in a flat near his own and played a double life. Through her, he knew the joy of the paternity and spiritual regeneration through human love of which he had always dreamed. Zola had two children with Jeanne, which he couldn't never had with his wife, Alexandrine.

Zola published his last masterpiece *La Bête humaine* (The Beast in Man) and finished his *Rougon Cycle* which he had started in 1871. *La Bête Humaine* is based around the railway between Paris and le Havre in the 19th century and is a tense, psychological thriller. *The Cycle of Trois villes* was published between 1894 and 1898 and the Cycle of *Quatre Evangiles* between 1899 and 1903.

Zola risked his career and even his life on January 13, 1898 when his *J'accuse* (I accuse) was published on the front page of the Paris daily « L'Aurore ». *J'accuse* accused the French Government of anti-semitic and of wrongfully placing Alfred Dreyfus in jail. Zola's was leading light of France and his letter formed a major turning point in the Dreyfus affair, causing the captain's case to be reopened, where upon he was acquitted. Rather than go to the jail, Zola fled to England. After 11 months of exile, when he returned to Paris, he got to know that Dreyfus was completely exonerated by the Supreme Court.

Zola died in Paris on September 29, 1902 of Carbon monoxide poisoning caused by a stopped chimney. He was initially buried in the Cimétière de Montmartre in Paris but on June 4, 1908 almost after six years of his death his remains were moved to the Panthéon.

Zola was the founder of the Naturalist Movement in the 19th century literature. His medicinal approach in scrupulous description of the lives of ordinary people was based on the contemporary theory of hereditary determinism which he used to demonstrate factors influence human behavior. His most notable novels : *L'Assomoir*, *Nana*, and *Germinal* displayed Zola's concern of both scientific and artistic nature as well as his stances on the social reform. The fundamental naturalist doctrine is presented in Zola's 1880 essay "Le roman expérimental" (meaning the experimental—or experiential—novel). In it, Zola claims that the naturalist writer should subject believable characters and events to experimental conditions. In other words, take the known (such as a character) and introduce it into the unknown (such as an unfamiliar place). Another major principle of Naturalism that Zola explains in this essay is the idea of determinism, which is the theory that a person's fate is determined solely by heredity and environment.

# Story to Screen

## Ekamath Eka Rateka

### ಸಹಸ್ರ ಸಹ ರೋದ... *Once Upon a Time*

The most of the novels, short stories written by Emile Zola have been adapted to films, TV series. One could tell that he has been one of the most adapted authors in world literature. Since the beginning of the cinema, more than 70 films have been adapted from the works of Emile Zola.

Many of these occurred during the silent era of International film production (1895–1927). While the aesthetic elements of Zola's fiction continue to appeal to international cinema, the author's thematic naturalism and his "scientific methodology" have provided an ideological framework that incorporates art, science and history into the many cinematic adaptations of his work ( Reference: Zola and Film : *Essays in the Art of Adaptation* by Anna Gural-Migdal) *Germinal, L'Assommoir, La Terre, Nana, La Bête humaine, Au Bonheur des Dames, Thérèse Raquin, Gervaise and Pot-Bouille, Une page d'Amour, Pour Une Nuit d'Amour* are some of his books adapted to cinema. Most of Zola's important novels and many minor ones have gone one, two and even more times before the camera.

With reference to the article *Zola et le cinema* (Zola and the cinema) written by Russell Cousins at University of Birmingham and published on the website <http://www.institut-francais.org.uk/zola/cinema.htm>) *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour* have been adapted to cinema by August Blom (Denmark's most prolific directors of the silent area) in 1913 and by Luigi Maggi (an Italian director) in 1914. I couldn't find any information on this film directed by these two directors (It is important to mention that these information was found only on this website). After these two films another 3 films based on this story, have been done by another three directors, as follows:

|      |                              |   |
|------|------------------------------|---|
| 1921 | <i>Pour Une Nuit d'Amour</i> | by Yakov Protozanof (Silent, Black & White) |
| 1946 | <i>Pour Une Nuit d'Amour</i> | by Edmond T. Greville (Black & White)       |
| 1988 | <i>Manifesto</i>             | by Dusan Makavejev (Cloured)                |

**Yakov Protazanov** (Protovanaf) is a Soviet filmmaker (born on 1881) best known for his lavishing historical epics and for adapting literature to the screen. The main roles were played by Edmond van Daele, Christian Delval, Blanche Ross, Rene Hieronimus, Jules de Spoly directed by Protazanov in 1921. It was a Silent movie , Nicolas Toporkoff was the director of Photography.

**Edmond Thonger Gréville** was born in France on 20 June 1906. Initially he worked in France as a film journalist and critic. His film *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour* has directed in 1946. Dialogues by Jean Josipovic and Marc-Gilbert Sauvajon. Jacques Lemare is the director of Photography. Odette Joyeux, Roger Blin, Jacques Castelot, André Alerme and others have played the key roles.

**Dusan Makavejev** is a Yugoslavian film director born on 13 October 1932. This inventive adaptation of a story of Emile Zola (*Pour Une Nuit d'Amour*) was originally titled *Manifesto* which was a USA/Yugoslavia co-production, starring Alfred Molina, Eric Stoltz, Gabrielle Anwar and Camilla Soeberg.

*France 2* (the largest French public television network) has selected 8 short stories written by French writers such as Balzac, Victor Hugo, Emile Zola to prepare 8 television movies of 60 minutes. *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour* has been also selected by France 2. The filming of this television movie directed by Gérard Jourd'hui will take place from 5 to 22 January 2009. Thierry Frémont will play the key role.

After considering all the facts related to the films and Television movies directed by various directors, we can summarize as follows:

|      |                              |  |
|------|------------------------------|--|
| 1913 | <i>Pour Une Nuit d'Amour</i> | by August Blom                         |
| 1914 | <i>Pour Une Nuit d'Amour</i> | by Luigi Maggi                         |
| 1921 | <i>Pour Une Nuit d'Amour</i> | by Yakov Protozanof                    |
| 1946 | <i>Pour Une Nuit d'Amour</i> | by Edmond T. Greville                  |
| 1988 | <i>Manifesto</i>             | by Dusan Makavejev                     |
| 2008 | <i>Once Upon A time</i>      | by Sanath Gunatilake                   |
| 2008 | <i>Pour Une Nuit d'Amour</i> | by Gérard Jourd'hui – Television movie |

**Movie Updates**  
EKAMATH EKA RATEKA

**එකමර එක රටෙක...**  
*Once Upon a Time*

**International Premier at Cairo International Film Festival**

Sanath Gunatilake left the country today morning to Egypt with his maiden direction, EKAMATH EKA RATEKA to take part in the selection Festival of Festivals at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Cairo International Film Festival which will held from 10 to 20 November.

The Cairo International Film Festival is classified as a category “A” festival as recognized by the FIAPF, it is undoubtedly the oldest and most important festival in the Middle East. This year the Cairo International Film Festival will acknowledge its honoured tradition and welcome the new generation of brilliant filmmakers from India by honouring Indian Cinema.

Sanath Gunatilake has already attend to the Cairo International film festival with the film *Devini Gamana* ( 1982) directed by late HD Premarathna. During his first visit to Cairo he met Omar Sherif who was the chief guest of the Cairo International Film Festival. Sanath's second participation in Cairo marks in 1999 with the film *Duwata Mawaka Misa*. Sanath says that its is a coincidence that the Cairo International Film Festival is the first international film festival that he participated as an actor and today as a director also this is the first film festival which he is attending. Daily News is waiting for his arrival to share his novel experience at the film festival as an director.

**Special screenings**

The film was screened will be screened from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2009 at Lido cinema, Borella at 7PM as there were many request from the viewers.

The film was also screened in Katunayake Airforce as a tribute to the war heroes who made Sri Lanka's dream of liberating the country from the clutches of terrorism a reality after eliminating terrorism from the soil of Sri Lanka. A large number of pilots participated and films has received a good feedback.

**Launch of the screenplay of the film**

Veteran actor Sanath Gunatilake launched the screenplay of his maiden direction EKAMATH EKA RATEKA (Once upon a time) on September 19 to coincide with the International Book Fair and Exhibition at BMICH. The script penned by Sanath Gunatilake is a Sarasaviya publication and this is his second screenplay. The film is now showing in cinemas closer to the village and it marked 100 days recently.

### **Seminars on Film**

A seminar organised by the Association Sri Lankaise des Anciens Etudiants en France on the movie, Ekamath Eka Rateka was held at the Mahaweli Center Auditorium on August 25 at 3.30 PM. Vice Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya Professor Sarath Amunugama chaired the discussion . Professor Chandrasiri Palliyaguru and Professor Kusuma Karunathna addressed the audience.

Another seminar initiated by Dr. Aruna Munasinghe was organised on 9<sup>th</sup> of September in Matara. Doctors, lawyers were also among the audience. Another seminar is to be held in Badarawela. Sanath Gunatilake says that he participates all these seminars at his level best because it will be an good encouragement to a debut , blooming directors in the film industry and hope it will continue from generation to generation.

### **Marking the 75th day**

A simple ceremony was held at Regal cinema Colombo last Thursday to mark the 75th day of Sanath Gunathilaka's maiden directorial venture 'Ekamath Eka Rateka'.

### **Special screening with French subtitles**

A special screening of the film EKAMATH EKA RATEKA with French subtitles which was held on the 9th of July 2009 at National Film Corporation The Guest of the honor of the event was HE Michel Lummaux , Ambassador of France to Sri Lanka and Prof. Osmund Boperachchi, Prof. Sarath Amunugama, Mr. Hervé Mascarau, Mr. Bertrand Dufieux and many others attended to this event.

### **The Premier Show**

The premier was held on the 4th of June 2009 at Regal Cinema Hall at 5.30 PM. Mrs. Sumithra Peiris, Mr. DB Nihalsinghe, Mr. Jayantha Dharmadasa (Chairman of NFC) and Tony Ranasinghe were the chief guests.

### **Press conference**

A press conference was held in 14th of May at Rajagiriya. A press show will take place on 18th of May at National Film Cooperation.

### **Post-production**

The post production was done in India. I am grateful to Mr. KR Subramaniam of Prasad Lab for his support. Besides, I would like to Shivaral, Ponniah, Sarathi, Hashim, Sarath Kumar / Jothi of the lab and also to Ms Geeta Gurappa, the senior Audio Engineer at Real Image Sound Studio in Chennai who was in charge of the sound aspects of the film. Its also to pleasure to thank Ranjith Nayar and Michel of Real Image.

### **2008**

## **Launch of the website**

The website of the film EKAMATH EKA RATEKA was officially launched on the 4th of December 2008 at Alliance Française de Colombo. The chief guest of the this event was HE Michel Lummaux, Ambassador of France in Sri Lanka. The director of Alliance Française Mr. Bertrand Dufieux, veteran filmmaker, writer, critic Mr. Tissa Abeysekera, were among the distinguished guests.

## **Release date of the film**

Though I was not in a hurry to push myself to get an early date to screen the film, when a photo of the film was published in the Kodak Magazine, I determined that I should release my film in 2009.

## **Music composing**

Maestro Khemadasa gave his fullest support to compose the music. I strongly feel that he was the only person who understood this film perfectly. With his advice, we recorded the fluatist music before filming. It was a rare occasion. His advice, his explanations were a great encouragement for me as debut in this career. The background music gave a special meaning to the characters. As he was not well, things got delayed to get the music for the trailer. After he returned from the hospital, he did his part with great enthusiasm. Even though the media was keen to know his opinion on the music compsoion of the film it was prevailed by his illness. I regret and feel unfortunat that he is not alive to see the final outcome of the film.

**2007**

## **Commencement of Direction**

In 2007, I started to work on the film with the help of my friend, Janaka Ramanayake. Through out the year, I took a great effort to finish the production part of my film. It would be nice to mention about the pre preparation of this effort where I was able to construct the house which I have to live according to the film, with the consultation of internationally recognized Production designer Eral Kely and also with the assistance of the art Director, Welegedara.

### **Selecting the cast and crew :**

After writing the script, I realized that it will be very difficult to find the eligible actress for the leading role. Because I understood that the female character of this film doesn't exist among the actress whom I know. It took me back to whom I was looking for when I was watching an interview held at the Rupavahini Cooperation, where I met Nirosha Perera who conducted the programme. I observed her very well during the programme and I realized that she is the ideal person for this role. I readily asked her whether she would like to play this role in the film that I am thinking of and she rejected the idea saying that she has already refused so many offers. Her father (even though he is not living anymore) was pretty sure that his daughter will accept this role which gave me some relief and it took two years for her to give a favourable answer to me.

### **Writing the script**

It took me nearly two to three years to write the script of the film as I was engaged in writing two other scripts.

### **Translation of the story**

I was fortunate to meet Ms Niroshini Gunasekera, Senior Lecturer in French at Kelaniya University who provided me with an excellent translation of the book. She had already translated four books from French to Sinhala. To her credit she has translated three books written by Marguerite Duras. Her second translation *Barrage Contre le Pacifique* won the "Prashastha Award" in 2004.

### **Efforts to find the book, *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour***

I went in search of Mr. Corporeau, former Cultural Councillor of the French Embassy in Sri Lanka, with the intention of finding the story book. He asked his assistant, Juliette Donadieu to help me and she took a great effort to find this story.

At the inception in looking for what I wanted, I managed to find the author of the short story (Emile Zola) and that it was based on crime and a commencement of love in one night. It was not easy to look for this book only knowing these two facts. Juliette searched for the book on Internet and discovered that the book stocks were exhausted in France. She was able to obtain a copy of this rare book from a Belgian bookshop, with the support of her brother. She offered me the book, Emile Zola's *Naï's Suivi de Pour Une Nuit d'Amour* (Emile Zola's *Naï's*, followed by *For A Night of Love*). I selected the short story, *Pour Une Nuit d'Amour*.

### **Contemplation of making a film:**

Almost 10 years ago, Sudath Rohana who is a tele-drama director and also very good friend of mine related me a French short story. The story and its characters fascinated me. He said that he is interested in doing a teledrama based on that particular story and also invited me to play the lead role. But it never happened. When I asked him about it later on, I realized that he had already forgotten it. I was curious to know about this story and wanted to study it.

## PRESS EXCERPTS

### EKAMATH EKA RATEKA

# එකමර එක රටෙක...

## *Once Upon a Time*

In his directorial debut, Sanath Gunatilake has placed his implicit trust in the ability of Sri Lanka's filmgoers to recognize and appreciate high cinematic art. If Sanath's concern for profound cinema achieves a wide impact, it could very well result in the Sinhala Film talking a fresh and wholesome creative direction. [...] Those who view the film, with keen alertness will detect traces that echo the impressionistic styles of Monet and Manet. These hints are present in some of the scenes that form the backdrop to some actions.

**Kalakeerthi Edwin Aryadasa**

*The Nation 9/8/2009*

Produced by Janaka Ramanayake, scripted, directed and played in its lead role, Sanath Gunatilake is at last placed in his rightful perspective in artistic influence. 'Once Upon A Time' is not a film for weak-kneed puritans who process an utopian do-gooder culture, yet would not hesitate to indulge in sexual abandon on the sly. Hypocrites who shun what others do but simultaneously indulge in sex which they say abhor, are clouted to subjugation.

**Steeve Morrelle**

*The Island, 18/6/2009*

I greatly enjoyed Sanath Gunatilake's maiden film, *Ekamath Eka Rateka*, which is based on Emil Zola's short story "Pour une nuit d'amour" – For a night of love. I write this mainly to figure out for myself why I found this film aesthetically pleasing, emotionally stimulating and even intellectually challenging. The role of the young upper class woman is played with amazing vigor and flamboyance by Nirosha Perera. For all his physical unattractiveness to women, nothing can prevent the clerk from fantasizing about the young woman whom he sees

every day through the window of his apartment, when she comes to the balcony of her luxurious home. In the language of cinema she would be called a sex-goddess; in common parlance a sex-kitten. Perhaps in consonance with the spirit of our times she should more appropriately be described as a “sex-bomb”. A large part of the film is devoted to the exploration of the evolution of her unorthodox, uninhibited personality. In our society as presently constituted, to play the role of that young woman with conviction requires immense reserves of moral courage and artistic commitment. She deserves a special salute for her courage and display of sexual pyrotechnics.

**Carlo Fonseka**

*Sunday Island 28/6/2009*

Sanath Gunatillaka's *Ekamath Eka Rateka* - dubbed as 'Once Upon a Time' in English based on Emile Zola's 'For a night of love' - is not an intelligent movie. Nor is it a standard movie. It doesn't have a specific story line (so don't worry I have nothing to kill your appetite on the film). It has neither start nor end. It just flows out.

**K. Sivakumaran**

*Daily News 27/5/2009*

Memories of storylines or the suspense and excitement of some present day films generally tend to die away even before you leave the boundaries of the cinema halls, but there are indeed exceptions. *‘Ekamath Eka Rateka’* – the maiden movie directed by seasoned campaigner Sanath Gunatillaka – is one such creation because it compels you to sense the feelings after even days since you watched the film.

**Ramesh Uvais**

*Daily Mirror 8/6/2009*

*Ekamath Eka Rateka* is the proof of Sanath’s outstanding capability to balance scripting, directing and performing even-hand. He is indeed a genius on and behind the lens. His dialogues are limited yet induce just the right touch of pathos. His directing syringes creativity into natural dialogues. In essence no single scene or dialogue seems unnecessarily inserted and adds a meaning to the plot which slowly builds up, intriguing the viewers to be in their seats till the end.

**Sachithra Mahendra and Ruwini Jayawardena**

*Daily News 1/7/2009*

**එකවර එක රවෙන..**  
*Once Upon a Time*

**Cast**

Sanath Gunatilake  
Nirosha Perera  
Roshan Ravindra  
Chandani Senevirathna  
Semini Iddamalgoda  
Damitha Abeyrathna  
Kumara Tirimaduwa  
Himali Sayurangi  
Lioni Kotalawela  
Nilmini Buwaneka  
Kanchana Kodithuwakku  
Chandana Silva  
Thanuja Dilhani  
Duminda Weerawardena  
And  
Tony Ranasinghe (Special Appearance)

**Crew**

Production Manager - Vikum Jayasooriya  
Assistant Directors - Ranjith Prasanna,  
Chiranjeeva Perera  
Audio - Kalinga Gihan Perera  
Editor - Ajith Ramanayake  
Editing Supervisor - Ravindra Guruge  
Art Director - Welegedara Ranasinghe  
Art Direction Supervisor - Errel Kelly  
Camera and Light - Lal Wickramarachchi  
Music - Dr. Premasiri Khemadasa  
Producer - Janaka Ramanayake  
Scriptwriter / Director - Sanath Gunatilake

Year of production - 2008

Country – Sri Lanka

Language – Sinhala

Subtitled in English / French

Running Time 105 minutes

Production Company/ International Distributor

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