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# Murmurs of the Jungle

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## Aadigunjan

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Courtesy of the Rotterdam International Film Festival

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# **VERDICT:** Our prehistoric relationship to the forest is atmospherically invoked in this <sup>(252)</sup> documentary about a small Indian village and the tales its inhabitants tell of the whispering trees.

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Ben Nicholson

February 5th, 2022

A village in the Western Ghat mountain range provides the location for Sohil Vaidya's contemplative look at the ancient bond between people and trees, *Murmurs of the Jungle*. Folk wisdom passed down through generations tells of humanity's emergence from the water coinciding with the growth of the forest and our spiritual bond is solidified by the idea that we will awaken from our eternal sleep as part of it once again. The film combines a gentle procession of mostly static imagery, often dominated by the environment, with tales told by members of the community of deities and ghosts inhabiting the limbs of arboreal neighbours.

Vaidya uses several techniques to create an almost otherworldly ambience, particularly creating composite images and recurring footage of fog rolling across the landscape. In more than one scene, local people are seen walking down roads or across fields only for them to be silently

enveloped in white. The composites are less obvious but equally effective. Vaidya lays different images over one another creating unreal scenes – such as a piercing round moon beaming through otherwise overgrown jungle vegetation in an early shot. It is only when the jungle image (252) fades that we realise the moon is part of another landscape, folded into this one by the filmmaker.

The visual channel creates a sensation of space being nebulous and the audio one pulls off a similar trick with the temporal, incorporating tales of gods cursed to live in trees and murdered villagers being deified to appease their enduring, restless spirits. All of this generates the impression of a place beyond time and an eternal connection between the people and the landscape itself.

*Director, producer, editor: Sohil Vaidya*

*Cinematography: Digvijay Thorat*

*Sound design: Bignya Dahal*

*Production company: Magic Lantern (India)*

*Venue: Rotterdam International Film Festival*

*In Marathi*

*20 minutes*

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