



# SHILLONG TIMES

A Story of Friendship & Fear

Authored by Nilanjan P. Choudhury



# LOGLINE



A coming-of-age story of a fourteen-year-old Bengali boy whose life is turned upside down over the course of one year in the late 1980s when communal tensions erupt in the hill station of Shillong, located in North East India.



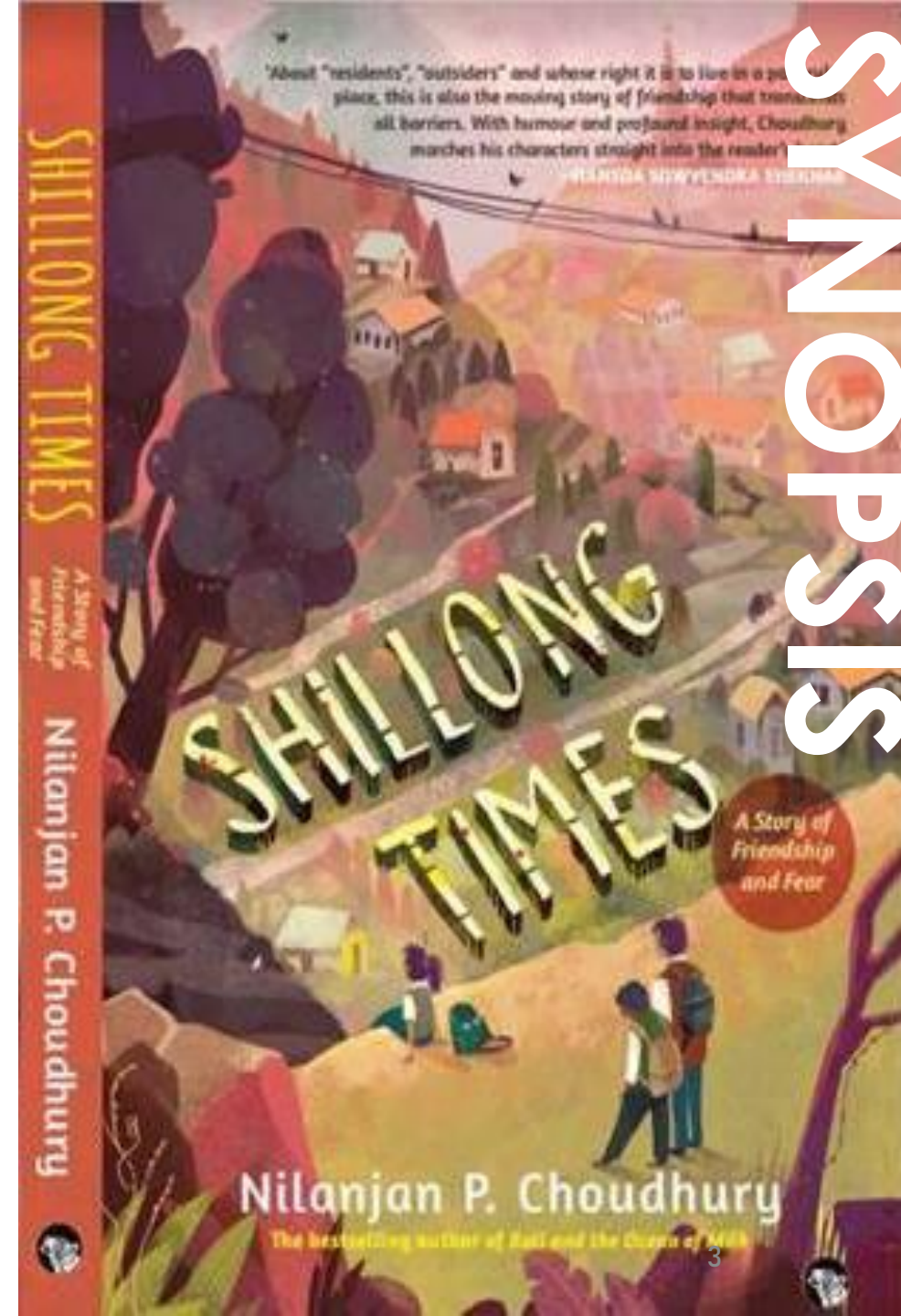
"Shillong Times" is a coming-of-age story set against the insider-outsider conflict that erupted in Shillong in the 1980s and continues to simmer to this day. Protagonist, fourteen-year-old Debojit Dutta (or Debu), meets the older Clint Eastwood Lyngdoh in his tuition classes. Clint wants to befriend Debu, but Debu is wary of him. Clint is Khasi, a member of the indigenous tribal community that has labeled Bengalis like him as "outsiders" – illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Debu also knows of the ethnic violence that had rocked the city only a few years ago, and he is scared of Clint. But the affable Clint introduces Debu to a brave new world of forbidden pleasures – pork chow-mien, Pink Floyd, whisky and, most importantly, Audrey Pariat, the coolest girl in town. Gradually, Debu's fears recede, and he strikes up a firm friendship with Clint and Audrey. Together, the three of them embark upon many adventures. But when renewed tensions between the Khasi and Bengali communities boil over, Shillong becomes a battlefield. Caught in the cross-fire, the three teenagers are forced to choose family and community over friendship and pay the heavy price that comes with the choice.

**DIRECTED BY**  
UTPAL BORPUJARI

**WRITTEN BY**  
ROMA SUR

**PRODUCERS**  
PRAKASH BARE, SILICON MEDIA

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**  
PRAKASH BARE, SILICON MEDIA



SYNOPSIS

# THE TEAM



PRAKASH BARE

Prakash Bare is an award-winning filmmaker and founder of Silicon Media. Silicon Media, founded in 2008, aims to create quality media content of social relevance targeting audiences around the world. Silicon Media's projects have won many recognitions nationally and internationally including 15+ Kerala state film awards and official selections to Berlin, Montreal, Almaty, BFI, Oporto, Dhaka, Hanoi, Trinidad and Tobago, Mumbai, IFFK and Durban festivals.

PRODUCER



NILANJAN P. CHOUDHURY

Nilanjan P. Choudhury's most recent novel is "Shillong Times", a coming of age story set against the insider-outsider conflict in Shillong in the 1980s. His debut novel, a mythological thriller entitled "Bali and the Ocean of Milk", was a (very) brief best-seller. His subsequent writings include "The Case of the Secretive Sister" a contemporary detective caper set in Bangalore and "The Square Root of a Sonnet", a pioneering play on the history and science of black holes, both of which received wide critical acclaim.

AUTHOR

# THE TEAM



UTPAL BORPUJARI

Utpal Borpujari is a film critic-turned-filmmaker, whose debut feature "Ishu" won India's National Film Award in 2018 and got screened in a number of international film festivals. Earlier, he had won the National Award for Best Film Critic in 2003. He is also known for documentaries like "Memories of a Forgotten War", "Songs of the Blue Hills", "Soccer Queens of Rani" and "Mayong: Myth/Reality". Borpujari has also served on the jury of several international and national film festivals and also the National Awards. His script "An Unreal Story" is part of the NFDC Screenwriters Lab 2021.

DIRECTOR



ROMA SUR

Roma Sur is a screenwriter and filmmaker, who found her niche in narrating cross-cultural stories that channel her Asian American immigrant experience and her childhood growing up in cosmopolitan India. She writes young adult and female driven dramas with levity, typically with a diverse cast. Her characters are typically underdogs, extracted from their comfort zones and put on a path to redefine who they are. Her recent screenplay, *The Rock Within*, was a second rounder at Sundance feature lab, 2018, and India's leading pitch market, Film Bazaar, 2019 as well as was an official select at the Stowe Story Labs, 2018.

SCREENWRITER



# ***DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT***

*Utpal Borpujari*

On the surface, Shillong Times is a story of adolescent friendship, of growing up pangs, of first loves and wistful memories of youth. Through its protagonist, we see a world that is innocent, yet on the verge of losing its innocence. But dig a little deeper, and it's a story about one of the most important questions in the current global geo-political context: "Where do we really belong?"

Is our sense of belonging to a place determined by our emotional connection to that place by virtue of having been born and raised there? Or is it decided by our mother tongue, religion or ethnicity? In a world where everything is viewed through the lenses of race, language, culture and migration, there are no easy answers to these questions.

In fact, each answer leads to a fresh set of questions. As a filmmaker who comes from the socio-politically volatile region of North East India, I find Shillong Times to be a universal, humane story that seeks to address some of these questions. And that for me, makes it a great story to tell.





# PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

*Prakash Bare, Silicon Media*

As a production house, Silicon Media aims to create quality, socially relevant content targeting audiences across the world. Our projects have won many national and international recognitions including 15+ Kerala state film awards, official selections to Berlin, Montreal, Almaty, BFI, Oporto, Dhaka, Hanoi, Trinidad and Tobago, Mumbai, IFFK and Durban festivals.

We believe that Shillong Times, with its deeply humane characters and its nuanced portrayal of contemporary North-Eastern history, is both a uniquely local and a truly universal story. The mesmerizing beauty of Meghalaya, the abode of the clouds, and the rich urban landscape of Shillong of the 1980s, form the backdrop of the tale and transport us to a time and place that has never been depicted in cinema so far.

At one level, this project belongs to the popular genre of 'coming of age' films that explore adolescent friendships, infatuations, rites of passage and nostalgic memories. But beyond this very engaging aspect, Shillong Times addresses one of the most globally relevant and burning issues of the day – the idea of natives and foreigners, the politics of residence and the clash of cultures. It has the makings of a compelling, internationally viable production that can resonate with global audiences.



EXT. DUTTA BUNGALOW - EVENING

An 80s style bungalow, with picket fences and red bricks, stands amidst the thick hilly foliage and greenery.

DEBU, 14, well-oiled hair. A face that glimmers with teenage Bengali angst. Always carrying a cross-body satchel.

Debu's gaze lingers on the house. Then the cobbled pathway leading to an empty porch. Nestled in his eyes are decades of memories.

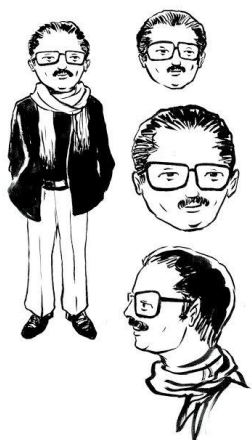




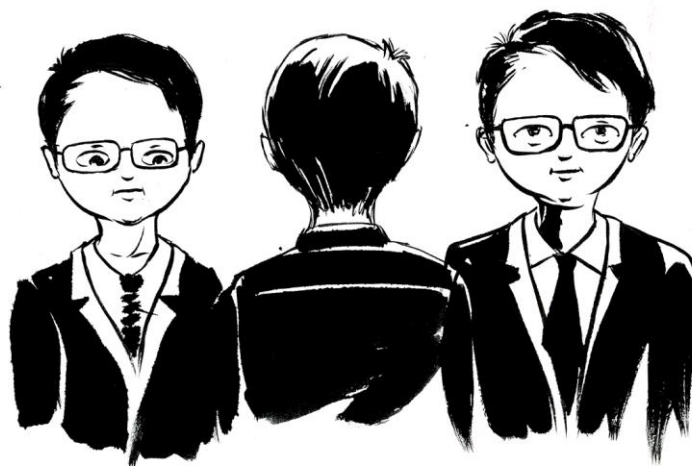
CLINT LYNGDOH, 14, a mixed bag of good, bad and sometimes, ugly.



AUDREY PARIAT, 14, piercing hazel eyes. A mole sits right above her full lips. As sharp as they come.



SHUBHOJIT (SHUBHO) DUTTA, late-40s, salt & pepper hair, premature grey mustache



DEBU, 14, well-oiled hair. A face that glimmers with teenage Bengali angst.



MALINI, mid-40s, the epitome of an overprotective Bengali mother.



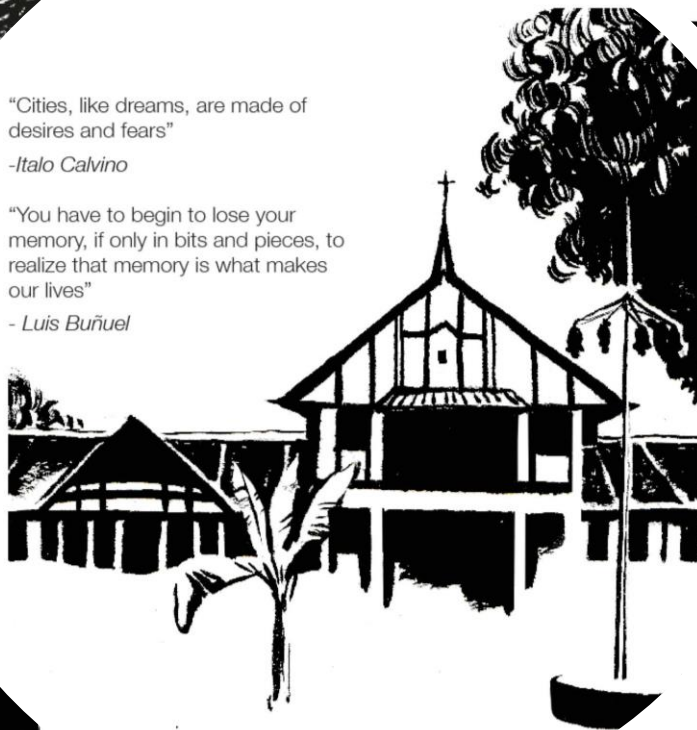
BLOODY  
DKHAR! GO BACK  
TO BANGLADESH  
AND EAT YOUR...

"Cities, like dreams, are made of  
desires and fears"

-Italo Calvino

"You have to begin to lose your  
memory, if only in bits and pieces, to  
realize that memory is what makes  
our lives"

- Luis Buñuel



shows my every first thing.  
able to escape from it,  
ories



BUT THEY HAVE  
WHITE SKIN. I  
DON'T LOOK  
LIKE THEM.



HEY DKHAR!

HEY  
DKHAR! WHAT  
ARE YOU DOING  
THERE? GET OUT  
OF OUR  
COUNTRY!

GO  
BACK TO  
BANGLADESH  
AND EAT YOUR  
ROTTEN FISH!

didn't know what "dkhar" meant but





*"A punch to the gut... a ripping good yarn written with a deft touch."* – **Hindustan Times**

*"Leavened with humour, the fault-lines between the two communities, Khasi and Bengali, are delineated in superb set pieces."* – **The Hindu Literary Review**

*"Filled with laughter, sharp observations, perfect scripting and historical details"* – **Mathrubhumi**

*"Offers a beacon of hope in troubled times"* – **Asian Age**

*"A brilliant novel with a layered complexity"* – **The Shillong Times**

*"This delightful novel about growing up in Shillong in the 1980s has the power to create an unforgettable map of that place in one's mind. A moving story of friendship that transcends the barriers of communities"* – **Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, Sahitya Akademi Award winning novelist**





**THANK  
YOU**

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SHILLONG-1

50