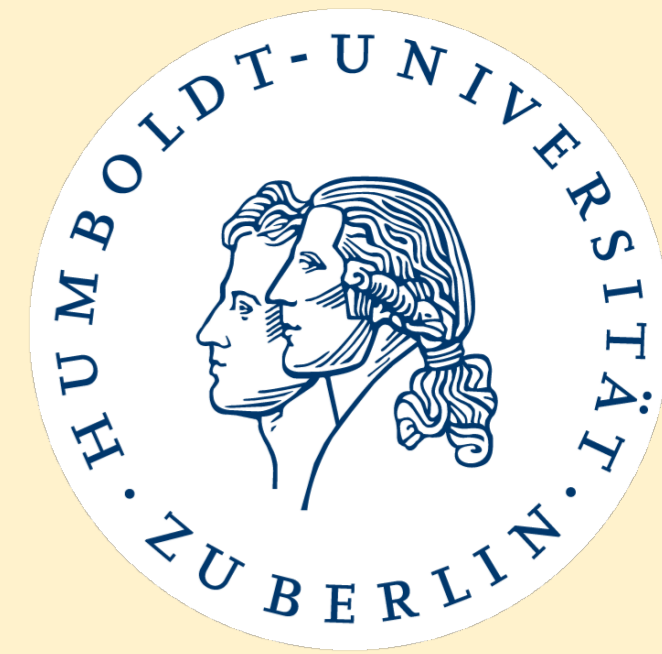


# The Last Adieu

SoSe 2024 - Family Matters: Domestic Ethnography, Home Movies and Autobiographical Documentaries in Indian (diasporic) Contexts.

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## Ideas of ethics in domestic ethnography, family, public and private life

*The Last Adieu* is the story of Shabnam Sukhdev search for her relationship with her father, famous director S. Sukhdev, by looking through his old films. In doing so, she finds herself...

*"I searched for you and I found who I really am"*

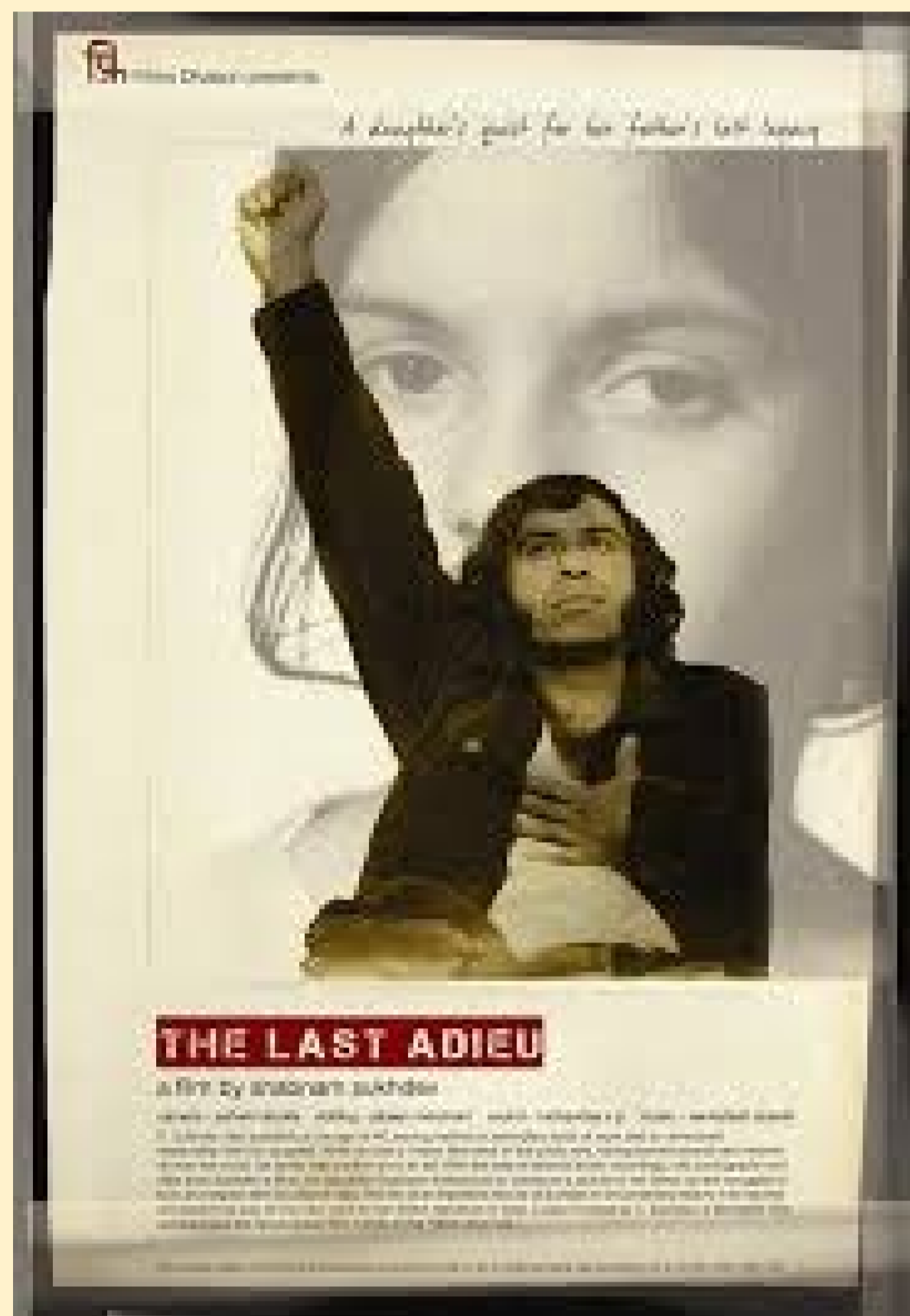
### Familial Connections

Shabnam Sukhdev is a critically acclaimed filmmaker in her own right. There are references throughout the film to the ways in which her work as a professional filmmaker may enable an (incomplete) understanding of her father's work. The film was produced by the Films Division of India, the company Shabnam's father worked closely with throughout his life.

### Public vs. Private

The film shows a stark contrast between Sukhdev's public and private personas. Shabnam discusses in depth the distant relationship she had with her father, yet when she interviews his friends, she finds that they saw him as a great man. This leaves her feeling upset that she was unable to have a close relationship with her father, while his non-blood relations could.

*"I thought you had never touched my life but I was wrong"*



IMDb (2014). *The Last Adieu* (2014). [online] IMDb.

### Ethics within filmmaking

The relationship between 'truth' and 'ethics' in Sukhdev's filmmaking is also confronted. Shabnam explores her father's work in relation to his private life, and the blurring of lines between Sukhdev as a filmmaker and a father. A mix of archival footage and fictional performed 'conversations' between herself and her father are used to enquire into the violent aspects of her father's personality, such as the film *Violence* (1974). From this, it is revealed that Sukhdev had slapped Shabnam in order to get a shot of a particular expression on her face - 'a perfect propaganda film against violence through violent means'.

### Is this a domestic ethnography?

This film explores the distant relationship between a father and a daughter.

Renov calls a domestic ethnography something that is a study between family members and a close familial other. However, this film muddies that definition. In our discussion, we found that *The Last Adieu* demonstrates the need for an extension to the domestic ethnography definition. Subjects do not need to be physically or emotionally close, or even blood related, to constitute something being a domestic ethnography.

Watch the Last Adieu here! →



Shabnam Sukhdev, @shabnamsukhdev, X.com [formerly Twitter], [accessed 11 Jul. 2024].

<sup>1</sup> Michael Renov, 'The Subject of Documentary' in eds. Michael Renov, Faye Ginsburg, Jane Gaines, *Visible Evidence*, vol.16 (University of Minnesota, 2004) p.229

*The Last Adieu* (2014), IMDb (2014) [online] [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4469548/mediaviewer/rm2060999680/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_i](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4469548/mediaviewer/rm2060999680/?ref_=tt_ov_i) [Accessed 11 Jul. 2024].

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