

A filmmaker in search of the right story

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Chennai: One of his award-winning films is being screened at the Russian Centre of Science and Culture here as part of the 5th Samsung Women's International Film Festival. But Kannada filmmaker Girish Kasaravalli, who recently won the Rajat Kamal for 'Koormavatra', is not one to rest on his laurels. Ready to take on his next project, Kasaravalli is busy going through Kannada short stories and novels in search of the story that will inspire him.

"The producer of my first film wants to make another movie with me after 35 years," says the filmmaker, who was in Chennai on Wednesday. "I am reading up but still groping in the dark."

All his films are based on works by Kannada writers. Kasaravalli's first film, 'Ghatashradha' (The Ritual), which fetched him a national award, is based on a novella by U R Ananthamurthy while 'Koormavatra' is based on a



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short story by Kum Veebhadrappa.

"There are two kinds of filmmakers — those who adapt from other sources and those who draw from life," says Kasaravalli, who has won four Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus) awards and eight Silver Lotus awards. There are also two modes of adaptation. "One is when you think the work on which your film is based is the ultimate and find visual equiv-

alents of the written word. The other takes the novel or short story as the source material or seed and develops it into a spin-off story," he says. That is what he does.

The film and original story don't correspond but there is intratextual reference. "For instance, the Japanese film 'Throne of Blood' by Akira Kurosawa is based on Macbeth but it is not Macbeth at all. To understand it, you have to un-

derstand the structure of Japanese society."

Finding the right story is not easy. "Even when you know it is a good story, it has to inspire you," he says, explaining what it takes to move from page to screen. "It should talk about contemporary problems we are facing and you should get the right kind of images. All of it has to fuse into one solid entity and you can't explain when and why it will happen."

For instance 'Koormavatra' is about a government servant set to retire who is offered the role of playing Mahatma Gandhi. "He is no good as an actor but he begins reading up on Gandhi's life. As he begins to understand Gandhi, he also begins to understand his past in a better light," says Kasaravalli.

Finding the right literary piece is the beginning. "How long I work on the script varies." Once the script is done, he shows a copy of it to the original writer for approval. "So far writers have appreciated the adaptation."