



Kolkata International Film Festival
(Accredited by FIAPF)
8-15 November 2019

Festival Diary

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LIGHTS, CAMERA, CONFLICT

A still from *The End Will Be Spectacular*



The end will be spectacular, a film from war-torn Syria has been shot during the war that rages till today. One of the lead actors, Cihan Siver, died a few days back resisting the Turkish invasion of his homeland. Many others have also died without seeing the finished film.



Ersin Celik (2nd from right) with his team

Roya Sadat is the first woman filmmaker from Afghanistan in a post-Taliban era. Today, she's the organizer of the Herat International Film Festival, runs a production house with her sister, and makes films in the same country that had banned music, movies, theatre, and education for girls when she was growing up.

In Bengali we have a phrase, '*pagol, na matha kharap?*' which translates to, are you mad, or are you mad? It's a phrase we hold dear, using it to tell off a person when they pitch an insane idea.

The phrase crossed my mind several times when I discovered the Syrian war film, *The End Will Be Spectacular*. Shot in the middle of armed conflict, the film follows a group of Kurdish fighters, and is based on the testimony of survivors, who also act in the film. It seems like a film that is nearly impossible to make. And yet, director Ersin Celik and his team managed to pull it off. The cast and crew risked their lives, and a lot of them died before completion of the film. The locations could be attacked any time, but they still went on to complete the shoot. 'We knew this would be a difficult film to make right from the beginning, says Celik, 'It's not like we did not know there would be any challenges. We were scared...but we had to tell this story'.

Two countries away from Syria, we have another war ravaged country. Afghanistan has seen wars, conflicts, and five years of a brutal, extremely misogynistic Taliban rule. But from the ashes of the war, Roya Sadat has risen like a phoenix. Born during the Russian war, Sadat has lived through a civil war and the taliban rule. She wrote her first film secretly, during the taliban regime. She risked it all to finally make it, and today she's one of the leading filmmakers in Afghanistan, and the country's first woman filmmaker.



Roya Sadat

they did. So what motivates them? It definitely cannot be money, can it? 'It was the courage we witnessed' remarks Celik. He talks about seeing young people, some of them barely out of school, fight to protect their homes and neighbourhood. 'You just cannot ignore that kind of courage'.

Sadat's motivations are different. Forced to stay at home after the government shut down all the schools for girls, she spent that time reading and trying to discover herself. "I'm a storyteller, I knew I wanted to tell stories". As it usually is, following your passion comes at a cost. It took her a year to find a woman who would act in her film. She had to assemble a skeleton crew and her technique was shaky. Still, she managed to pull it off, and 15 years later, she has won over 60 awards in film festivals around the world, and her latest feature film, '*Letter to the President*' is currently doing the festival rounds.

What's common between them both, is the spirit of not giving up. Cliched as it may sound, Both Ersin and team, and Roya are fighters. There's a fire burning within them and they're motivated by something more than passion. We are truly honoured to have them with us for the festival and we hope some of their bravery rubs off on us at a time when we need it the most. Sure it may seem crazy, but as Celik says with a laugh, 'As long as there are

Experience

The chairman of the 25th KIFF Raj Chakraborty sat with us for a small chit-chat over a cup of coffee on the second day of the festival, in between his busy schedule. He confessed that holding this position is a great learning process. The role assigned has definitely taught him to manage his tasks simultaneously. On the other, he is also grateful to the team working tirelessly behind the scenes, from important film selection committees to the I&CA Dept. and the Nandan workforce. Chakraborty also commented on how the inclement weather couldn't dampen the spirits of the attendees. A 'packed house' was witnessed in the halls and premises of Nandan, on a stormy 'day one' of the festival. "People of the city wanted to watch films and they made it to the festival braving the heavy rains. The second day of the festival looks promising and I believe this response would continue till the 15th of November." The delegates and special guests from diverse cultures and places had to be approached in a special way due to the celebratory 25th year of KIFF. Quite interestingly, the section of short fiction and documentary was the top pick for him. He feels viewers can watch these besides the feature films and it would be worth their time. Raj Chakraborty specially emphasized on the highlight of the festival, the Silver Journey exhibition inaugurated by Rakhee Gulzar, Saturday evening. He urged all cine lovers and well wishers to head to the Gaganendra Pradarshashala; "It is my earnest request that everyone should experience the historical archival images at the Silver Journey exhibition. This would give an overview of the 25 years of KIFF."



- Zoya Khan



(L to R) Durnibaar, Ujjaini, Iman, Srikanta Acharya, Kaushik Ganguly, Usha Uthup, Indraadip Dasgupta, Surojit Chatterjee, Joy Sarkar

Sunday evening's adda moderated by renowned filmmaker Kaushik Ganguly, was star-studded by the likes of Durnibaar Saha, Ujjaini Mukherjee, Usha Uthup, Indraadip Dasgupta, Srikanto Acharya, Iman Chakraborty, Joy Sarkar and Surojit Chatterjee. The evening was filled with soul-stirring music, melody and laughter. The topic of conversation revolved around the question, 'Composer or the Singer?' On being asked to whom does the song belong to: the composer or the singer, Usha Uthup said, 'Song is bigger than the singer and the audience is the biggest of all.' Seconding her, Kaushik Ganguly expresses his pride in today's Bengali music and said, "The victory of Bengal's songs don't belong only to Bengal cinema, but to Bangla." Usha Uthup reminisced with pride about her journey that started from being a nightclub singer at Trinacas. Her characteristic husky voice was received initially by a barrage of criticism in her early days and she fiercely made an inspiring remark, 'Sadly, I cannot sing like anybody else but the best part is nobody can sing like me either.' Iman serenaded the audience singing 'Tumi Jake Bhalobasho' from the film 'Praktan', composed by Anupam Roy; Usha Uthup charmed the listeners by singing an English rendition of the same in a typical feisty tempo. Surojit's 'Rangabati', a Bengali recreation of an Odia song made the audience tap their feet. Durnibar Saha expressed his nervousness in singing and recreating songs sung by others but Srikanto Acharya assured him every song belongs to the singer who sings it. The evening concluded with Usha Uthup's popular number 'Darling Aankhon Se Aankhe Char Karne Do' from the film '7 Khoon Maa', making it an evening to be remembered.

- Adrija Kundu



OLD FILMS GET NEW LIFE

Mr. Sridhar Gopalan from Prasad Corps, Chennai, held a workshop on the restoration of old films at the KIC, conference hall. Along with him members of KIFF closely associated with film making and restoration were present in the panel.

The workshop was a presentation conducted by Mr. Sridhar. It started on the note of a brief discussion regarding the essence and loss of old films - celluloid reels. He spoke truth when he mentioned that seldom we remember old film reels, in which are preserved, our cultural heritage. Time is running out as every day negatives are decomposing leading to the loss of several masterpieces whose spirit cannot be remade. Valuable content is being lost, depriving future generations from access to these. It is known that analogue print processing laboratories have been shut, causing large scale unemployment too.

80% of the world's negatives are already gone. Hence companies are now coming together and making the effort to digitize what's left of these negatives for future preservation and restoration. Steps to do so include firstly the physical inspection and manual cleaning of the films by professionals to generate a report regarding its current state. The films then undergo an ultrasonic chemical wash for removal of oil, dust, grease etc. A frame by frame scanning occurs next to upgrade the film to higher resolution of 2K, 4K and digitize it. Shot by shot colour grading and an automated real time restoration is done next. Scratches, pinholes, dust, colour stains, film tear, vertical lines and splice joints are removed. The sound tape is then checked for glitches, cracks, hissing and a final quality check is run for HD and SD outputs. However all this comes at a cost. Even if today, we have digital versions of film reels, we cannot wholly depend on them and neither can we do away with the negatives. The 2K and 4K versions are merely temporary, and with every passing day newer and more advanced technologies for scanning are formulating. But digitization is perhaps the only suitable process to cope with the present time. The other option is to print the digitized copy into polyester films that are available today, have long shelf life and are not fragile. More saddening is the thought of producers who do not have the fervour to restore artistic content as such to which only they have copyrights. The output has great value scope for monetization and revenue generation; if only there could be more awareness so that the one's who are capable can contribute and make a change.

STAR STUDDED SCREENING



Buddhadeb Dasgupta speaks as Raahg director Gautam Ghose and Prosenjit look on

Neeraj Kabi and Prosenjit : Actors bond



Tilottama Shome, Gautam Ghose, Prosenjit and Arindam Sil

Friends meet and greet : Rakhee and Mamata



Waiting for the screening of Raahgir



(L-R) Gautam Halder, Rakhee Gulzar, Sashi Panja, Raj Chakraborty

It is the large size 'koi maach' at the Tollygunge bazaars and the long begunis at a small roadside shop in Barasat that keeps bringing back Rakhee on her quiet, anonymous trips to the 'City of Joy'. However, Goutam Halder's 'Nirvana' provided for the perfect on-screen return of eminent actress Rakhee Gulzar after almost a decade alongside her return to her hometown. The movie thus provided the perfect occasion for a press conference which was graced by the likes of KIFF Chairman, Raj Chakraborty, Honourable Minister, Shashi Panja, the film's director, Gautam Halder besides Rakhee Gulzar herself. However what stood out from the insightful press conference was Rakhee's Kolkata connect that emerged as personal as ever amidst a packed hall of reporters. According to her, the best part about Kolkata is the way in which a random person on road becomes another's 'Dada', 'Kaku' or 'Didi' - there is a certain amount of camaraderie among the people of Kolkata Rakhee noted which is missing in other parts of the country. She also shared how she keeps coming back to Kolkata but silently avoids fanfare to get the real feel of the city. She could also be seen expressing her regret over the slow disappearance of paras from the 'City of Joy' with urbanization setting in. The fact that Rakhee's heart lies with the Bengali film industry was evident. Speaking on the film, Rakhee opined how actors are essentially a part of what the technicians visualize. Speaking on the film she expressed her desire for people to remember her for Bijolibala (her character in the film) rather than people remembering the character for her name. On being asked about what is special about the film, she said that the background in which the film has been set suits the current troubled times. She stressed that one doesn't require to create the audience as they are smart to choose a movie for themselves. The fact that she chooses scripts for the soul that it has in it was not kept a secret either. Overall, it was a frank session where the actor who holds no holds barred regarding her life, as we were left admiring her personality more than ever.

- Kanjyik Ghosh

Cinema

Raahgir focuses on three central characters who travel through rain and slush through the rustic landscape of Jharkhand. Rivers have always played an important role in Goutam Ghose's films. As he himself admits that hailing from East Bengal, he has always felt the rivers flow through him. In most of his films the river is like a character. In Raahgir, it is the rain which takes its place, and eventually the rain will flow into the river. In his own words, Raahgir is 'a story on the humanity of the common man' largely influenced by a short story by the celebrated writer Prafulla Roy. The topography of the plateau region was beautifully explored in the story that Ghose felt he wouldn't have been able to do justice to the film had he not kept the language Hindi, and shoot it in Jharkhand. While the story was only 2 pages long, Ghose felt that it had a lot of depth and substance worth exploring, and approached co-writer Jagannath Guha about a project that would embody the struggles and tribulations of the unheard population of India. The duo aimed to represent the entire community that lived beyond the fringes of society through their three characters, and give their message in a non-dramatic yet intense manner. Given their passion for the cause, writing came organically, with the script being finalised by July, and shooting commencing from August. Naturally, portraying characters of such intensity required immense commitment from the actors. Tillotama Shome confessed that the role required her to be more in touch with her feelings and be emotionally vulnerable.. Neeraj Kabi remarked that it had been a childhood dream of his to work with the Moner Manush director, and the process of connecting with his character had been made significantly easier because Ghose's scripts read like poetry. Ghose himself described his actors and technicians as those who translated his ideas to create a cinematic canvas. Producer Amit Agarwal stated that his vision was to reach the message of the film to global audiences, and he wanted it to become a commercial success so that producers would support more such projects in future. While the film met with overwhelming positive reviews everywhere and will go to other film festivals after KIFF, the chief takeaway for cinephiles from the conference were Ghose's words, 'Slowly, we're getting too much into stories. Let us go back to cinema.'

- Vedant Karia



(L-R) Amit Agarwal, Neeraj Kabi, Tilottama Shome, Goutam Ghose, Jagannath Guha



OF CASTE AND COLOUR

Renowned filmmaker, director, screenwriter Deepesh T spoke to the press about his film 'Karup' and the divisive forces of caste and colour in the country today. He expressed pride in the film being the first of its kind produced by school children, the nation's leading youth association. 'Karup' features a 13-year old tribal boy of the Paniya tribe who addresses the flaming issue of caste politics and discriminations faced by the tribes of Kerala. The film was made on a budget of fifty lakh rupees, collected by National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers from the local people. "Political parties have always used the bait of communal and caste politics to segregate the nation for their own gain and our film condemns the social ostracism and violence faced by lower caste groups as a result of it. As a director I feel we should speak more about the caste issues prevailing in Kerala." When asked about his experience working with a child actor he fondly said, "It was a surreal experience working with this boy who had never even seen a camera in his life until then."

- Adrija Kundu

RENAISSANCE WOMEN IN ROME

It was a celebration of firsts, as critically acclaimed actor Tannishtha Chatterjee made her first appearance at the Kolkata International Film Festival to screen her directorial debut, Roam Rome Mein, with cinematographer Sunita Radia by her side. Interestingly, the film is set in Italy because it pioneered the renaissance movement by artists, and her female protagonist is a reincarnation of a renaissance woman. Tannishtha candidly remarked that it wasn't a planned project, but a story in her mind that she told Nawazuddin Siddiqui Lion in Kolkata. It was turn her idea into a film, pre-production being True to the title, Roam cultural film, not only cast and crew comprise artists, but also because the film has spoken to audiences across cultures, including at the Mumbai International Film Festival, the Rome International Film Festival, and the Busan International Film Festival, where she won the Asian Star Award. Tannishtha remarked that while she had made the film to tell a story without thinking about the viewers, the response proved that it was a film for everyone. While many of her popular projects are international, Tannishtha has far from abandoned her roots, acknowledging how her film's soul is essentially Bengali. The premiere at Nandan was an extremely emotional moment for her, since she had herself discovered and celebrated cinema from around the world at the iconic venue.

- Vedant Karia



CELEBRATING CELLULOID

Actor and director Gautam Ghose inaugurated the film section 'Great Master: Bernardo Bertolucci'. Among many of his initiatives for the 25th KIFF, is the bringing back of celluloid and film projection. While it is uncertain whether celluloid will come back fully, we must feel the ethos and emotions that celluloid evokes. Excited and honoured, he opened the doors to Sisir Mancha where 'The Conformist' was being screened, celebrating celluloid with Bertolucci



11th Nov.

Upcoming Events

Seminar on 'Has the prestige of International Film Festivals' - 11th Nov. 11:30 AM



Nandan - I	09-00am	11-45am	03-00pm	05-00pm	07-15pm
11-Nov Monday	50 years Celebration- Restored Classics Easy Rider Dir : Dennis Hopper 1969 USA 95 mins	Maestro Vitalina Varela Dir : Pedro Costa 2019 Portugal 124 mins	International Competition : Innovation in Moving Images Maadathy Dir : Leena Manimekalai 2019 India 90 mins	International Competition : Innovation in Moving Images The Weeping Woman Dir : Jayro Bustamante 2019 Guatemala 97 mins	Maestro The Flight Dir : Buddhadeb Dasgupta 2018 India 82 mins
Nandan - II	11-15am	03-15pm	05-15pm	07-30pm	
11-Nov Monday	Unheard India : Rare Language Indian Films Kenjira Dir : Manoj Kana 2019 India 100 mins	Unheard India : Rare Language Indian Films Soldier From Coorg Dir : Kottu Katira Prakashkaryappa 2019 India 105 mins	Competition on Indian Language's Films Run Kalyani Dir : Geetha J 2019 India 100 mins	Documentary Films The Candidates Dir : Michael Schwarz 2019 Germany 82 mins	
Nandan - III	11-15am	03-15pm	05-15pm	07-30pm	
11-Nov Monday	German Classics Dr. Mabuse The Gambler Dir : Fritz Lang 1922 Germany 242 mins	Short & Documentary Films	Short & Documentary Films	Short & Documentary Films	
Rabindra Sadan	09-15am	03-15pm	05-15pm	07-30pm	
11-Nov Monday	Maestro Ang Hupa Dir : Lav Diaz 2019 Philippines 276 mins	Asian Select (NETPAC Award) Mystic Memoir Dir : Aparajita Ghosh 2019 India 80 mins	Bengali Panorama Baki Itihas Dir : Tushar Ballov 2019 India 106 mins	New German Cinema The Marriage Of Maria Braun Dir : Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1978 Germany 120 mins	
Sisir Mancha	11-00am	02-00pm	04-15pm	06-45pm	
11-Nov Monday	Short & Documentary Films	Focus Germany : A Selection Of Best Contemporary German Animation Films 2019 Germany	Satyajit Ray Memorial Lecture The Feature Of The Individual By Kumar Sahani	Great Master : Bernardo Bertolucci Last Tango In Paris Dir : Bernardo Bertolucci 1972 Italy 129 mins	
Chalachchitra Satabarsha Bhaban	11-00am	02-00pm	04-00pm	06-00pm	
11-Nov Monday	Regional Focus : Kannada Cinema Arghyam Dir : Y. Sreenivas 2019 India 115 mins	Unheard India : Rare Language Indian Films Turtle Dir : Dinesh S. Yadav 2018 India 71 mins	Indian Master : Basu Chatterjee Ek Ruka Hua Faista Dir : Basu Chatterjee 1986 India 117 mins	Centenary Tribute : Karuna Bandopadhyay Aparajito Dir : Satyajit Ray 1956 India 110 mins	
Rabindra Okakura Bhawan	12-00noon	02-30pm	06-00pm		
11-Nov Monday	Retrospective : Alexander Kluge The Assault Of The Present On The Rest Of Time Dir : Alexander Kluge 1985 Germany 113 mins.	Centenary Tribute : Aurobindo Mukherjee Agnishwar Dir : Aurobindo Mukhopadhyay 1975 India 62 mins	Homage : Chinmoy Roy Charmurti Dir : Umanath Bhattacharya 1978 India 112 mins		
Nazrul Tirtha	11-00am	02-00pm	04-00pm	06-00pm	
11-Nov Monday	Unheard India : Rare Language Indian Films Dhumkudya Dir : Nandal Nayak 2019 India 110 mins	Regional Focus : Kannada Cinema A Ray of Hope Dir : Santanu Ganguly 2019 India 95mins	International Competition : Innovation in Moving Images Cat Sticks Dir : Ronny Sen 2019 India 94 mins	International Competition : Innovation in Moving Images Mindanao Dir : Brillante Ma. Mendoza 2019 Philippines 123 mins	

EDITOR'S PICK



The Weeping Woman
2019 | Color | 97mins | DCP
Director : Jayro Bustamante
Country : Guatemala
Nandan I



Maadathy
2019 | Color | 90mins
Director : Leena Manimekalai
Country : India
Nandan I



The End Will Be Spectacular
2019 | Color | 105mins
Director : Ersin Celik
Country : Syria
Rabindra Sadan



The Truth
2019 | Color | 106mins
Director : Hirokazu Koreeda
Country : France
Inox City Center 1



Adults In The Room
2019 | Color | 124mins
Director : Costa Gavras
Country : France
PVR (Avani Mall)



Gitarista
2019 | Color | 142mins
Director : Jason Orfalas
Country : Philippines
Ajanta Cinema

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