

THEATRE IN CINEMA: CINEMA IN THEATRE

Cine Adda

Tuesday evening's adda topic at Ektara Mancha was Influence of Theatre on Cinema. Moderated by actor Chaiti Ghoshal, there were a galaxy of stars who have been passionate about both theatre and cinema throughout their career. Starting from Sabyasachi Chakraborty, Debesh Chattopadhyay, Deb Shankar Halder, Rajatava Dutta, Subhasish Mukhopadhyay and Shantilal Mukherjee, everyone spoke about their vision on the interface between theatre and cinema.



Debesh Chattopadhyay who had made a film on Keya Chakraborty called *Natoker Moto*, mentioned that even proscenium theatre is not rooted in India. When Hiralal Sen made his first film *Alibaba*, the entire film was staged and he then filmed the theatrical process. He feels that images in both cinema and theatre are constructed. Only the technology is different. Film-makers have not explored the language of cinema enough unlike theatre directors who have delved deep into theatre language, he opined.

Rajatava Dutta said that as cinema began by taking inspiration from theatre, it used to be very verbal in the beginning. This has changed gradually. In cinema you can change a thousand locations. Each sigh, each glance can be accentuated in cinema through close-ups. However in theatre in order to reach these nuances to the audience in the last row, the acting has to be accentuated. Dutta also said that whether in terms of form or content or human resource, cinema has been greatly enriched by theatre. He mentioned Al Pacino who had once said that when acting in long shots, he acts theatrically. Nowadays, theatre too has back projections. When an actor is in front-stage and the spotlight is on him alone, it also looks like a close-up.

Subhasish Mukhopadhyay reiterated that cinema is intrinsically connected to theatre and to reinforce his point he mentioned that a film script is known as screenplay or "chitronatyo". Actors who joined cinema directly without the discipline of acting in theatre, often take



up theatre later to enrich themselves. He mentioned Satyajit Ray's *Nayak* where through Uttam Kumar's dialogue, Ray spells out the difference between theatre-acting and cinema-acting, "Camerar samne oti obhinoy cholena" (loosely translated: 'Overacting does not work in front of the camera'). However, he also suggested some overacting is required in commercial films.

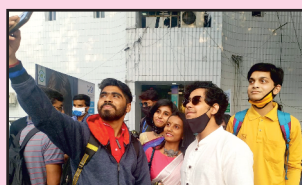
Deb Shankar Halder felt theatre and cinema provide different experiences. Theatre acting, he believes, requires a lot of discipline and is a continuous process while it can be a frustrating experience working in a film. He recalls an experience that Ashok Mukherjee had with the late Utpal Dutt during the making of *Jhor*. Dutt who was brilliant while directing theatre seemed completely at sea while on the sets of *Jhor* when Ashok Mukherjee arrived. After a patient wait of four hours, Utpal Dutt finally came face to face with Ashok Mukherjee and asked in a distressed voice, "Tumi ki amay part ta pherot debe?" (Will you reject my role?). To Halder both art forms stem from the same art practice and whether one wants to act on stage or on screen is an individual preference. He remembers that Soumitra Chattopadhyay started motion picture application on stage.

Shantilal Mukherjee recalled how Amitabha Bhattacharya's *Raktakarabi* (the film) used 95 percent of dialogues from Tagore's play and that worked perfectly on screen.

Sabyasachi Chakraborty in his usual humble manner stated that he is the least qualified to speak on the subject. However he acknowledged that theatre is ancient whereas cinema is a relatively new form. Theatre started with speech, poetics, narratives and so on. Therefore the influences of other arts including theatre on cinema are but natural.

Deb Shankar Halder rounded up the evening with a quote from Tagore where he said, "Shabhabiker porda phank koriya ontorer leela je dekhaite pare, tahai obhinoy." (Acting is nothing but the capability to reveal one's inner emotions) The session ended with everyone singing "Kotha Bolona" from *Norok Gulzar*, the music of which had been set by late Debasish Dasgupta, a music director par excellence.

DYSTOPIAN DEBUT



A press meet for the short film *Coldfire* was held on the fifth day of the 26th Kolkata International Film Festival. National Award winning actor Riddhi Sen was present at the session to discuss his debut film. Sen's sci-fi is based on Nabarun Bhattacharya's short story and its relevance in contemporary times pushed the director to conceptualize the film.

He mentioned how the issues of class, caste and religion cannot be eradicated but should be addressed through cinema. Riddhi Sen stated, "Even though we're depending on the advancement of technology, we're losing our core values in this mechanical world." The 30 minute film with an underlying wry sense of humour kept the audience gripped.

AN AUDACIOUS RETELLING

Miss Marx, a film by Susanna Nicchiarelli was screened on Tuesday at Nandan I under the Cinema International category. The biopic narrated the rarely told story of Eleanor Marx, the youngest daughter of Karl Marx and how she evolves to become one of the pioneers in blending socialism and feminism. The passionate but tragic love story aroused varied emotions:

Rupkatha Dam, a media student, found the film to be an intense clash between political ideologies and emotional connections that Marx's daughter embodied.

Ashesh Mitra, who is acquainted with Karl Marx's ideologies, found the film enjoyable and educational enough to make him go home and read up more about Eleanor Marx.

Yubasana Kapas commented that Nicchiarelli's film feels like its own kind of manifesto, one in which period pieces can speak plainly and freshly to the present.

Shrestha Ghosh expressed how she expected a lot more essence in the story, but all that she could take away was the beautiful music and editing of the film.



CELEBRATION OF YOUTH



Biler Diary directed by Biswarup Biswas was screened this year in the memory of Swami Vivekananda as part of the Youth Day Celebration. The film revolves around Anabil and his inspiration, Kanuda, from his school hostel.

After the screening the audience shared their experience:

Soumyajit Bose, a teacher, exclaimed what a magical experience it was to go back to his alma mater, as the film had been entirely shot at the Ramakrishna Mission, Narendrapur campus.

An excited **Arghya Sarkar** explained how relatable the film was in terms of the emotions it evoked - the nostalgia of childhood and visuals of familiar nook and corners.

- Zoya Khan

A TRIBUTE

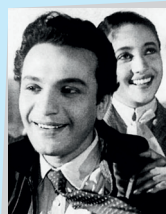
Director Debaditya Bandopadhyay interacted with the press about his 2012 film, *8:08 Er Bongaon Local*. The film had been screened as a special tribute to actor Tapas Pal. A news report headline had sown the first seeds of the film in the director's mind. From its very inception, he had visualized Tapas Pal as the protagonist and wanted to convey an ordinary man's struggle through his character. Bandopadhyay mentioned how he grieves the actor's demise. "It was a challenge to present a real life incident in a fictionalized form, that too as a commercial film" he concluded.



Editor's Pick



Chhoti Si Baat
1976 | Colour | 123 mins
Director : Basu Chatterjee
Country :India
Rabindra Sadan
Time : 3:30pm



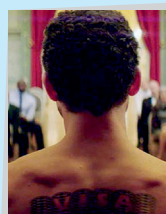
Saptapadi
1961 | B & W | 163 mins
Director : Ajoy Kar
Country : India
Rabindra Sadan
Time : 12 Noon



Laila In Haifa
2020 | Colour |99 mins
Director : Amos Gitai
Country : Israel
Nandan I
Time : 7pm



Bandar Band
2020 | Colour |75 mins
Director : Manijeh Hekmat
Country : Iran
Nandan I
Time : 12 Noon



The Man Who Sold His Skin
2020 | Colour | 104 mins
Director : Kaouther Ben Hania
Country : Tunisia
Nandan I
Time : 3.30pm



Oskar & Lilli
2020 | Colour | 102 mins
Director : Arash T. Riahi
Country : France
Nandan II
Time : 6pm

BHUBANMOY BHANU



Sarmishtha Chakraborty aka Babli and La Utsov's documentary, *Bhubon Moy Bhanu* on the legendary comedian and actor Bhanu Bandopadhyay evoked nostalgia amongst all present at the screening. Eminent artists from the industry who had worked with the legend or knew him in person, and his children - Basabi Ghatak, Pinaki and Gautam Bandopadhyay spoke on the comic spirit of the actor. Entirely shot during the lockdown, the film was screened as a tribute to the actor's birth centenary at the 26th edition of KIFF.

Actor Prosenjit Chatterjee acknowledged the charm and talent of Bhanu Bandyopadhyay at the onset of the film. Actor-director Aparna Sen credited the legend as one of the major influences in Bengali cinema, not just for his excellent comic-timing but also for his diverse potential as a performer. Rituparna Sengupta expressed her misfortune at not being able to work with him or to meet him in person. She concluded by thanking him for his enormous contribution to the film industry.

The documentary was followed by a press conference and screening of *Bhranti Bilas*. Subhasish Mukhopadhyay went on to talk about the way Bhanu Bandyopadhyay glorified the Bangal Bhasha (East-Bengal dialect) through his comic acting. He drew parallels between the illustrious comedian Charlie Chaplin and Bandopadhyay. Actor Shaheb Chatterjee mentioned that the legend had set a benchmark through his political satires, which has declined since his demise.

- Sukanya Deb



UPCOMING EVENTS

Topic : Is Comedy Dialogue Dependent?

Venue : Ektara Mancha

Time : 5pm.

Moderator : Biswanath Basu

Speakers : Rituparna Sengupta, Raja Chanda, Manali Dey, Pinky Banerjee, Anirban Chakraborty, Tulika Basu, Ankush Hazra, Aparajita Addhya



PRESS MEET

- Virus by Anindya Bose at 2pm.
- Bish (Bengali Panorama) by Jyotishman Chattopadhyay (Director), Shantilal Mukherjee and Anindya Banerjee at 3pm.
- Sahobashe (Bengali Panorama) by Sumana Kanjilal (Producer), Modhura Palit (Cinematographer), Anubhav Kanjilal and Isha Saha at 4pm.

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