HOU shalt not ever depict the bitter facts of 1971" - had the ten commandments dawned on Moses from the Film Censor Board of Bangladesh instead of from the Almighty, this particular commandment, no doubt, would top the list, The followers of Moses were lucky. They could get away with any of the commandments. But we, the hapless filmmakers of Bangladesh, by no means, can evade the dictates of our omnipotent censor.

The Censor Board wants to chop off ten large chunks of celluloid from my film "Nadir Nam Modhumati" ("The river named Modhumati") both from the visuals and the soundtrack. When consecutive two films of a director receive negative nod from the Censor Board, the other one being "Smriti '71" ("Remembrance '71"), people may tend to think that there must be something wrong with this film-maker! I know one "Aeropagitica" by one Milton should suffice to expose the sinisterity of the institution called censor. Yet I could not resist the urge to write a few words about censor in general. and the Bangladesh Film Censor Board in particular.

During the colonial era, in 1918, the British decreed an Act called "The British Cinematography Act". The raison d'etre of the Act was to see to that no impudent native would dare to picturise anything that disturb the smooth rule of the mighty Raj. During the semi-colonial Pak era, following the footsteps of their white masters, and based on the Act of 1918, the brown sahibs of the Pakistan bureaucracy enacted the Film Censor Regulations in 1963. A close look at the Bangladesh censor codes makes one ponder as if the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan are just two states with the same ide-

It all started with "Agami". the prize-winning short film which our Censor Board had refused to certify. Then followed "Dhushar Jatra", "Ekatturer Jishu" and now the beleaguered duo of mine "Smriti '71" and "Nadir Nam Modhumati".

"Smriti '71" is an hour-long documentary on the murder of the Bengalee intellectuals by the Islamic death squads during 1971. In a curfew-clamped city. Al Badr buses would come to pick up litterateurs, artists, teachers, playwrights, journalists, doctors: would blindfold

HOMOY", a group of

blished trends, recently held

an exhibition devoted to their

nouveau ideas at the Shilpakala

tures too are distorted and ex-

aggerated. At the side is seen a

dog chewing on the leg of a

man, taken from a severed

body. The last is a scene that

the artist had seen in real life

other horrifying image. This

has a grotesque man in a tight

fitting suit, who is shown as

approaching a sleeping woman

with a dao in his hand, bring-

ing to mind the numerous

stories of wife killing that one

reads about in the daily news-

In front of this composition

is another couple with a black

pit dug at the foot of the bed.

The woman sleeping beside

the man has an ugly grey pond

near at hand. Limbs of dead

bodies are seen stretching

torment portrayed is a two-

headed bust of a man with

fierce and quarrelsome birds

perched on the shoulder. One

as clutching and tearing the

wings of a bald headed cupid,

held upside down. Looming on

top of this is a bird figure por-

trayed with numerous hard

beaks. A fish with open mouth

Shishir says, "I feel I am

parent every day but it exists.

From negation comes affirma-

pictures. Mine are a bit differ-

blur or confuse the situation."

To add to the ugliness and

papers.

from the bed.

waves of water.

To the left is presented an-

in '71, when he was a child.

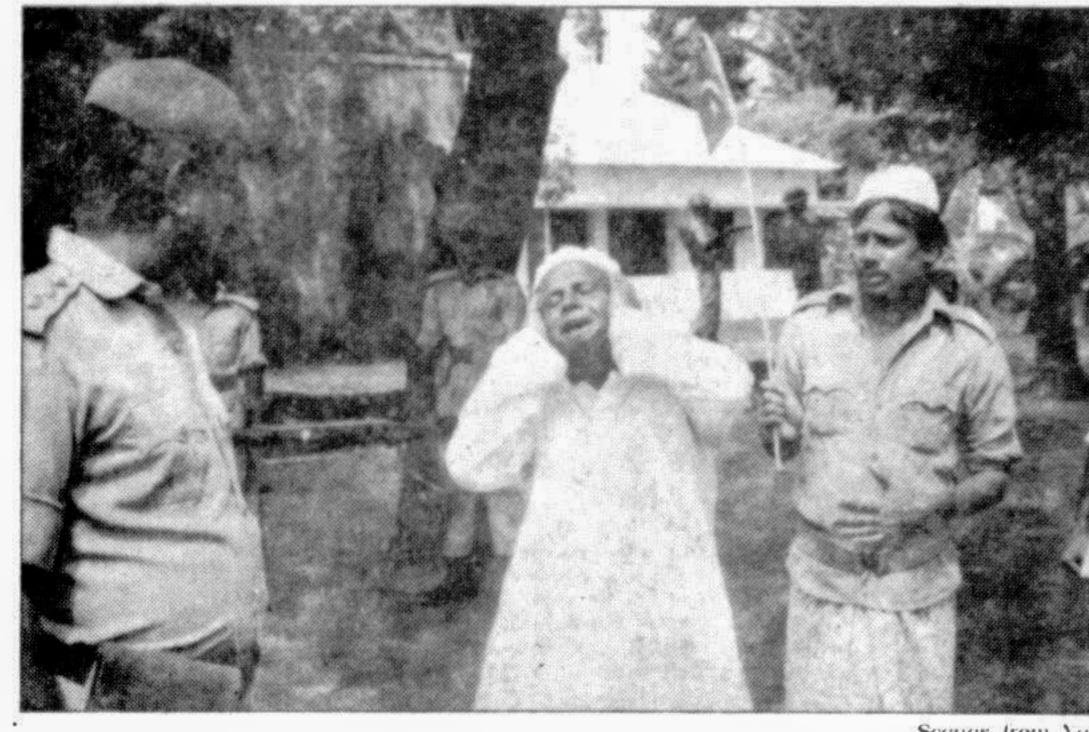
radical young artists

who are against esta-

FILM

Ah Censor and the Ten Commandments

by Tanvir Mokammel



communicator than other

forms of artistic expression, i.

e., books or theatre. That per-

haps explains why the Bangla

Academy produced book

unperturbed while the filmisa-

'Smriti '71" is on sale quite

Scenes from Nadir Nam Modhumati

"Smriti '71", remains gagged. Hamlet-theme, enacted on the The last film of mine against which the Censor Board has come up with ten objections is "Nadir Nam Modhumati", a 130-minute fea-

marshy lands around the Modhumati river during 1971. The Censor Board has objected that one character in the film, a freedom fighter. ture based on a true story and tells the story of Abraham and

> known Semitic story may figure in quite naturally. From Joyce to Fellini, it is an established practice by the artists all over the world to explore and to reinterpret myths in contemporary social contexts. We the artists of Bangladesh are bound to become very limited if we are not allowed in our artworks to explore and reinterpret myths surrounding us and along with which we have grown up in our Muslim

Ismail. Now the film "Nadir

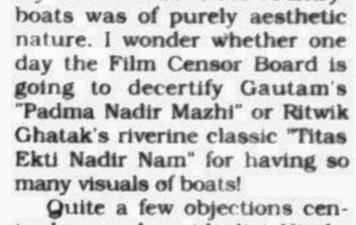
Nam Modhumati" is a story

about the relation between a

father and a son. So this well

family milieus. One pundit of the Censor Board has uttered the objec-

tion why there were so many boats in the film! Now the locale of "Nadir Nam Modhumati" where the events were enacted was a marshy land, a place where countryboats were the only means of transport. It never struck me that boat was the electoral symbol of an opposition party! could be considered a combi-



do not belong to any party and

my interest about the country-

tred around an idealist Hindu school teacher in the film who refused to leave the country, and his daughter - a widow. The objections regarding this particular subplot proves once more the out and out communal outlook of our ruling coterie, much akin to the Pakistani brand of communalism. During 1971 everybody of this land knew people belonging to which community were most vulnerable, who had the least chance to survive if caught by the Pak soldiers or by the razakars. I witnessed, and millions of people of this

land witnessed as well, how in the name of religion, the innocent men, women and children of the hapless Hindu community were killed, tortured and raped. And as an artist committed to our history, I am conscience-bound to portray that.

When a film-maker sets out to make a film on 1971 he has to depict the realities of the time - the incidents, the characters, the costumes, the ambience and the dialogues as precisely as possible. Now if the Censor Board goes on objecting any aspect of that period which is not of their liking, it becomes impossible to make a realistic film. The worst was, as a director of the film I was never given any chance to defend my points in front of the certifying committee. Freedom of expression is a basic tenet of democracy and an inalienable right of a citizen. The Article 39(1) (a) of the

Bangladesh Constitution guarantees the right of freedom of expression in the form of dialogue, writing, painting and by pictures. Bangladesh is a signatory to the Charter of the International Human Rights. Clause 19 of the Charter guarantees right of an individual to seek and expose truth indifferent to country, class or creed. I don't know what our Censor Board has to say about

Apparently the Censor Board's arbitrary decision regarding "Nadir · Nam Modhumati" seems utterly senseless. But a close look vindicates what Shakespeare's grand old Lear had to say, the reason is not the cause, and indicates the uncanny existence of a method in the madness. A precis of the ten objections placed and the changes suggested may be categorised as follows. The Censor Board wants the film.

- to uphold a communal view of history:

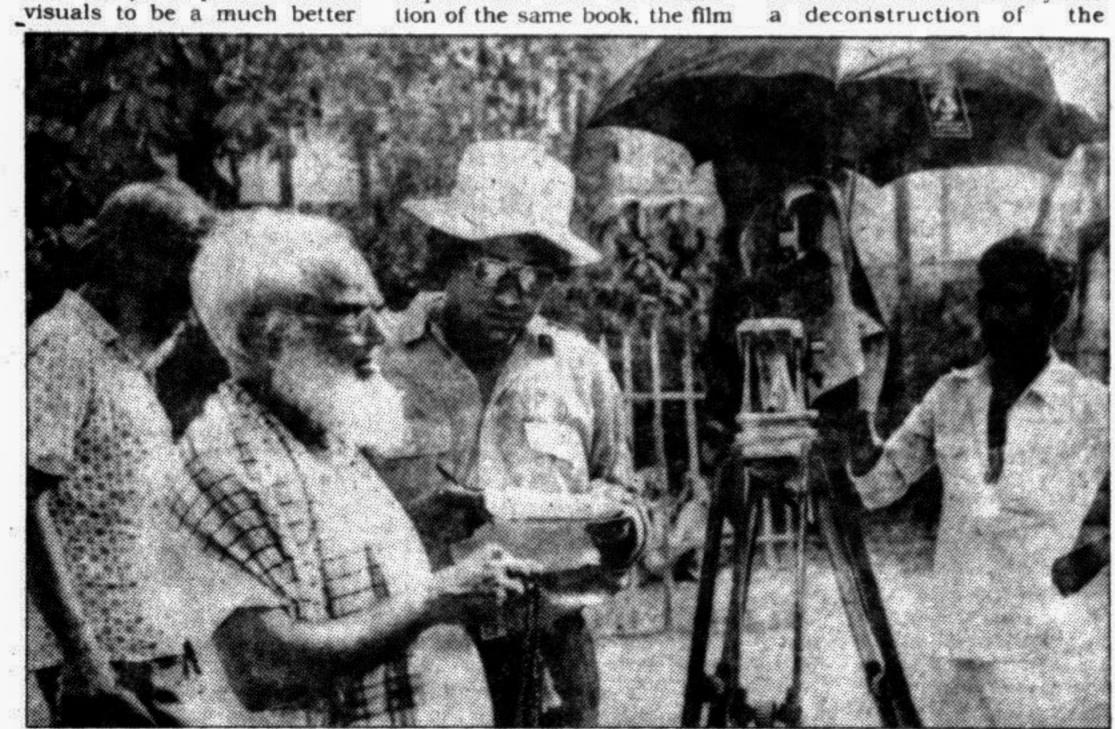
- to portray the events of 1971 completely disregarding the sufferings of the minority communities:

- to protect the good samaritan image of the Islamic fundamentalists by suppressing the evils done by these zealots in the name of Islam during

We are now approaching the threshold of the twentyfirst century. Our society is also not lagging behind. It will be a pity if the Film Censor Board still remains a provincial and orthodox body and fails to response to social changes. It must learn to operate in the climate of democratic tolerance. The ultimate censorious power belongs to the people. Let people judge, weigh, shun or love a film. Let people see it

Actually in this age of satellite TV and home video, the job of the Censor Board to regulate, certify and certify films have become quite redundant. With the appearance of dish antenna and the hightech electronic gadgets, the very concept to censor visual materials, is fast becoming as anachronistic as Don Quixote charging the sky with his rusty

Moses was lucky!



them and whisk them away.

Later their mutilated bodies

were discovered in the marshy

Mirpur. Cinematography with

its photographic realism has

over the years proved screen

lands of Rayerbazar or in

Departing from Established Trends

Tancir Mokammel (wearing cap) at the location of Nadir Nam Modhumati

Academy. "Shomoy's creations Dhali Al Mamoon has the are directly opposed to the Behula myth continued on "crafts" that sell easily at the from his earlier exhibitions. art galleries. Theirs is "a move only this time the subject is towards creativity and sensualpresented in a more abstract ity". The group, which began in manner than before. The artist '79, held its first exhibition in has used cement, stone dust, '84. Its total membership is synthetic glue and textile colour in his most recent Shishir Bhattacharjee's work. Behula is portrayed by "Come and See the Game" is simple scratches which stand perhaps the most striking enfor her flowing hair. In front is try in the array of soul searchthe abstract image of the boat ing creations by members of in which the subject floated. "Shomoy". Done in black and The three canvases - the two white it has a nightmarish triangles plus the square put quality and presents a sleeping close together - reminds one couple - the man having two of a boat. The river water imheads, four gigantic eyes and ages are brought by circles and two mouths. Instead of thumbs curved lines on the triangle. he has snakes growing out of While one triangle is an extenhis hands. By his side lies a sion of the central square the partially clad woman. Her fea-

by Fayza Haq

other is a vermilion red. Like Shishir Bhattacharjee's work, Dhali Al Mamoon's creation is very experimental and certainly not for the consumption of the average viewer. Unless the artists explain their work one can hardly comprehend what they are about.

"We should consider the socio-cultural situation around us. We should search for a new language for art which is connected with our environment," Dhali insists.

Saidul Huq Juise's Welcome I" is an obvious mockery of religious bigotry. It depicts the figure of a priest, held by white angels. The

curved lines are meant to invoke the domes of mosques. In "Welcome II", the bearded and capped priest is seen swinging blithely with an angel. The work is done on plywood in which the colours are punched in. Instead of working with a brush the artist has worked with a roller. The forms are repeated so that the wings. body and limbs are done with four strokes instead of one.

Juise's other work has two masks on a broken clock. In his earlier exhibition of masks at La Galerie the artist was dealing with craft work rather than art. This was sand mounted on plywood. It was neither entirely sculpture nor a piece of pure graphics - it





nation of the two.

Lala Rukh has done sculpture pieces which are certainly very different from the sculpture items that are sometimes kept in bourgeois homes for decorative purposes. In one called "Crossing" old newspapers have been used for the main figures. The sand represents land, while the blue mass of polythene is the water. The artist has used the raw red. yellow-ochre and blue that one sees on rickshaws and buses in Dhaka. "People of the Delta" and "Feline" had similar simplified forms with deliberate distortions in them.

Death, defeat, suffering and humiliation are to be seen in Dilara Begum Jolly's depiction of the snakes developing from nature, growing from treetops, shrubs and hedges. The miserable fate of wronged women in Bangladesh are shown as the product of fatwabazi in her brown and blue acrylic painting. "I have put colour and forms to my imagination," Dilara explains.

The young artists of the "Shomoy" group are protesting against old forms and are holding up the image of the prevailing corruption in the society around them. They are not out to paint idyllic or nostalgic dreams or please the viewers with a dazzle of colours or forms.

They did not care even if they gain nothing from their sale. The object of their exhibition is to wake up the viewers to the realities of the grave socio-economic situation around them. By portraying awesome and bewildering images the artists wish to shake up the composure of the people and make them admit the existence of the inequalities and inadequacies around.

Imprisoned People

Continued from page 10 nous, so until new statistics on Aborigine life have been impossible to obtain.

As well as disposing of myths, the survey uncovered the extent of Aboriginal deprivation which had been concealed in overall national figures. Nearly one-third worry about going without food. Only a quarter own their home compared to nearly threequarters of non-indigenous Australians. One in five Aboriginal dwellings accommodate more than six people.

David Byrne draws hope from the figures: "Now we can tell the government: "These are problems. This is the data. Now give us the resources and the expertise so we can bring the status of Aborigines up to the rest of Australian society."

ENTERTAINMENT

Viewing Video

by Lenin Gani he saw the French Revolution

ASED on the novel by Louisa Alcott Mary, Little Women depicts the March family, or, to be more precise, the four March daughters and their mother Susan Sarandon, trying to make the best of their economic hardship.

In the early years, they enact their fantasies by writing short plays. But later the girls discover that living in the real world means only finding a

and destruction of the world by Adolf Hitler. Nostradamus began life as

doctor and was supposed to have invented the remedy for plague. But astrology and magic were more profitable than medicine. His gift also got into trouble with the church. There was even an attempt on his

For any history buff this is a

ture story about a young boy and his dog who are trapped on an island for more than weeks. Angus was looking forward

Far From Home is an adven-

to going on a first fishing trip with his father. Everything was going ac-

cordingly until their boat encountered rough weather. Angus' father was rescued however his son and their dog (Yellow) are not so fortunate.

Although the film was supposed to be about the adventures of Yellow saving his master. in fact, it's Angus who takes centre-stage.

Ryder/

Mimi Rodgers/Bruce

Harry Hamlin/Kabir

Tcheky Karyo/Am-

anda Plummer/

Richard Burton/

Kirk Douglas/Tony

Elizabeth Taylor/Van

Doris Day/Ronald

Jonathan Ke Quan/

Rhys

Eddie Saavedra

Chuck Norris

Kathy Long

Curtis/Janet Leigh

Elizabeth Taylor

Bedi/John Savage

Davison/Jesse

Rutger Hauer

Fedric March

Johnson

Reagan

Sofia Loren

Bradford

			60
Salaria Salar	Mary I		-
A. S. Carlotte			
3 3 3	San .		
s etc.	7 . 49		
-7.0	427		
	e de la composition della comp	* * ±	
- 2 2 L 7 7		84. B	
M. Company		4	
47.70	48		en.
	150		
	MA		
	103		
	-190		
.2 %	- 10		
Kita a 🕰			
and the same	Marian	and the	
	- 1		1000

suitable companion for life Of them, two tie the knot

early on and one dies of a fatal disease. Only Winona Ryder tries to pursue a career as a writer in New York. There she meets a German professor



(Gabriel Bryne) who encourages her to write about her family which she does with instant success. Needless to say, Ryder too gets married.

Nostradamus recounts the life and times of the famous French astrologer and soothsayer Michael de Notredame (1503-1566) who rocketed to fame when some of the rythmed predictions in his book 'Centuries' (1555) appeared to come true. In one of them he had written The young lion will overcome the old one in cruel battle by strange duel." Here he referred to Henry II losing an eye during a jostling contest in 1559. Another time

ENGLISH NAME TYPE CAST Little . (Drama) Winona Women Gabriel Bryne/Susan Sarandon Sigourney Weaver/ Death And Ben Kingsley/Stuart The Maiden Wilson

(Adv)

(Act/Thrill

-er)

(Action)

From Home Op Centre (Written by Tom Clancy) Nostradamus (Historical) Alexander The Great The Vikings Last The Time I Saw

(Rom) Paris **Butterfield 8** (") Desire Under

The Sun The Winning Team Breathing Top Dog The Stranger The Mosaic Project The High

Crusade Galaxis Skinner A Thousand Heroes

Blood Sport Final Combination Dial M For Murder (Dir: Alfred Hitchcock)

23. Deconstructi ng Sarah The Never Ending Story III

Drohkal

Tagdeerwala

John Tabler/Ben Marley John (Comedy) Davis/Rick Overton (Scifi) Brigitte Nielsen/ Richard Moll (Horror) Ted Raimi/Ricki Lake Charlton Heston/ (Drama) Richard Thomas/ James Coburn lan McShane (Thriller) Michael Madsen/Lisa Sinclair

(Rom/ Thriller) (Children's Adv)

HINDI

TYPE (Drama)

(Rom/Act)

Venkatadesh/Raseens

NAME Bandit Queen God And Gun (Action)

CAST Jackie Shroff/Raj Kumar Nasiruddin Shah/Our (Social) Puri

Source: Film Fair Video and other Clubs.