

Interview

Art for heart's sake

Goutam Ghose talks about the film world around him

INDIAN High commission in Bangladesh screened a documentary on Bismillah Khan, a world famous Sanai maestro of the Indian Sub-continent by celebrated film maker Goutam Ghose on October 5. While Goutam's camera takes the audience along the alleys of Benaras, favourite city of this giant musician, he makes use of 'Pagla Sanai' as background music in his documentary. When Sanai ceases to play the audience listens to Bismillah Khan reminiscing his days of childhood and his immeasurable love and devotion to music.



Goutam Ghose

Goutam Ghose is no stranger to the art of filmmaking. He is known for his inimitable style and socialistic touch. Therefore, it's no surprise that his movie Dekha, starring legendary Bengali film actor Soumitra Chatterjee and actress Indrani Halder, won the best regional film award in this year's National Film Festival.

Following are excerpts from an interview with this great film maker: Q: How do you feel about the controversy that has plagued this year's National Film Festival Awards? Well, to tell you the truth, I am extremely pained over the fraudulent manner the jurors declared this year's awards.

Chatterjee followed suit. Pained and embarrassed at the injustices meted out to him, Chatterjee says, "Why should I accept an award that is given merely on lobbying skills? I have been associated with Satyajit Ray for so long, yet no one ever bothered to notice my talent."

"Now they have chosen to appease me at the fag end of my career by announcing a special jury award. I feel insulted. I had rejected an award in the past for the same reasons and my contention remains same even today."

Equally upset is Ghose, who was the jury president in last

year's National Film Festival. The renowned film director now plans to write to the President of India vindicating his refusal of the award for best regional movie.

Q: How do you feel about the controversy that has plagued this year's National Film Festival Awards?

Well, to tell you the truth, I am extremely pained over the fraudulent manner the jurors declared this year's awards.

However, my decision to return the award for best regional film for Dekha was not a publicity stunt, for I don't believe in sensationalism. I had to express my anguish and pain at the distressing reports in a section of media, which showed how the jury members had fallen prey to nepotism and lobbying.

To say that I was appalled would be an understatement. It was shocking to see jury members walking out of the Board in protest. Therefore, what I did was natural and a token protest of sorts against all malpractice

that has tainted this year's awards. I am writing to the President of India justifying my stand and suggesting how things may be improved in future. Isn't it a shame that corrupt practices have sullied the National Awards, which are associated with the President? After all, the same awards were previously known as the President's Awards. To restore their lost glory, we must revamp the entire system under which such prestigious awards are declared.

Q: You were a jury member for two years and headed the jurors last year. Did you ever find actors or participants lobbying for favours?

Yes, but when I functioned as a mere jury member for two years, I only came across passing references to irregularities. Even last year when I headed the Board, there were many instances of people trying to influence jury members. But this year to hadh ho gayee (exceeded all limits).

The truth is out there for everybody to see.

Q: Would you elaborate on what most irked you when you

were jury president?

To give you an instance, the manner in which Kiron Kher was adjudged best actress for her role in Bariwali was not technically justified. It was evident during the screening of Bariwali that Kiron had used a dubbed voice. In fact, Rita Koiral, who had given voice for Kiron, claimed it was her (Rita Koiral's) voice in the movie.

I was astonished to see Kiron mention that it was her original voice in the movie in the application form. Since it was stated in her application form, we couldn't do anything. Worse, I was told that even participants influenced the judgments. Some



Stills from his films

told me that a group of agents influenced the process in Delhi during the Film Festival.

But all these are difficult to prove. Last year, after announcing the National Awards, I announced in a press conference that I had congratulated those who had lost out at the awards. I did it primarily because none of the judges had been able to evaluate their performances convincingly.

Q: To what extent has this year's controversy affected the credibility of the National

Awards?

I think the damage is irreparable. The Director of film festivals and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting have a lot to do before they can restore the lost glory. They have to revamp the entire system. From selection of jury members, to the duration of viewing for nominated movies, everything must be changed.

Q: What are the suggestions in your letter to President K R Narayanan?

For example, I don't see the logic of short-listing over 150 films for final viewing.

We get more than 150 feature films every year under the

do justice to their duty? There is no time left for discussing the merits and demerits of the movies in question.

In such a scenario, there is always scope for major slips and mistakes. Therefore, I have suggested that such vast numbers should not be screened. We can have preliminary rounds at a regional level and shortlist a selected number of films for final viewing.

For a thankless job like this, who will sit for ten hours everyday and screen movies for awards? There is hardly any in depth analysis on the idioms and languages of cinema. There are times when the jury mem-

bers leave midway? Q: Do you agree that this year's controversy is interlinked with the RSS and BJP? I can't really say, but such accusations may be true to an extent. Having said that, I am bothered by the quality of performance. But at the same time, politics should not be allowed to influence what is supposed to be an impartial decision-making process. Have you watched Daman and Pukaar, for which Raveena Tandon and Anil Kapoor have been given the Best Actress and the Best Actor Awards, respectively? No, I haven't seen either of their films. Therefore, I can't comment on legitimacy of

the awards received by them. Q: Do you think Anil and Raveena should return their awards?

Not at all. Why should they? India is a democratic country and both of them have been given the awards after a consensus. Our grudge is against the system and not the individual performers.

Courtesy: The Internet

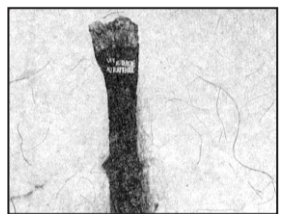
RECOMMENDATIONS

Milos Forman Retrospective

Zahir Raihan Film Society will screen six films by Hollywood-based Czech New Wave filmmaker Milos Forman at the Goethe-Institut Dhaka at Road No. 9, Dhanmondi from Saturday, October 6 to Monday, October 8. The programme-schedule: "Valmont" (1989) at 5:00 pm and "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" (1975) at 7:00 pm on October 7; "Amadeus" (1984) at 5:00 pm and "The People vs. Larry Flynt" (1996) at 7:00 pm on Oct. 8.

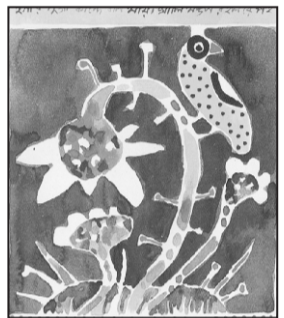
Debut photo show

Mulla Shawatul Alam Sagar first solo photography show is now being held at the Indian High Commission auditorium at 754, Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi. Open from 3 to 8 pm, Mulla's solo exhibition runs until October 8.



Graphic prints show

Noted French artist Jean-Michel Alberola's solo exhibition of graphic prints opens at the French cultural centre, Alliance Francaise, on



October 7 at 6:30 in the evening.

Six Seasons

Shipra Gallery at Dhanmondi (House#15, Road# 27 old) presents an exhibition on the theme six seasons. Leading artists of the country have captured in their canvases the rich variety of our seasons and their ambience. The month-long show will continue till October 14 everyday from 11 am to 8pm.

TV GUIDE

Table with columns for BTV, Ekushey TV, and ATN, listing various programs and their times.

Table with columns for HBO and STAR GOLD, listing various programs and their times.

Table with columns for Generation, STAR PLUS, and STAR MOVIES, listing various programs and their times.

Table with columns for TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS and CHANNEL [V], listing programs and their times.

Table with columns for PICK OF THE DAY and ZEE TV, listing programs and their times.

Table with columns for ZEE CINEMA and ZEE TV, listing programs and their times.

Table with columns for ZEE MUSIC and ZEE CINEMA, listing programs and their times.

Table with columns for HALLMARK and STAR NEWS, listing programs and their times.

Table with columns for SPORTS and ALPHA TV, listing programs and their times.