About Entertainment

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"Television has raised writing to a new low", said Samuel Goldwyn, the famous American film producer of late twentieth century. Obviously, as a man connected with films, most probably, he had script writers on his mind. He must have been a stickler for good stories. Unfortunately for him, these were in short supply.

The quality stuff he was looking for comes across clearly from two of his other smart quotes: "We want a story that starts out with an earthquake and works its way up to a climax"; and "The scene is dull. Tell him to put more life into his dying."

Television was emerging as a serious competitor to movies because of its availability at home and its menu of soap operas which ran high on popularity charts.

Whether it was an expression of frustration by Goldwyn over television intruding into the space of movies one cannot be too sure about. But that television presented a challenge to the film industry to get good scripts for films could not be in question. The electronic media with its variety of programmes topped up by firsthand anchorage enabling on spot presentation of authentic news and views caught on almost since its inception as a popular medium of entertainment, information and education.

But how are our own film industry and television channels doing? Dhaliwood is just about getting out of the rut of cheap films and embarking on serious filmmaking of considerable merit. Examples are: *Chorabali*, based on literary work of Syed Shamsul Haq; Nasiruddin Yousuff Bachchu's *Guerilla*, themed around freedom struggle won acclaim at Kolkata International Film Festival; another film named *Television* by Mostafa Faruqui and scripted by Anisul Haq was shown in the Canne Film Festival in France. Besides, it merited South Korean award for portraying the appeal of television to people. Tareque Masud's *Matir Moyna* inspired young filmmakers into going for creative art film cinematic ventures.

Cinema houses have been closing down and spaces allotted for these have been used to set up commercial ventures. One way to restore some of the ground cinema had lost to DVDs, VCRs and television channels would be to bankroll setting up of cinema halls. Cineplex is a good idea to promote enjoyment of films. The promotional approach can only receive an impetus from good films which too would need to be encouraged through financial support and Censor Board's open mind towards experimental art films.

There are only a handful of playwrights and scriptwriters in Bangladesh. Capacity building is needed in the area. The television and cinematic buffs emphasise the need for formal training in script writing. Dhaka University's film department and some private universities do impart training in some measure but there is so much more to be done. We are waiting for a full-fledged national film institute to emerge from the paperwork into materialisation on the ground.

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Television channels have by far the greatest potential for outreach among the widest possible audience inside the country and outside among the Bengali Diaspora. One of the major vehicles for cultural projections with entertainment is through television serial dramas and plays.

One of my colleagues gave his perspective on TV serials. I had the impression that village politics dominate these presentations woven around family rivalries reflecting on power relationships in the rural outback. The professional told me that this was a common feature in the 80s and 90s but has since been replaced by a strong presence of homour-based stories. But yes, urban-based themes are few and far between.

In the use of dialects, Pabna, Kushtia and Barisal, and to some extent, Noakhali predominate. Playwright Brindabon Das pioneered the use of local dialects which caught on as Salahuddin Lavlu with his *Ronger Manush*, a highly popular serial made generous use of dialects. To emphasise humour, sometimes, the scriptwriters take liberty with dialects.

Perhaps linguists should have an opinion on possible corruption of the dialects as they have already aired their views on FM radio channels' curious admixture of English and Bengali words in the dialogues.

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