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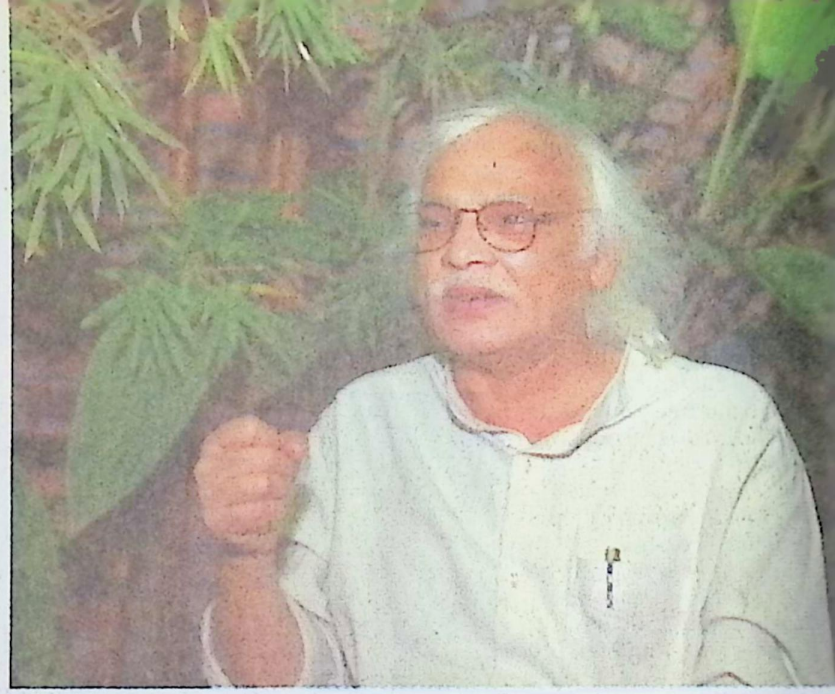


PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Manjare Hassin Murad

movies by some of the greatest filmmakers of the world, he gradually began to realise that films were a reflection of life and society. Through the works of other filmmakers, Topu began to understand that he needed to change focus to filmmaking.

Along with a group of friends and others interested in filmmaking, writing and music, the two formed a socio-political and cultural group called Rastar Gono Madhyom (RAGMA) with the hopes of creating products that would express their independent thought and style of filmmaking.

"We were inspired by Tareque Masud's vision of ferrying cinema to different parts of the country. RAGMA is a tribute to that vision, as we hope to take our music, writings and films to the people, forcing them to think, to dream, to get those brain cells to work," says Topu.

The duo will soon release their debut feature film 'Poton.' Initially, they thought of approaching TV channels but they were rejected as the channels were not interested in investing in a feature that had no star cast or commercial value. They eventually found a person within RAGMA who was ready to produce the film.

The film gives an insight into the lives and dreams of youngsters. 'Poton' tells the story of every youngster who hopes of making it big quickly.

"We placed more importance on the image and sound production of the picture, as we think that the plot of a story is not as important in a film, as the image or sound. We need to remember that films are an audio-visual media. Thus, maximum attention should be given to these two aspects," says Shekhar.

Both Shekhar and Topu believe that with independent films have chances of growing if there's more variation in mainstream cinema. People will be exposed to different styles and techniques in commercial films, and their tastes will develop accordingly. Thus, they will be able to give more space to independent films.

After 'Poton', the duo will concentrate on a documentary on the political condition of the region from 1947 to 2013. They are currently busy with research work of this project as well as with the promotion of their debut film.

"Independent filmmaking is like a relay race. The earlier generation of filmmakers passed it onto us and we hope to pass it onto the next generation. Unfortunately, just like our predecessors, we also have to struggle with producing and releasing good work. The state of the film industry is such that there is no way to go but continue with this struggle with the hope of creating something valuable," says Shekhar with a smile.

The Child Prodigy

For Mohammad Abir Ferdous Mukhor, venturing into films was a natural progression; his father, Md Aftab Uddin, was a theatre artist and his uncle, Samsuddin Kayes, who passed away last year, was a noted film actor. Script narrations and rehearsals were a regular feature of Mukhor's childhood. From a very young age, Mukhor knew that films would not just be a passing hobby for him but his life and living.

"When I was in class 8, I would direct and organise cultural shows. It is then that a friend suggested that we try our hand in actual filmmaking. I participated in the second International Children Film Festival with a film," he adds.

Mukhor's film '3.2.1.0 Action' won a Special Prize at the fifth International Children Festival in Bangladesh. Another film 'Endless Waiting' was shown in a festival organised by Save the Children,