

A NOOB'S BANGLA CINEMA EXPERIENCE



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Bangla cinema appeared in my life in the form of snippets when I had to change between TV channels, criticisms from friends when they've actually watched them and Internet memes. I knew all the flaws, all the clichés and all 3-4 plotlines that repeatedly get adopted, but I've never watched one completely with any sort of attention. And that had to change.

To tick it off my summer bucket list, I took on the mission last Eid to not only watch a full Bangla film, but to experience it in a cinema hall. So a few days after Eid when dawaats subsided and I had enough salami money to spare, I called a few friends and went to the nearest hall to watch the only cinema they were screening, *Badsha - The Don*. With a generic name like that, I was hopeful I would be getting the classic Bangla cinema experience.

I went to the earliest screening of the day and there was a sizeable queue already formed. When buying the tickets we found that they've increased the VIP seat's price by 20 taka because of Eid. Such unforgivable act of robbery needed a proper *genjam* but the ushers with their cute little red bow ties prevented any of the sort. The interior of the two-storey building – adorned with posters and small descriptions of classics both local and

foreign from years before I was even born – was a treat for any movie enthusiast.

VIP seats meant we got to sit on the second floor that provided a snacks booth, phrased as “the greatest” by the hall itself, a chandelier in the middle of the auditorium ceiling, and a feeling of grandiose. The film would not start unless the seats are filled to the satisfaction of the administrative overlords and by the time it did I had completely mastered the tunes and lyrics of many ads of present day Bangladesh.

Before reviewing the movie in brief, let's first say what I expected from it. All shows and movies I've watched in recent times were heavily loaded with complicated plots, morally grey characters and a lot of *genjams*. As a break from all that negativity and realism, I hoped that *Badsha - The Don* would shower me with physics-defying stunts, a saint-like protagonist, beating all 117 goons at once, and getting the lady in the end – a plot simple enough to predict from viewing the first 15 minutes and a super catchy song every 10-20 minutes.

So how were the stunts? Excellent! The extra 15 loops of a flying CNG and flying moonwalks from goons after getting hit really pumped up the audience. Add the organic “DHISHOOMAIK!” sound to every slap and kick alike and you get a solid fight scene. The goons were smart

enough not to attack the one protagonist all at once because experience tells them that the hero will jump from the middle with a battle cry (“HAIYAA!”) and all the surrounding goons would be pulled by the outlying vertical gravity never to be seen again.

How was the protagonist? The movie's namesake, *Badsha*, *Don Badsha* would've been a great example of how pop culture turns the new generation into rotten piles of narcissistic insecure douchebags, but unfortunately they didn't emphasise on that. But he did get the gal, and also the gal's BFF, who forgave him altogether in the end. Our hero also had the most annoying laughter I've ever heard. Did they try to copy the *Mirakkal* laugh track? I don't know, but I didn't mind too much because it subdued the loudest audience in the hall, who was luckily seated right beside me. No joke.

Was the plot satisfactory? Yes, at first. We were firmly introduced to the good guy and the bad guys of the film early in the film. We saw the protagonist win his first fight with a semi-powerful bad guy and his henchmen and consequently win the hearts of the irresponsible bystanders. We saw the mandatory teleportation to a foreign country. The confused and judgemental look the foreigners in the background gave when our characters were doing Bangla cinema stuffs was

mildly embarrassing. But then it started to get disappointing for me. Just when I thought I could enjoy a no-brainer classic Bangla cinema plot, we got blasted with plot twists after plot twists. I've witnessed “Luke, I'm your father” and “Promise me, Ned”, but the surprises the movie had in store for us topped them all. Even when the final fight scene was commencing I was struggling to figure out what exactly happened. I left the hall with a headache, which was caused firstly by the nonstop loud background score but mostly for the diabolical plot. The screenwriters failed me.

But there were catchy songs for distractions, right? This is where it gets the saddest. There were just three songs in the whole film. Just three songs in the whole span of 2 hours and 26 minutes. Although there were instructions of “How to set this fire track as your ringtone” conveniently placed on top of the screen, that didn't excuse filling up half the movie with plot progressions rather than song-and-dance sequences that symbolises the principal duo making out.

All in all, it was a fun experience albeit the message-filled, morality-inducing story I wasn't expecting. I will never forget the hero's horrific laughter, and the first of the three songs being about Eid, the taste of “Daal Bhaja” from the greatest snack booth and the cute little red bow ties.