“बॉलीवुड में जिन्हें आदर्श माना, उन्हीं के साथ काम करने का मौका मिला” – योगेश भारद्वाज।

योगेश भारद्वाज।
लेख: डॉ. तबस्सुम जहां

बॉलीवुड के उभरते कलाकार योगेश भारद्वाज न सिर्फ एक सफल अभिनेता हैं बल्कि कवि और कहानीकार भी हैं।

उनका जन्म रोहतक (हरियाणा) के एक छोटे से गाँव ‘बसाना’ में हुआ था। चूँकि उन्हें बचपन से ही भजन गाने और लिखने का शौक था, इसी शौक ने उन्हें एक बहुत बड़ी जागरण पार्टी में शामिल होने का मौका दिया। वह चार साल तक इस जागरण पार्टी से जुड़े रहे जहाँ उनके भजन बहुत लोकप्रिय हुए। बकौल योगेश, ”मैंने कभी नहीं सोचा था कि जब मैं बड़ा होऊंगा तो कला मेरा पेशा बन जाएगा। 12वीं की परीक्षा पास करने के बाद जब मैं रोहतक शहर के जाट कॉलेज में पढ़ने गया तो मुझे यूथ फेस्टिवल के बारे में पता चला। यूथ फेस्टिवल के दौरान एक नाटक के दौरान मेरी मुलाकात बॉलीवुड के मशहूर अभिनेता जयदीप अहलावत से हुई। उन्होंने मेरी प्रतिभा देखकर कहा कि मैं इस क्षेत्र में अच्छा कर सकता हूं। मैं उनसे बहुत प्रभावित हुआ और मैंने अभिनय को अपना जीवन बनाने का फैसला किया।”

साल 2012 में योगेश एक्टिंग की पढ़ाई करने के लिए रोहतक स्थित फिल्म इंस्टीट्यूट गए। वहाँ उन्हें समझ आया कि उनकी भूख ‘प्रसिद्धि’ की नहीं बल्कि ‘सिद्धि’ की है। वहाँ से निकलने के बाद उन्होंने तीन हरियाणवी फिल्मों में काम किया और कुछ म्यूजिक एल्बम का निर्देशन भी किया। जल्द ही उन्हें लगने लगा कि उनका कार्यक्षेत्र छोटा होता जा रहा है। उनके शब्दों में, ”संसाधन और पैसा दोनों कम पड़ रहे थे. कुछ नया सीखने और बड़ा काम करने के लिए मुझे ऐसी जगह जाना था जहाँ बड़े पैमाने पर सिनेमा बनता हो. दिसंबर 2017 के अंत में मैं सपनों के शहर मुंबई आ गया। यहाँ आने के बाद मुझे मुंबई के मशहूर कास्टिंग डायरेक्टर मिस्टर जोगी मलंग सर के साथ काम करने का मौका मिला।”

मुंबई आने के बाद योगेश भारद्वाज को काम के नये अवसर मिले। बाद में उन्हें बॉलीवुड की कुछ बेहतरीन फिल्मों में काम करने का मौका मिला। 2019 में योगेश भारद्वाज की एक के बाद एक तीन बॉलीवुड फिल्में रिलीज हुईं- ‘एक लड़की को देखा तो ऐसा लगा’, ‘एस पी चौहान’, ‘सैटेलाइट शंकर’। इन फिल्मों से योगेश ने बॉलीवुड की दुनिया में अपना नाम बनाया है। फिल्म ‘छिपकली’ और ‘कॉलेज कांड’ वेब सीरीज की सफलता ने योगेश भारद्वाज को सिनेमा जगत में एक मंझे हुए कलाकार के रूप में स्थापित कर दिया है।

योगेश भारद्वाज का मानना है कि निजी तौर पर और एक अभिनेता के तौर पर उन्हें ऐसी फिल्में पसंद हैं जो भरपूर मनोरंजन के साथ-साथ दर्शकों को समाज की कुछ छुपी और अहम सच्चाई से भी रूबरू कराती हैं। जिसके नायक आम लोगों की जिंदगी के बारे में बात करते हैं।

फिल्म छिपकली में काम करने के बारे में योगेश कहते हैं कि वह अपने पसंदीदा अभिनेता और गुरु मशहूर बॉलीवुड अभिनेता निर्देशक यशपाल शर्मा के साथ उनकी पहली निर्देशित फिल्म दादा लखमी में काम कर रहा थे तभी एक दिन उन्होंने कहा कि आप किसी की तलाश में हैं आपको बड़ी फिल्म के बड़ी भूमिका मिलनी चाहिए। लेकिन जब कोविड काल आया तो सब कुछ बंद हो गया। ऐसे में योगेश की लेखनी ने उन्हें बचा लिया। कविताएँ और कहानियाँ लिखते रहे। कोविड के बाद दोबारा मुंबई पहुंचे। एक दिन यशपाल सर ने फोन किया और मिलने को कहा। कहा कि तुम्हें एक बड़ी फिल्म में बड़ा रोल मिल रहा है। इस तरह ‘छिपकली’ बॉलीवुड में उनकी पहली मुख्य भूमिका वाली फिल्म बन गई।’

फिल्म छिपकली में अपने किरदार के बारे में वह आगे कहते हैं कि

छिपकली में उनके किरदार रुद्राक्ष नाम के एक निजी जासूस का है जो एक लेखक के घर उसकी पत्नी और बेटे की मौत का रहस्य जानने के लिए आता है। बाकी फिल्मों से छिपकली इसलिए अलग है क्योंकि अब तक हमने बहुत सारी सस्पेंस थ्रिलर सुनी और देखी हैं, लेकिन यह पहली दार्शनिक थ्रिलर है जो एक मर्डर मिस्ट्री को सुलझाने के साथ-साथ कई सामाजिक मुद्दों और विज्ञान के बारे में बात करती है।

मुंबई से जुड़े अपने संघर्ष के बारे में योगेश कहते हैं कि मुंबई आने के बाद उन्हें ज्यादा संघर्ष नहीं करना पड़ा। यहाँ आते ही उन्हें काम मिलना शुरू हो गया। उनके मुताबिक, “मेरा संघर्ष बाहरी से ज्यादा आंतरिक रहा है कि मुझे अपने बाहरी काम के साथ-साथ अपनी कला के जरिए भी अपने विचार व्यक्त करने हैं, जो एक कलाकार के तौर पर मैं समाज से कहना चाहता हूं।”

योगेश भारद्वाज के मुताबिक बॉलीवुड इस वक्त काफी विविधता के साथ काम कर रहा है। और वह हर तरह के किरदार करना चाहते हैं। इसके अलावा वह उन किरदारों को करना पसंद करेंगे जिनके होने या न होने से कहानी पर पूरा असर पड़ेगा।

हरियाणा सिनेमा जगत के लिए मील का पत्थर साबित हुई फिल्म दादा लखमी के बारे में योगेश का मानना है कि निस्संदेह दादा लखमी हरियाणा की अब तक की सबसे बड़ी और मजबूत फिल्म है। इस फिल्म ने देश के हर राज्य और विश्व मंच पर हरियाणवी संस्कृति को दर्शाया है। ये सिर्फ एक फिल्म नहीं बल्कि हरियाणवी सिनेमा की धरोहर है. अब अगर किसी को हरियाणा में विश्व स्तरीय सिनेमा बनाना है तो उसे दादा लखमी के मानकों से आगे बढ़कर काम करना होगा।

हरियाणवी सिनेमा और उसके कलाकारों के भविष्य के सवाल पर योगेश कहते हैं कि स्टेज ऐप के आने से हरियाणा के कलाकारों को अपना सिनेमा बनाने और उसे लोगों के सामने पेश करने का मंच मिला है। जो लोग मुंबई आने का सपना नहीं देखते थे और किसी कारणवश उस सपने को पूरा नहीं कर पाए उनके लिए अब अपने क्षेत्र में रहकर सिनेमा में काम करने के अधिक अवसर हैं।

बॉलीवुड के बड़े अभिनेताओं के साथ काम करने के अपने अनुभव को साझा करते हुए योगेश भारद्वाज कहते हैं कि सभी के साथ यह एक अद्भुत अनुभव था। अभिनय की पढ़ाई के दौरान जिन कलाकारों को मैं अपना आदर्श मानता था उनके साथ काम करना एक उपलब्धि की तरह था। वे

सभी दिग्गज अभिनेता हैं। उनके साथ काम करके मुझे बहुत सी नई चीजें सीखने को मिलीं और एक अभिनेता के रूप में खुद को अधिक परिपक्व महसूस किया।

योगेश भारद्वाज एक अभिनेता के साथ-साथ एक दिलदार कवि भी हैं। अपनी लेखनी और कविता संग्रह के बारे में योगेश कहते हैं कि उन्हें बचपन से ही लिखने का शौक रहा है। पहले वह भजन और गीत लिखते थे। लेकिन मुझे नहीं पता था कि एक दिन कविताएं इतना बड़ा आकार ले लेंगी और मेरी जिंदगी का इतना बड़ा हिस्सा बन जाएंगी। मेरा पहला कविता संग्रह पिछले वर्ष “रास्ते ही मंजिल हैं” नाम से प्रकाशित हुआ है, जिसे पाठकों का भरपूर प्यार मिल रहा है।

अंत में योगेश अपने प्रशंसकों और सिनेमा जगत में नए आए लोगों को संदेश देते हैं कि इस क्षेत्र को अपना व्यवसाय बनाने से पहले इसके बारे में सही जानकारी होना बहुत जरूरी है। यह पता लगाना जरूरी है कि क्या यह सिर्फ आपका शौक है या आप इसमें अपना सर्वश्रेष्ठ काम कर सकते हैं।

वर्ष 2023 में, योगेश की फिल्म ‘लॉस्ट’, ‘कड़क सिंह’ क्रमशः हिंदुस्तानी सिनेमा के दिग्गज अभिनेता श्री पंकज कपूर जी और यामी गौतम और पंकज त्रिपाठी जी के साथ रिलीज़ हुई। उन्होंने एक नाटक ‘अणु’ भी प्रस्तुत किया, जो उनके द्वारा ही लिखा, निर्देशित और प्रस्तुत किया गया था और इसे बड़ी सफलता मिली। उसी वर्ष उनका पहला कविता संग्रह “रास्ते ही मंजिल हैं” प्रकाशित हुआ और पाठकों ने उन्हें एक लेखक के रूप में दिल से स्वीकार कर लिया। बॉलीवुड में बतौर लीड एक्टर उनकी दूसरी फिल्म बनकर तैयार है, जिसका फिल्म फेस्टिवल्स का सफर शुरू हो चुका है। इस साल “बवाल” नाम की एक वेब सीरीज भी रिलीज होने वाली है जिसका निर्देशन राजेश अमरलाल बब्बर ने किया है।

आजकल वह अपनी पत्नी के साथ मुंबई में रहते हैं और सफलता हासिल करने के लिए अभी भी लगातार सीख रहे हैं। जल्द ही उनका एक और स्वलिखित नाटक भी रिलीज़ होने वाला है, जिसका निर्देशन और अभिनय योगेश भारद्वाज करेंगे।

Tarali’s musical experiment with Anup Baruah

Tarali Sharma’s cinematic song, ‘Upomar Sipare,’ is her latest contribution to the industry. She earned the National Film Award for Best Female Singer for the Assamese film ‘Akashitorar Kathare,’ a well-deserved recognition that thrust her into the national spotlight. Before receiving this accolade, her talent had been confined to the regional sphere. Once she transcended those boundaries, she faced the challenge of maintaining her prowess on a national scale. Working in a remote place like Assam, within a small film world with limited resources, it was difficult for her to maintain a national level in all her work.

Yet, through dedication and hard work, she sustained her capabilities and showcased her multifaceted talents as a singer, lyricist, music composer, and director for both stage

and film productions. She also served as a jury member in the National Film Award, enriching her with a wide variety of cinematic experiences. Her diverse experiences in these interconnected fields enhanced her creative pursuits, exemplified by her latest song ‘Upomar Sipare.’

Presented in a visual format, this song defies prevailing norms in music videos. Rahul Gautam Sharma, an upcoming lyricist-singer, penned the song, showcasing his praiseworthy command over the Assamese language. The song takes the form of a short film (duration 8 minutes), depicting emotional moments between a singer and her fan during a brief encounter. Tarali herself portrays the singer, staying true to her character.

The narrative unfolds as she encounters a young boy at a homestay near her house. Their gradual acquaintance reveals him as a devoted fan. The young boy purchases a biography of Tarali Sharma and asks her to sign the book. The book, written by Alex Figo, portrays the musical journey of Tarali Sharma. In the film, director Anup Baruah establishes her as she is and includes the fictional character of the photographer. Anup establishes her residence ‘Puwati’ (early morning), known to most culturally inclined people of Assam. Again, the homestay he shows is a fictional entity. This interesting mix of a real character with a fictional makes the narrative intriguing, diminishing the thin line between fact and fiction. When the photographer leaves, he gifts her a beautiful portrait, prompting Tarali to reflect on the unexplained bond they shared.

Anup Baruah, a renowned still photographer, crafts this sweet and concise film. Each frame is meticulously composed to convey the adjacent emotions of the narrative. Despite being dialogue-free, Baruah skilfully captures expressive moments.

As the central character, Tarali shoulders the responsibility of conveying all emotional nuances through the journey. The film may be short in length, but it exhibits the growth of a

drama feature film. Tarali effortlessly breathes life into the visuals, portraying subtle expressions with rapid transitions—a testament to her acting competence.

Bishnu Nath, portraying the young photographer, complements Tarali's performance by doing justice to his character. Cinematography by Chandra Kumar Das supports the simple yet underplayed dramatic narrative.

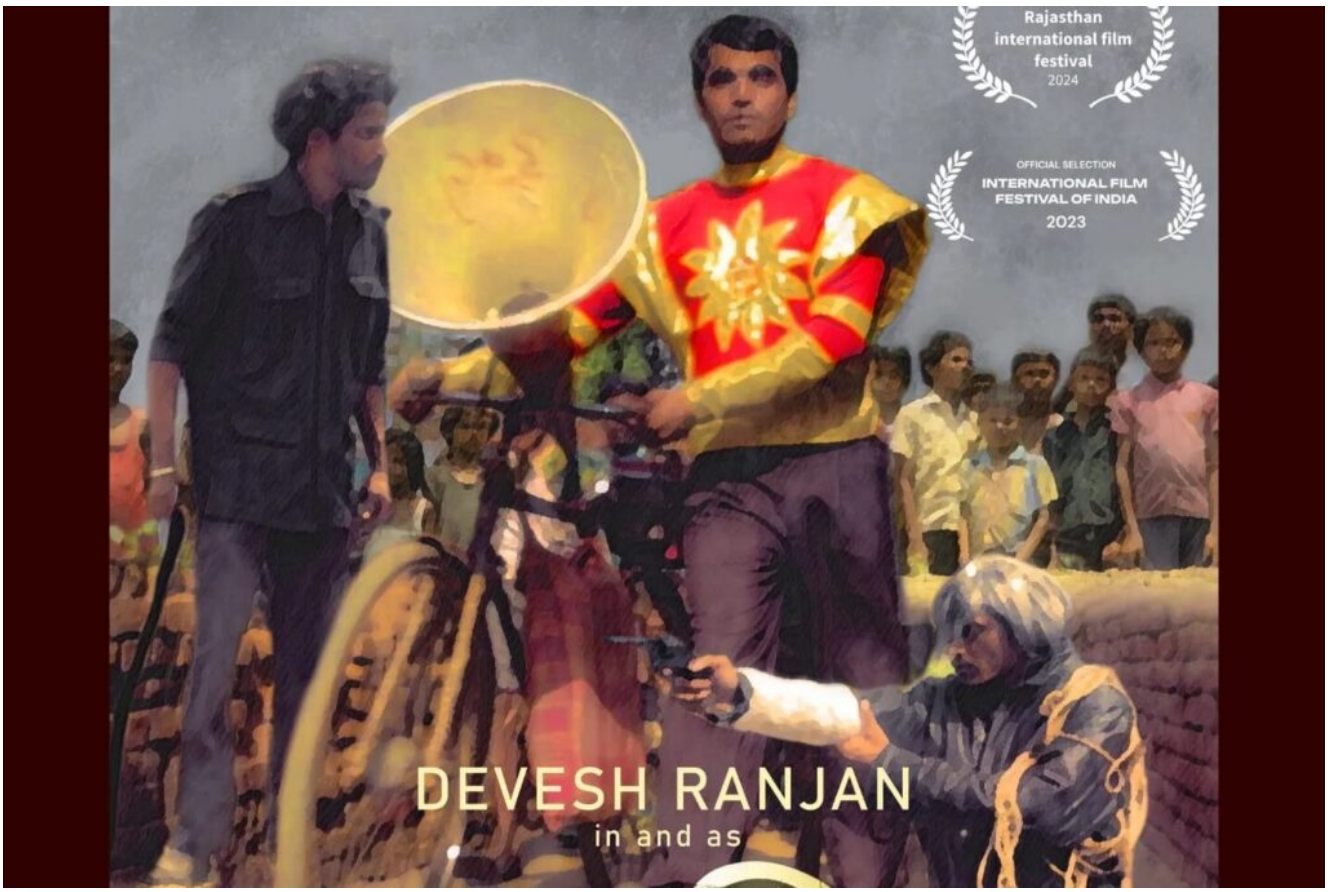
Integral to this creation is the song, serving as practical background music. It enhances the visual moods, with melody and instrumental sounds playing pivotal roles while the lyrics align with powerful visuals. The composition weaves the vocal part seamlessly into the entire musical narrative. As a busy music director in Assam, Tarali's vast experience prompted her to experiment with a different musical pattern for this song, combining instrumental and vocal elements to create a unique musical experience.

This experimental approach served as a crucial test for both the director and the music director. In the end, they have delivered a meaningful and out-of-the-box experience

—- Utpal Datta.

First published in The Daily Eye (www.thedailyeye.info)

Story of a Lonely Artist



Film Criticism | Behrupiya

It sounds pathetic, but the reality is that a huge number of folk art forms are on the verge of vanishing from the world. There may be many reasons for this disappearing state within our society. Several Indian films have been made on this existential crisis of folk art forms and the void it has created. Bhaskar Biswanathan's short film 'Behrupia,' based on a similar theme, has been selected for this year's Indian Panorama.

'Behrupia' is a familiar character in rural areas of India, mainly in the Hindi belts. Currently, these multifaceted 'Behrupiyas' are mainly confined to Hanuman, Shiva, and Kali forms. These three characters are immensely respected and worshipped by the common public. There are also stories about how kings and emperors used such 'Behrupiyas' for spying.

The film's 'Behrupiya' is a member of the present day's world. He carries a small sound system on his bicycle. He travels from place to place, performing his art of being a

‘Behrupiya,’ enacting popular dialogues from Hindi films and television serials. He also uses costumes to enhance the look of the character he plays. Most of his audience is comprised of children, with a small number being women. No matter how happy the children are, they cannot afford to support him financially. The village women also lack financial capacity, so some of them give rice and other food items. Incidentally, once his foot gets hurt, he cannot work. One day, while fetching water and returning home, he finds that his costumes are gone. Despite his unimaginable injuries, he wanders the village in search of his stolen costumes.The story is simple, and the audience is often familiar with the expected sadness and pain of the ending of such stories. The extinction of folk art is sad for connoisseurs, yet there is no way but to accept it as part of the evolution of time. The film is about the life of a modern-day Behrupiya. This modern Behrupiya is a creation of the story-writer. Such modifications will certainly hurt the traditional character of folk art, but they will also reveal a picture of the recent trend of folk life in a society where the influence of cinema and TV serials is unimaginable. The story writer-director may have thought that some modernization could give a new life to this endangered folk art form. In support of this, he shows that the costumes and dialogues of the characters attracted the children’s community, and some children have even expressed their desire to become a ‘Behrupiya.’ This positive attitude distinguishes the film from other films on the same subject. In Buddhadev Dasgupta’s ‘Bagh Bahadur,’ the folk artist died of exhaustion in the struggle for survival, announcing the tragic end of an art form. In contrast, Bhaskar Biswanathan’s film is a message of hope that the younger generation is showing interest in the multifaceted and going along with it, distinguishing the film from similar films.

The film’s lead actor, Devesh Ranjan, makes the character believable. His expressions were explosive, especially in the silent parts. Earlier, he successfully played the central role

in Kamakhya Narayan Singh’s ‘Bhor.’

A calm and lively picture of a village in Bihar is beautifully captured by the camera, creating the necessary local setting for the story. The camera plays a significant role in capturing the subtle expressions of the main character. Director of Photography Yogendra Panda has helped the director realize the vision of the director. The film is edited by Himanshu Dwivedi and Deepankar Sarkar. The editor’s skill is particularly noticeable in the scenes where the devastated ‘Behrupiya’ goes around looking for the clothes after they are stolen. In terms of the story, the character’s mind was restless and fast at that moment, but the injury to his leg prevented him from walking fast. The editor has balanced the pace of the film by properly controlling these two opposing motions. The music of the film also keeps the plot moving. The film is produced by Aditi Santosh Tapasvi and Bikram Viswanathan.

Two Assamese technicians were associated with the film in editing and BGM, and they are Dipankar Sarkar and Arnab Deka, respectively.

—- Utpal Datta

Review of Merry Christmas(movie) in the light of Western Classical Music

I am a big fan of filmmaker Sriram Raghavan and after Andha Dhun the expectations were high. His recent film Merry Christmas did not fail to amuse me. It was a rapturous experience to see his film in theatre. Witty dialogs, on screen flirting, old world charm of Bombay (not Mumbai as he wrote in title roll) and a Hitchcockian drama in a Victorian set up is all I needed for a thorough entertainment. However, there is more to it if you see details and feel the film. The screenplay is doubtlessly taut with twists and turns every 15 minutes; there is God in details. The visuals of Victorian Gothic and Art Deco buildings of Mumbai added a splendour. Particularly for people who like Mumbai, this movie is a treat

because Bombay seeps into it as a character. With an overtone of Christmas, the choice of cityscape cannot be better than Bombay in whole of India.

I never knew Katrina Kaif has so much left in her in terms of acting and histrionics. In Bollywood and regional films of India an actress is outdated after few years being in her peak. She is generally shown and seen as a Diva and an item number. Most of the actresses are out of business before they hit mid-life. So, in that kind of background Katrina has made a comeback and what a comeback it is!! Her charm added to her free willy nature of the character and surprisingly her histrionics later on exhibited the violence and cruelty in that character. Vijay Setupathy made “Non-Acting” his acting style. His witty one liners, awkward dance and subtle expressions made my day. His method acting made it a superb watching experience. And I must mention Sanjay Kapoor, who, in a brief role, was hilarious.

The movie is a dark comedy, a Noir film where two lonely souls with chequered past and shades of grey cross paths on a Christmas night and gets locked forever. You may love or hate the ending but last 15 minutes was extraordinary. And now comes the role of Western Classical Music in creating and maintaining the mood of this film.

I have observed earlier in Andhadhun how beautifully Sriram Raghavan used Beethoven’s Symphony no.5 to show the jarring visuals and rapturous moments. Similarly, the background music in “Merry Christmas” was heavily influenced by Western Classical Music. For example, during the gunshot the crescendo of Grieg’s Peer Gynt Suite no 1,“In the hall of the Mountain King” superbly helped to muffle the crime. If you hear this classical music piece you will relate how the slow tempo initially is growing to a thundering crescendo eventually within few minutes. For your reference I am pasting the Youtube link below. If you see the film you can relate to what I mean.

Similarly, to add class, Maria was playing Habanera from Carmen by Bizet. Listen to the video. Ronnie was constantly saying “Oh she is a classy woman.” In India, due to a colonial hangover, anything Western means sophistication and it implies that to enjoy western classical music, Opera particularly one needs good education and sophistication, which is treasured by many. So the Habanera from Carmen is a great choice to exemplify class.

And in the end Vivaldi’s Winter played for almost 10 minutes to the perfection. Starting with the Pizzicato which exemplified the sprinkling of doubt in the police officer’s mind, it moves on to a rise in tempo and tone, where swiftly the hidden things expose fast climaxed with the exchange of ring between two souls with tormented past. There is anxiety, hope, romance, despair, magic realism and baffle in that last 5 minutes superbly portrayed by Vivaldi’s Winter. Nowhere in Bollywood I expected Vivaldi’s Winter to personify the swift changes of human behaviour amidst the movie characters. Sriram Raghavan deserves a special mention for this intelligent use of western classical music to evoke and maintain feelings in a film.

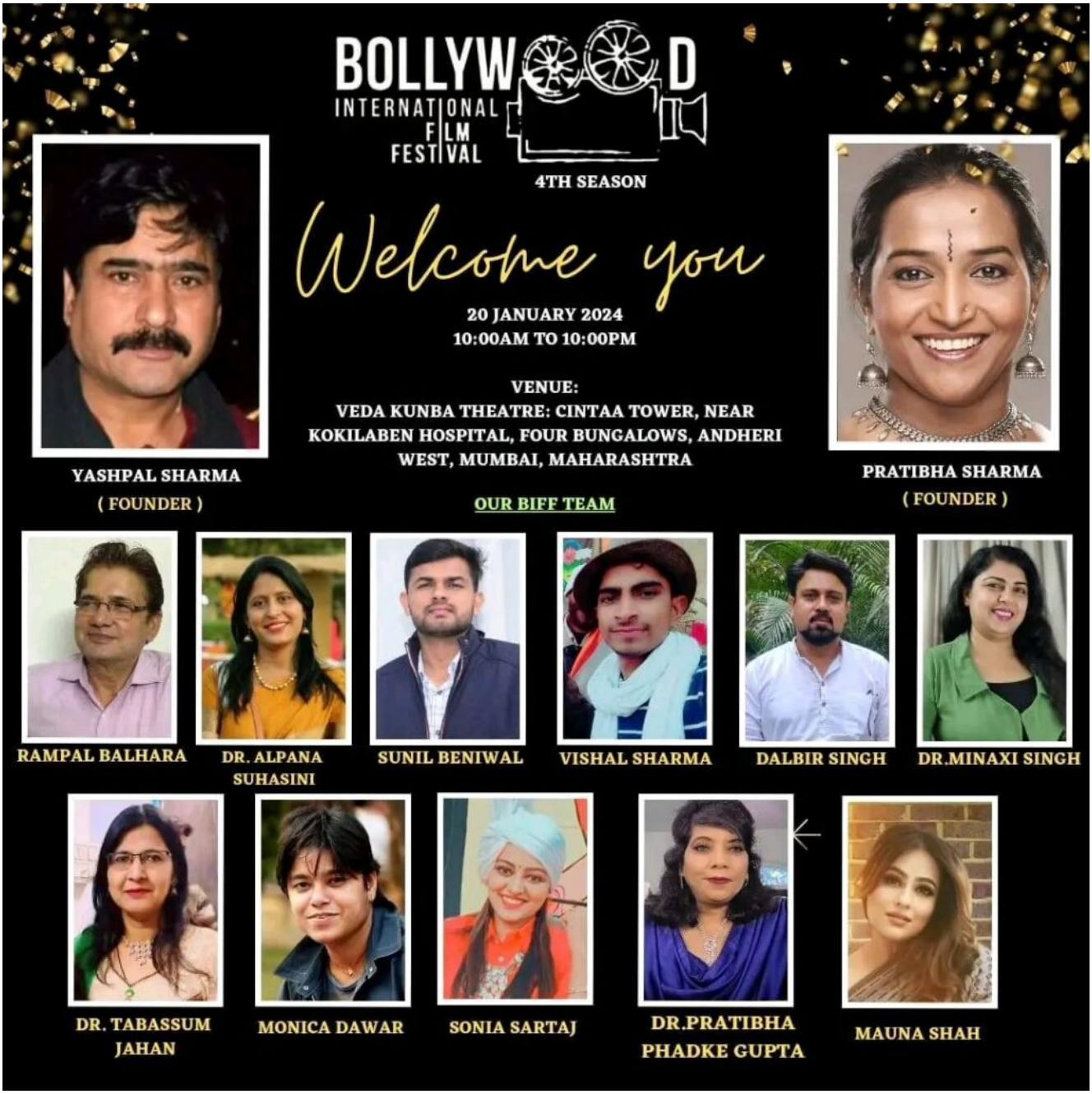
Earlier I have observed use of Western Classical Music pieces in a Satyajit Ray movie or Shyam Benegal movie. For example, Gluck’s Melodie from Orpheus and Euridicce was used in “Jana Aranya” by Ray and he also borrowed Mozart’s Symphony no 25 in Feluda theme in “Joy baba Felunath” or Mozart Symphony “Jupiter” and Requiem mass in songs of “Hirak Rajar Desh e”. Kamaleswar Mukherjee used Beethoven Symphony 5 first movement in his “Meghe dhaka tara”. Shyam Benegal films like Kalyug, Trikal or Mammo used music of Beethoven and Mozart. However, in Bollywood use of Western classical music motifs are few and far. In a refreshing take, Sriram Raghavan has used Vivaldi, Grieg and Bizet in “Merry Christmas” to reflect and set the mood.

Overall, the movie “Merry Christmas” brings a point that

“Content is King” in an industry flooded with Jawaans, Pathaans and Animal. Merry Christmas is a thoroughly entertaining movie where you have to sit on the edge not to miss the details. Particularly the edgy ending was something a movie goer will remember for a long, long time. In fact, Merry Christmas opens a new year of pure filmmaking and story telling in Bollywood

_______ Biswa Prasun Chatterji.

20 जनवरी होगा बिफ़्फ़ का धमाकेदार आयोजन। धरती पर चमकेंगे फ़िल्मी सितारे।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MONICA DAWAR
SONIA SARTAJ
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MAUNA SHAH

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सेशन हो चुके हैं। 2020-2021दो सालों से अनवरत ऑनलाइन होने वाले इस फेस्टिवल का ऑफलाइन संचालन तीसरी बार पिछले बरस 17-18 दिसंबर को मुंबई के ओशिवारा हारमनी मॉल अंधेरी में हुआ था। इसका चौथा एक दिवसीय सेशन इस बार भी 20 जनवरी 2024 को वेदा कुनबा थियेटर, अँधेरी वेस्ट मुंबई में होने जा रहा है।

बिफ़्फ़ अपने तीन बरस की कामयाब यात्रा कर चुका है। वर्तमान समय के कमर्शियल दौर में बॉलीवुड इंटरनेशनल फिल्म फेस्टिवल का एक ही उद्देश्य है कि दर्शकों तक ज़्यादा से ज़्यादा स्तरीय व बेहतरीन फ़िल्मे पहुँचाएं। फ़िल्म जगत से जुड़े नए लोग फ़िल्म जगत से जुडी बारिकियों को समझें, सीखे और इसका लाभ उठाते हुए कम संसाधनों के साथ भी अच्छी फ़िल्म निर्माण कर सके। बॉलीवुड इंटरनेशनल फ़िल्म फेस्टिवल उन लोगों के लिए काम करता है जिनके पास प्रतिभा तो हैं परंतु मंच और अच्छे मार्गदर्शन का अभाव है। यह मंच नई प्रतिभाओं को आगे लाता है। फेस्टिवल मे होने वाली मास्टर क्लास से इन नई प्रतिभाओं को मार्गदर्शन मिलता है। बिफ़्फ़ मुंबई मे फ़िल्म जगत से सम्बंधित लोग अपनी फीचर फ़िल्म, शॉर्ट फ़िल्म, डॉक्यूमेंट्री, मोबाइल फ़िल्म, स्टूडेंट्स फ़िल्म, एनीमेशन फ़िल्म और म्युज़िक वीडियो इसके अलावा सिनेमा पर आधारित पुस्तके भी भेज सकते हैं। चयनित बेहतरीन फ़िल्म को वर्ष के अंत में होने वाले फ़िल्म फेस्टिवल में दिखाया जाता है। बेहतरीन कैटेगरी को अवार्ड भी दिया जाता है।

बिफ़्फ़ मुंबई मंच की सशक्त हस्ताक्षर हिंदी सिनेमा तथा रंगमंच के बेहतरीन और लाजवाब एक्टर यशपाल शर्मा और उनकी पत्नी प्रतिभा शर्मा किसी परिचय के मोहताज नहीं हैं। लगान फ़िल्म में अपने ज़बरदस्त अभिनय का लोहा मनवाने वाले यशपाल शर्मा ने फ़िल्म यहाँ, अनवर, गुनाह, दम, वेलकम टू सज्जनपुर, गैंग्स ऑफ वासेपुर 2, गंगाजल, राउडी राठौड़, सिंह इज़ किंग सरीखी फिल्मों में अपने अभिनय का बेहतर प्रदर्शन किया वहीं दादा लख्मीचंद जैसी क्लासिकल संगीतमय फ़िल्म बना कर डायरेक्शन के क्षेत्र में भी बुलन्दी के सभी झंडे गाड़ दिए। वहीं दूसरी ओर प्रतिभा शर्मा एक्टर डायरेक्टर होने के साथ यह एक समाज सेविका के रूप में भी जानी जाती हैं जिनका ‘पहल फाउंडेशन’ आर्थिक संकट में फंसे कलाकारों की सहायता करता है। इनकी रचनाधर्मिता की बात करें तो इनकी तक़रीबन सभी छोटी बड़ी फिल्में, डॉक्यूमेंट्री तथा कविताएं व कहानी स्त्री जागरूकता व स्त्री सशक्तिकरण की बुलन्द आवाज़ हैं।

यशपाल शर्मा तथा प्रतिभा शर्मा ने बताया कि आज के कमर्शियल दौर में बॉलीवुड इंटरनेशनल फिल्म फेस्टिवल का एक ही उद्देश्य है कि दर्शकों तक ज़्यादा से ज़्यादा स्तरीय व बेहतरीन फ़िल्मे पहुँचाएं। फ़िल्म जगत से जुड़े नए लोग फ़िल्म जगत से जुडी बारिकियों को समझें, सीखे और इसका लाभ उठाते हुए कम संसाधनों के साथ भी अच्छी फ़िल्म निर्माण कर सके। बिफ़्फ़ की शुरु होने के बारे में प्रतिभा शर्मा बताती हैं कि यह फेस्टिवल बातों-बातों में शुरु हुआ था और जैसे ही बॉलीवुड इंटरनेशनल फ़िल्म फेस्टिवल नाम दिमाग में आया तो इसे आनन फानन तुरंत ही रजिस्टर्ड कर लिया गया। हालांकि इसे लाने के पीछे हमारा एकमात्र उद्देश्य अच्छे सिनेमा को प्रमोट करना है। यशपाल शर्मा इसके मक़सद और उद्देश्य के संबंध में बताते हैं कि जो लोग अच्छे टैलेंटिड हैं, अच्छे कलाकार हैं अच्छे डायरेक्टर व एक्टर हैं वो लोग कई बार फेस्टिवल को लेकर इनसिक्योर महसूस करते हैं कि पता नहीं इतनी बड़ी-बड़ी फिल्में फेस्टिवल में आएंगी तो पता नहीं उनका नम्बर आएगा या नहीं। पर मैं उनको भरोसा दिलाता हूँ कि अगर उनकी फ़िल्म में दम है या उनकी एक्टिंग में दम है तो बॉलीवुड इंटरनेशनल फ़िल्म फेस्टिवल उनको ज़रूर सिलेक्ट करेगा और उनको सम्मानित करेगा व उनको अवार्ड देगा।

बॉलीवुड इंटरनेशनल फ़िल्म फेस्टिवल उन लोगों के लिए काम करता है जिनके पास प्रतिभा तो हैं परंतु मंच और अच्छे मार्गदर्शन का अभाव है। यह मंच नई प्रतिभाओं को आगे लाता है। फेस्टिवल मे होने वाली मास्टर क्लास से इन नई प्रतिभाओं को मार्गदर्शन मिलता है।

वर्तमान में देश विदेश में अनेक छोटे बड़े फ़िल्म फेस्टिवल हो रहे हैं अन्य फेस्टिवल से इतर बिफ़्फ़ कैसे ख़ास है या बिफ़्फ़ ने कैसे अपनी छवि बाक़ी फेस्टिवल से अलग बनाई है इस संबंध में प्रतिभा शर्मा कहती हैं कि उनकी जो ज्यूरी है वह बहुत स्पेशल है। नेशनल और इंटरनेशनल अवार्ड विनिंग ज्यूरी है। उनके शब्दों में “हम निष्पक्ष होकर सारा फैसला देते हैं। पहले हम लोग जो होम ज्यूरी हैं वो देखती हैं वो इस तरह फाईनल फैसला लेते हैं उसके बाद चयन होता है फिल्मों का। इस तरह बहुत ही ट्रांसपेरेंसी होती है। इसमे हम किसी की फ़िल्म अच्छी हो तभी अवार्ड देते हैं।” यशपाल शर्मा के अनुसार “आजकल बहुत सारे फेस्टिवल हो रहे हैं लेकिन मैंने जितने भी फेस्टिवल देखें हैं 90% फेस्टिवल उनकी मैनेजमेंट में गड़बड़ी, उनका एक अच्छा सिनेमा दिखाने में गड़बड़ी, उनका अपने दोस्तों का सिनेमा दिखाने की गड़बड़ी यानी वह केवल अपने कुछ लोगों का सिनेमा

दिखाते हैं जिन्हें वह प्रमोट करना चाहते हैं। जब कोई फ़िल्म चल रही है किसी फेस्टिवल के अंदर और वह लोगों को बोरिंग लगे अच्छी न लगे, उसका मानक सही न हो यानी उसकी डिग्निटी सही न हो, फ़िल्म की क्वालिटी अच्छी न हो तो असल में हम अपने दर्शकों को तोड़ रहे होते हैं और उनको जोड़ नहीं रहे होते हैं। केवल कुछ लोगों को खुश करने के लिए दिखा रहे होते हैं।” उनके अनुसार उनके बिफ्फ में ऐसा बिल्कुल नहीं होगा। वे बताते हैं कि पिछले सेशन में बहुत लोग हमारे खिलाफ़ हो गए थे कि हमारी फ़िल्म क्यों नहीं दिखाई। वह फिल्में ज्यूरी ने सिलेक्ट नहीं की थीं इसलिए नहीं दिखाई। हमें इस बात का कोई ग़म नहीं है हम अपनी क्वालिटी के तौर पर अपना फेस्टिवल आगे बढ़ाते रहेंगे और आगे चलते रहेंगे।

बिफ़्फ़ मुंबई का पिछला तीसरा आयोजन मुंबई में हुआ जो अपने आप में बेहद सफल रहा। महीनों तक देश विदेश में इस फेस्टिवल की चर्चा होती रही। खासतौर पर यह फेस्टिवल दो दिन दिखाई जाने वाली सामाजिक फिल्मों को लेकर अधिक चर्चा में रहा। प्रतिभा शर्मा बताती हैं कि बिफ़्फ़ अपने सामाजिक दायित्वों को पूरी तरह से निभा रहा है। वार्षिक फेस्टिवल के अलावा हम लेट्स टॉक के मंच पर सिनेमा जगत से जुड़े कलाकारों व सेलिब्रिटी को बुलाकर विविध विषयों पर चर्चा की जाती है । सिर्फ़ एक्टिंग ही नहीं या सिर्फ़ निर्देशन ही नहीं या फ़िर संगीत ही नहीं बल्कि फ़िल्म से जुड़े सभी पहलुओं पर। तो एक सर्वांगीण चर्चा जो इस मंच पर होती है और मेरे ख़्याल से जिस मंच पर सर्वांगीण चर्चा होती है वो स्वयं अपने आप मे एक सामाजिक दायित्व निभा रहा है। उनके कथानुसार “बिफ़्फ़ अपना सामाजिक दायित्व निभा रहा है या नहीं यह तो दर्शक तय करेंगे और दर्शकों का, लोगों का अभी तक हमें बहुत प्यार मिला है तो मेरे ख़्याल से हम लोग सही जा रहे हैं।” यशपाल शर्मा का भी मानना है कि उनके बिफ़्फ़ में इंडियन फिल्में और विदेशी फिल्में दोनों शामिल हैं चाहे वह शॉर्ट फ़िल्म हों चाहे फ़ीचर फ़िल्म हों, चाहे डॉक्यूमेंट्रीज़ हों या वेबसीरीज़ हों या बाक़ी हों तो इसलिए इसमें जो विदेशी अच्छा सिनेमा है वो हम को देखने को मिलता है। और जो हमारा अच्छा सिनेमा है वो विदेशियों को देखने को मिलता हैं। पिछले फेस्टिवल में मुझे अभी तक याद है कितनी सारी विदेशी फिल्में आई थीं जिनको देखना अपने आप में कमाल का अनुभव था। हमको एक अच्छा दर्शक भी होना है क्योंकि सिनेमा देख कर हम बहुत कुछ सीखते हैं। तो हमारे फेस्टिवल में एक मेला जैसा लगा है तीन साल। और बक़ायदा लोगों ने ख़ूब देखा है सिनेमा और तारीफ़ भी की है। सैंकड़ों मैसेज भी आए हैं। यह बहुत बड़ी

उपलब्धि है हमारा यही मक़सद है कि विदेशी सिनेमा भारतीयों तक पहुँचे और भारतीय सिनेमा विदेशियों तक पहुँचे बिफ़्फ़ ने दोनों जगह आशातीत सफलता पाई है।

प्रतिभा शर्मा और यशपाल शर्मा बताते हैं कि बिफ़्फ़ में लोग फीचर फ़िल्म, शॉर्ट फ़िल्म, डॉक्यूमेंट्री, मोबाइल फ़िल्म, स्टूडेंट्स फ़िल्म, एनीमेशन फ़िल्म और म्युज़िक वीडियो इसके अलावा सिनेमा पर आधारित पुस्तक भी भेज सकते हैं। चयनित बेहतरीन फ़िल्म को जनवरी में होने वाले फ़िल्म फेस्टिवल में दिखाया जाएगा। इतना ही नहीं बेहतरीन कैटेगरी को अवार्ड भी दिया जाएगा।

बिफ़्फ़ फेस्टिवल सीज़न 4 जनवरी में मुंबई में होगा उसके लिए ज़ोरो शोरो से तैयारियां हो रही हैं एक ख़ास बात जो बिफ़्फ़ को अन्य फेस्टिवल से अलग करती है वो इसकी रचनाधर्मिता के प्रति लगाव है यही कारण है कि इस बार पहली बार लोगों की सिनेमा जगत विषय पर लिखने वाले लेखकों को भी फेस्टिवल में शामिल किया गया है प्रतिभा शर्मा और यशपाल शर्मा चूंकि स्वयं लेखन और साहित्य जगत में रूचि रखते हैं इसलिए फेस्टिवल में उन पुस्तकों को भी शामिल किया गया है जो सिनेमा से जुड़ी हैं। चयनित पुस्तकों को भी अवार्ड दिया जाएगा।

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Tora’s Husband: Honest and rooted

Tora’s Husband,’ the latest film by Rima Das, is simple in

content and production. The film revolves around the transformation of the mindset of Jaan, an alcoholic young businessman and husband of Tora. Tora, a responsible village daughter-in-law with two children, loves her family, husband, and flowers, although she is not comfortable with her mother-in-law. In crafting the story of this couple, Rima Das has remarkably succeeded in portraying the lives, hopes, aspirations, frustrations, joys, imaginations, realities, problems, and other issues faced by the lead characters. The major characters are integral to society, and certain societal sequences also become part of the film. Rima Das seamlessly integrates the environment and people as a part of reality without imposing any constructed characters or locations, thereby enhancing the film's authenticity.

The film's narrative is thin and straightforward. Tora's husband, Jaan, is a young enthusiast who engages in football, runs a successful business, drives a Bolero, and spends quality time with his children. However, his habit of drinking with friends late into the night, causing him to be absent at home, becomes a source of frustration for Tora. Set in a village close to an emerging business hub with an urban framework, the story unfolds just after the post-COVID period. As Jaan's restaurant faces financial challenges, he grapples with the stress while also supporting the village football team financially. The film captures Jaan's realization that his nightly drinking habits are taking a toll on his family, especially when Tora has to search for him at night. Tora's hospitalization for COVID-19 infection becomes a pivotal moment, prompting Jaan to recognize Tora's significance in his life.

The film progresses with two compelling assets: the vivid portrayal of village life and its inseparable connection with the characters, complemented by a balanced dose of normal humour. The narrative begins with Jaan taking his son to the cremation place of his deceased father, creating initial

curiosity that, unfortunately, doesn’t contribute significantly to the main storyline. Instead, the film cleverly weaves in Tora’s purchase of flower seedlings from a small nursery, linking it symbolically to the climax and providing a meaningful reference to the earlier scene. The film skillfully uses the flower as a metaphor for the gap between Tora and Jaan, enhancing the emotional depth of the story.

While the film contains scenes that add instant appeal through natural acting and simple visualization, it lacks a well-structured screenplay. The scattered sequences, although interesting, often do not contribute to the central theme’s development. The film’s pacing issues raise questions about the necessity of a well-defined screenplay, as the story lacks a cohesive rhythm.

The film primarily explores the strained relationship between Tora and Jaan. However, crucial information, such as Jaan’s mother leaving due to Tora’s alleged misbehaviours, lacks convincing evidence, making it a less dominant aspect of their troubled relationship.

Towards the film’s conclusion, Tora’s return from the hospital is marked by a family walk on a narrow bridge in the rain, emphasizing the spiritual bonds, responsibilities, and reliance within the family. The film uses elements like rain, narrow bridges, and umbrellas as metaphors, elevating the scene’s aesthetic appeal and conveying deeper meanings.

The film’s visuals maintain simplicity to align with the narrative and production technique. The fixed camera frame offers opportunities for beautiful composition, yet cinematographer Rima Das doesn’t fully capitalize on this potential. The film’s visual simplicity contradicts its central message, as it fails to express the complex emotions inherent in the story through strong cinematic language. Despite the challenges of capturing busy outdoor scenes with a

limited crew, Das maintains a balance in preserving the simplicity of the camera work.

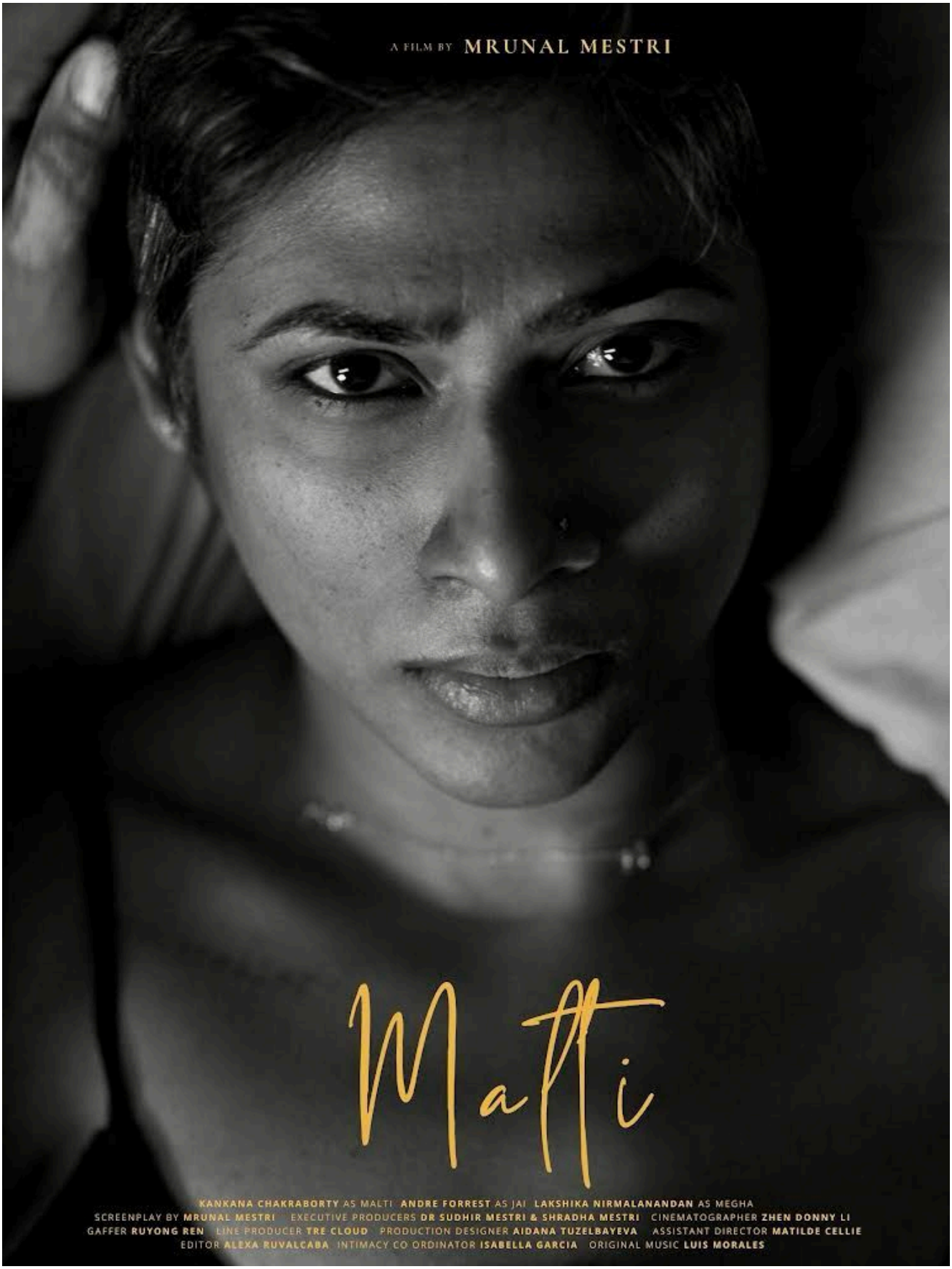
The major characters, Jaan and Tora, are well-portrayed by the writers and director. Tarali Kalita Das delivers a convincing performance as Tora, while Abhijit Das effectively embodies the multifaceted character of Jaan. However, the characters of Jaan's mother and sister, crucial to the story, are not proportionately presented. The two child characters are believable, adding depth to Jaan's relationship with them. Though not closely connected to the main plot, other characters contribute to the film's credibility.

While the film tells a compelling story, the necessary rigour and technical skills to seamlessly propel the narrative forward are somewhat lacking. Both the editor and director are responsible for ensuring a clean and cohesive film, but 'Tora's Husband' falls short in this regard. The film's timeline, set in the declining stage of the pandemic, handles COVID-related elements with sensitivity, focusing on the courage to embrace a new life. The protagonists embody the spirit of overcoming challenges, making the film a globally recognized work of art in the post-COVID era.

___Utpal Datta

"Malti": Like a Flower, it spreads Fragrance

Film Criticism | Utpal Datta



In Hindi, ‘Malti’ is the name of a little flower, distinguished by its delicate fragrance.

The film “Malti” opens with a woman in her thirties entering a

house. Two framed photographs adorn the walls: one capturing a girl receiving a ring (a marriage proposal), the other depicting her embracing a man (indicative of marriage). Limited information about the woman is provided. She returns home, takes a bath, and searches for clothes in the closet. As she touches a man's robe, her expression reveals a desire not for the fabric but for the man within. The emotion is palpable, deepened by a melodic accompaniment. It becomes apparent that the robe belongs to her beloved, and through it, she senses his presence. Selecting another robe, she detects a scent, halting her humming; the joyous closeness on her face dissipates, replaced by a pained question mark.

This sets the tone for the film. Mrunal Mestri, the writer-director of the sixteen-minute film 'Malti,' explores the emotions of a newly married woman discovering her husband's proximity to another woman. While such narratives are not novel in cinema, the film's real strength lies in the innovative approach taken by the writers and directors in visual storytelling.

The heroine sings at the film's outset, offering no linguistic cues. Once the humming ceases, the film remains entirely devoid of audible sounds and dialogue—a dialogue-free cinematic experience. The director adeptly compensates for the absence of dialogue by strengthening the visuals to convey the narrative effectively. The primary crisis of the story is introduced within the first two minutes, a testament to the director's skill. By isolating the woman inside the house, the director successfully immerses the audience in the protagonist's emotional turmoil. The actress's gestures convey her anticipation of her husband, evidenced by a smoky candle lit at night. While intimacy is shared in bed, her face betrays no interest, with only the presence of the other woman reflected in her eyes.

The film, presented in black and white, employs shadows and lights aesthetically to complicate scenes. Zhen 'Donny' Li's

camera work contributes to the film’s allure, with certain long shots effectively expressing the emptiness within the woman’s mind. Luis Morales’s background music enhances the film’s appeal, while Alexa Ruvalcaba’s editing skillfully balances the mood and pace of the story.

The director’s choice of a talented actress, Kankana Chakraborty, proves pivotal to the film’s success. Without any dialogue, Chakraborty eloquently communicates the subtle emotions of disbelief, surprise, distrust, and pain through facial and body expressions. Two standout moments include her poignant reaction while smelling the shirt and her solitary contemplation at the dining table. The actress seamlessly embodies the character, and a lion’s share of this credit is due to the director for this achievement.

The film tackles a complex theme, utilizing all elements of filmmaking proficiently to achieve its intended impact. Maintaining the delicate balance among numerous aspects is challenging, yet director Mrunal Mestri succeeds admirably. Although the name ‘Malti’ is presumed to refer to the film’s heroine, the film itself, devoid of dialogue, refrains from explicitly naming her. After viewing the film, one might ponder the choice of the name Malti. Perhaps, like the flower, the film ‘Malti’ is diminutive yet leaves an enduring appeal, akin to the fragrance of the flower.

Key words #utpal_datta #Kankana_chakrabarty, #Malti, #Mrunal, #short film

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The story of an ice-cold

relationship

Film review | Utpal Datta

It’s approaching evening, and a woman in her forties is seated in her house, engrossed in a video conference on her laptop. The phone rings, prompting her to step out of the conference to take the call. Her facial expressions and tone shift to a mundane and unwanted conversation. After the call concludes, she re-enters the conference, restoring a smile to her face. This marks the beginning of the film, subtly expressing that the woman inhabits two distinct worlds. An evocative entrance unfolds, inviting viewers into the film.

Titled ‘Deep-Fridge,’ this Bengali film hints at a section of the refrigerator where ice quickly forms. The name unmistakably suggests an urban theme. The narrative revolves around the relationship between two individuals – Mili, the woman introduced first in the film, and her husband Swarnava, both divorced. They share a child named Tatai, who resides with his mother. Tatai’s father has remarried and is anticipating another child. When the father visits, and Tatai reciprocates, his father’s second wife, Ronja, establishes a

warm bond with him.

The initial scene’s conversation unveils Mili’s assumption of full responsibility for Tatai, with Swarnava equally invested. On that stormy evening, Swarnava visits to inquire about the child’s health. Reluctantly, both individuals engage in conversation, focusing on the child’s well-being. The child persuades his father to stay the night, and with no alternative, they hesitantly begin talking, gradually revealing the thoughts concealed in their hearts. The accumulated ice between them, preserved in the deep freeze for so long, begins to thaw.

Their marital happiness is disrupted when a third party enters, altering the course of their lives. While such narratives are commonplace in films, Arjun Dutta’s approach is distinctive. Swarnava marries a close acquaintance and is expecting children, while Mili falls in love with a younger man. Despite their intimate relationship being acknowledged by the boy’s family, Mili is hesitant to formalize it. She confides in her male friend, describing this intimacy as a form of escape. The film explores why Mili, who voluntarily embraces a free life, perceives this connection as an escape. As the daughter of a broken relationship, Mili harbours disdain for her mother, preventing her entry into her home. Despite Swarnava’s repeated apologies, Mili remains dissatisfied.

Lead Actors Abir Chatterjee and Tanushree Chakraborti

The film unravels the complexities on that rainy night, delving into various aspects such as questions, pride, conflict, sense of rights, responsibilities, and more, providing Mili with answers. It’s a portrayal of the ice in the mind, needing to melt and flow like water for life to progress.

While the film primarily addresses personal issues, the director’s adept storytelling elevates it to a profound exploration of the human psyche. Presented against the backdrop of a rainy night, the film captures the gloomy mood of the protagonist living in a confined space. Events unfold indoors, often in low light or even complete darkness, while flashback scenes bask in bright light, indoors and outdoors. Cinematographer Supratim Bhol skilfully utilises light and shadow to intensify the prevailing sense of claustrophobia. Capturing facial expressions in low-light situations is

challenging, yet Supratim adeptly manages, maintaining the scene’s mood. The blue colour effect harmonises indoor scenes with the prevailing mood. The flashback scenes, featuring Mili in a bright red saree, visually symbolize her strength. In a morning scene following a troubled night, the sunlight delicately highlights the actor’s body and the room’s interior, showcasing the filmmaker’s sensitivity.

In this 100-minute film, Tanushree Chakraborty, portraying Mili, seizes the opportunity to express diverse emotions, perceptions, and reactions. Her nuanced performance, marked by restraint and avoidance of exaggeration, positions her as a potential contender for film awards. Abir Chatterjee, in the role of Swarnava, delivers a natural performance. The complexity of the principal character’s emotional journey is navigated with skill, given Abir’s experience. However, the kissing scene between Abir and Tanushree feels mechanical and hesitant, contrary to its narrative demand. Anuradha, playing Ronja, impresses with evident improvement as an actress.

The film alternates between the present and the past, with the present progressing chronologically and past scenes interjecting sporadically. Editor Sujay Dutta Roy adeptly manages this intricate pace transition.
The Western music used as background music complements the film’s urban setting. Music director Soumya Rit seamlessly incorporates Indian Classical and Folk music as per scene and mood requirements. The sweet songs, especially the one composed with a blend of Mallar and Bhairavi ragas (Gagne Garaj Barse), stand out for their unique fusion and ability to enhance visuals. The singer Mekhla Dasgupta deserves special mention. However, the inclusion of Kaviguru Rabindra Nath Tagore’s name as a lyricist in the film’s credit title seems unjustified. Tagore did not write songs for Arjun Dutta’s films; Dutta used uncopyrighted songs for his work. Tagore’s name should be mentioned with proper dignity and respect, a practice observed in many Bengali films.

The screenplay (Arjunn Dutta and Ashirbad Maitra) could have benefited from greater attention to character development with visual details. While Swarnava’s profession is labelled as an economist, this alone falls short in establishing his credibility. Characters visiting Mili’s home needed more contextual references to firmly establish their identities. A brief verbal introduction proves insufficient for character identity establishment.

In his gentle and nuanced narrative, Arjunn Dutta gracefully unfolds the story of a divorced couple. As a suggestion for future endeavours, expanding creative horizons beyond the confines of upper-middle-class society could add a layer of richness to cinematic encounters.

Tags #Utpal Datta #Arjunn Dutta #Deep Fridge #Film criticism #Bangla Film

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ASHA BHOSLE AT NINETY

Evergreen Asha Bhosle when she was younger

First Published in THE AIDEM (theaidem.com)

Asha Bhosle, the most charismatic female exponent of the Hindi film song (from the late 1940s to the early 1980s) when it became an independent art form, turned Ninety on 8th September, 2023. She has sung thousands of songs in good, bad an indifferent films, principally in Hindi, where her singing has been the leading attraction. This is indeed high compliment as she has always been compared to her elder sister Lata Mangeshkar, who, in her prime years between the late 1940s to, the early 1980s, was the most tuneful or 'Sureela' of all woman singers in Hindi films, or films from any other part of India. Asha, however won out because of her versatility and the ability to conjure up a wide range of feelings and experiences that belonged to this flesh and blood world.

Her singing at first was not so different from that of her elder sister, a style she adopted or was made to adopt by certain music directors in order to sound like her thin-voiced but extremely mellifluous elder sister Lata. Not until O.P. Nayyar (1926–2007) came along, was she able to find her musical self. He reportedly told Asha, "Tum apni awaaz main gao (sing in your own voice)". Nayyar saw to it that she did her riyaz (practise) every morning in her natural voice which was distinctly darker than her sister Lata's and intrinsically sensual. But before O.P. Nayyar came along she had sung two non-film songs that still linger in the memory: "Geet kitni gaa chuki hun is sukhi jag ke liye" and "Ambua ki dari bole….", both composed by the brilliant, mercurial table maestro Nikhil Ghosh.

Strangely enough in 1953, when Lata her elder sister was already famous, Asha was offered three solo songs by a gifted, young composer, Mohammad Zahoor Khan 'Khayyam' for Footpath, a film directed by Zia Sarhadi and Starring two powerful young performers, Dilip Kumar and Meena Kumari. It was said that Lata wanted to sing those three solos but young Khayyam stood

firm backed by his director. ‘Piya aaja re’, ‘Kaise jadoo dala re’ and ‘So jaa mere pyare’ sung by Asha Bhosle are still remembered along with Talat Mahmood’s immortal “Sham-e-gham ki qasam”.

Soon after the brilliant composer Madan Mohan, a Great Lata fan, got Asha to sing a ghazal written by Jalal Malihabadi, “Saba se ye keh do” for the film, Bank Manager. Asha’s rendering had both empathy and romance. As a singer she had arrived. But the contracts for solo songs were not that many. Earlier in Sangdil, 1952, a Dilip Kumar–Madhubala starrer, a composer of genuine originality, Sajjad Hussain, had got Asha to sing a duet with Geeta Dutt, an unusual talent. “Dharti se dur gore badalon ke paar aaja”. It was a haunting duet with Asha showing both vocal range and a timbre that could be called tactile. It was a voice destined to stay in the memory of the listener.

It took Asha a fairly long time to establish her identity as a truly fine soloist, despite earning respectable sums of money. Lata held sway over the film music world as a soloist, with her obviously formidable musicality and by sounding like a ‘virgin’. A musical approach that seemed to fit the image of all the leading ladies who were there to shore up the moral quotient of Hindi films and were thus curtailed emotionally, leaving the male leads to indulge in their peccadillos!

It was Nayyar, whose career was in the ascendant who worked hard to project Asha as a solid, reliable soloist. In Shakti Samanta’s Howrah Bridge (1957) he promoted her as the voice of Madhubala, the reigning Queen of Hindi films and its only comedian. in “Aaye meherban”, Asha’s sensual singing picturised on Madhubala in a Cabaret sequence, made her sparkle. Then was the snappy, melodious solo, “Ye kya ker dala tuney” that made the most recalcitrant of cynics respond to the romance in the words and the music. In the same year Nayyar repeated his success with Asha in Nazir Hussain’s Tumsa Nahi Dekha. Her two duets with Mohammad Rafi were instant

hits, namely, “Aye hain dur se….”, “Dekho kasam se kasam se”. Around that time, Sachin Dev Burman, created a moving solo for Asha in Bimal Roy’s Sujata, “Kali ghata chaye mora jiya ghabrae” mirroring the longings of an Untouchable orphan girl played by Nutan.

S.D. Burman had a falling out with Lata Mangeshkar, but ego forbade him to give in. Kala Bazar produced by Navketan and directed by Vijay Anand, had Asha singing “Sach hue sapne mere”. No female singer had sung with such abandon in Hindi films before, perhaps because the Heroines, with the notable exception of Madhubala, and Geeta Bali, who died well before their time, the only two who got roles to also express the sunny side of their personalities.

S.D. Burman got Asha to sing four solos in Narendra Suri’s, Lajwanti “Kuchh Din pehle…”, “Chanda re chup rehna”, “Gaa mere mun tu gaa” and “Koi aaya dhadkan kehti hai”, are all sung with depth and feeling and picturised on Nargis, an exceptional actress. They continue to be played on the Radio and on YouTube, surprising those young listeners are who responsive to the beauty of Indian melodies that enunciate and augment the lyrics that are set to them.

Two other solos recorded almost a decade apart come to mind : ‘’Main jab bhi akeli hoti hun’’ from Dharamputra (1962) composed with elegance and poise by N Dutta, and, ‘’Mein shayad tumhare liye ajnabi hun’’, a haunting melody composed by O P Nayyar for Ye Raat Phir Na Ayegi.

Contemporary composers, to be sure, had been aware of Asha’s potential and the expressive quality of her voice. However, they were not going to challenge the preference of film producers and financiers who were completely taken in by the virginal sweetness of Lata Mangeshkar’s voice and her unassailable technique. Asha would have to prove herself in duets (and did she!) She sang with Kishore Kumar in the Dev Anand–Nutan starrer, Paying Guest. “O deewana Mastana” and

“Chod do aanchal zamana kya kahega” spring to mind after all these years with all their freshness and zing.

O.P. Nayyar had an unusual sense of melody, part Punjabi folk and part raga-based in its inspiration: this coupled with his pulsating rhythm section of tabla, dholak and occasionally, western drums, gave to many of his compositions a distinctive personality. Even when he cogged melodies from the West, eg., “Hun abhi mein jawan” sung by Geeta Dutt from Aar Paar that got its mukhda or introduction from “Put the blame on me” from Gilda, a Rita Hayworth hit from Hollywood directed by Charles Vidor. The Antara clearly had Nayyar’s distinctive touch.

Asha Bhosle, and before her Geeta Dutt, had voices most suitable to his work. Much as he had admired Lata Mangeshkar’s artistry, he found her voice to be too thin for his kind of music. Asha’s voice was very flexible, had a dark, sensual colour and was responsive to lyrics to express many moods and experiences. Nayyar understood perceptively both Asha Bhosle the woman, as well as the singer who brought his compositions to life. Until they parted in amidst much acrimony, they had literally been a perfect pair of lovers for twelve years.

Asha Bhosle, a mother of three, had been unhappily married to a man of uncertain profession, Ganpatrao Bhosle, from 1949 to ’60. He died in 1966, supposedly in a taxi. O.P. Nayyar, had married Saroj Mohini when he was seventeen and she, fifteen. They had four children together. He shot to fame with “Preetam aan milo” that he composed as a teenager and was first recorded by C.H. Atma as a non-film song. On discovering Asha Bhosle, he found his muse, and the perfect female voice for his songs. Their problematic marital status as separate individuals did not prevent them from living together in a beautifully furnished flat on Worli sea-face in Bombay.

When they parted in 1972, they had recorded for the film Pran Jaye Per Vachan Na Jaye, “Chaen se humko kabhi aap ne jeene na diya”. It was a masterly composition rendered by Asha with

unfettered emotion, which, in effect, also summed up the cause of their parting. O.P. Nayyar could not find another female voice to replace her and his career faded away rapidly. He observed ruefully later, “I put all my eggs in one basket.” He regretted having side-lined a singular talent like Geeta Dutt. Asha went from success to success over the next three decades and married Rahul Dev Burman, the gifted composer son of S.D. Burman.

This digression was necessary while discussing the life of Asha Bhosle, an unusually gifted singer and a feisty woman who has navigated with unusual grit and skill through all the ups and downs in her turbulent life. For the record her depressive daughter Varsha committed suicide in 2012 and son Hemant, a composer, died of Cancer in 2015 in Scotland. Asha continues to fight on with every fibre of her being.

As late as 2001, when she sang, “Radha kaise na jaley” for A.R. Rehman in Amir Khan’s, Lagaan, Asha had retained the spring, and melody in her voice, which by then had become ever so slightly girlish. She could render fast taans (there are a couple of instances in this song) with ease and accuracy. No mean achievement for a singer in her late sixties.

She is believed to have sung Ten thousand songs in eight hundred films. One can only talk of one’s favourites and there are very many. There are the three from the Ashok Kumar starrer, Kalpana, (composer O.P. Nayyar), namely, “Phir bhi dil heye beqaraar”, “O ji sawan mein bhi… ”, “Beqasi hudh se jab guzar jaye”. Completely different from each other, revealing the amazing malleability of her voice, its unique melody and the sure grasp of evanescent emotion. There is the other haunting song, from Raagini, also composed by O.P. Nayyar, “Chota saa baalma” in Raga Tilang. There are a host of other Nayyar compositions as well.

“Jaaiye aap kahan jaayengi” (Film: Mera Sanam), “Meri nazrein

haseen" (Ek Musafir Ek Haseena); ''Aaj meiney jana mera dil heye diwani'' (Farishta), "Aaj koi pyaar se" (Sawan ki Ghata); "Yehi wo jaga heye" (Ye Raat Phir Na Ayegi); "Puchho na hamein hum unke liye", (Mitti Main Sona), ''Aao huzoor tumko sitaron mein le chalun'' (Kismat), and a song picturised on the 'bad girl' in a given film, "Ye heye reshmi zulfon ka andhera na ghabraeye …." (Mere Sanam).

The duets that she sang for S.D. Burman with Kishore Kumar in Nau Do Gyaara, "Aankhon mein kya jee", her own solo, "Dhalki jae chunariya…" and the two duets with Mohammad Rafi, "aaja panchi akela heye" and "Kali ke roop mein chali ho dhoop main…" certainly are memorable as are the three from Ek Musafir Ek Haseena: "Main pyaar ka rahi hoon"; "aap yun hi agar humse milte rahe"; "Jawani yaar man turki", and two others from Kashmir ki Kali—"Isharon isharon mein" and "Deewana hua badal", both composed by O.P. Nayyar and yet another duet with the marvellous Mohhamad Rafi ,''Phir milogi kabhi…'' from Ye Raat Phir Na Ayegi,and, much earlier a mesmerising duet from Phagun, ''Main soya akhiya meechey''.

Khayyam is the other composer who brought the best in Asha's multifarious musical personality. Two duets from Ramesh Sehgal's Phir Subah Hogi: "Who subah kabhi to aayegi", and "Yun na keeje meri gustakh nighahi ka gila", both with Mukesh, have attained immortality. Her solos in Muzzafar Ali's Umrao Jaan bring out her astonishing vocal range, the flexibility and soz (poignance) in her voice. Her songs for the tawaif (singing courtesan) Umrao in this period piece set in mid-19th century Lucknow, stay in the memory. "Dil cheez kya heye aap meri jaan lijiye"; "justu jiski thi", "Ye kya jagah heye doston" are amongst the finest songs composed in the annals of the Golden Age of Hindi film music. Asha's singing fitted Rekha's vulnerable screen-personality perfectly, just as her elder sister Lata's did on Meena Kumari playing Sahib Jaan in Kamal Amrohi's, Pakeeza.

If this article is a shade too subjective, well… it is. While

having enormous respect for Lata Mangeshkar’s peerless tonal quality at her peak that lasted for thirty or so years, one could never understand her well-nigh ‘abstract’ handling of emotion in her songs, as if any hint of sensuality in them would disqualify her from being a great artiste. Asha Bhosle’s singing was uninhibited, earthy, intrinsically musical and very much to be felt with one’s entire being. That is why one remains enamoured of Asha Bhosle’s singing.

Somehow, she continues to be in the limelight not just for her delectable music. At the recently concluded World Cup Final played at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, India was pitted against Australia in the 50-over Cricket tournament. India lost, after giving great hope to an enormous, completely partisan home crowd. Asha Bhosle, a die-hard cricket fan, like her late sister, Lata, was seated between BCCI President Jay Shah and Sharukh Khan, the superstar of Hindi cinema. An ND TV video, shows Sharukh take Ashaji’s empty coffee cup, despite her reluctance, and hand it over to one of the cleaning staff. A viewer remarked,’’It was the only heart-warming gesture in the whole match.’’ Asha Bhosle’s charisma cuts through generations and inspires them to acts of gallantry.

Sam Bahadur – A lackluster effort which disappoints

A review by **Sanjiva Sahai**

Sam Bahadur, the biopic by Meghna Gulzar, attempts to bring Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw to life, but it’s a lacklustre effort that falls flat. Watching his interviews or listening to audio recordings would have been a more engaging tribute.

Yes, the movie falls flatter than a pancake, lacking the cinematic excellence needed to do justice to this real-life hero’s valour and contributions. The screenplay and execution, akin to a deflated balloon at a celebration, fail to capture the essence of his remarkable journey. It’s almost as if the scriptwriters were aiming for a snooze fest rather than a compelling tribute to the national icon.

Furthermore, the core of the narrative hinges on the war sequences. Whether lifted from dusty archives in mere snippets or presented without leaving a discernible impact, these scenes fail to contribute meaningfully to the overall theme.

The movie adopts a docudrama-like tempo, punctuated by sporadic witty moments that aim to reflect the essence of Sam’s character. Unfortunately, this approach falls short of creating a consistently engaging experience, leaving viewers yearning for a more dynamic and compelling storytelling rhythm.

Vicky Kaushal nails the postures but overdoses on drama in dialogue delivery, occasionally channeling Dev Anand – a peculiar choice. His characterization is more external that misses out on the depth. The actor who moved everyone of us with Sardar Udham, stays put on the periphery. Fatima Sana Sheikh’s portrayal of Indira Gandhi lacks authenticity, bordering on the amateurish. Most of the actors in the movie come and go unnoticed. In the midst of the forgettable portrayals on reel, one can’t help but salute the vibrant spirit of the real Manekshaw.

Talking about my generation- having grown up inspired by the valour and vibrancy of Manekshaw, listening to his words on the radio and later on TV, the movie proves to be a disheartening disappointment.
_____ Sanjiva Sahai