

MARQUEE

The Statesman

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LOOKING AHEAD



UTV Motion Pictures is fully loaded and ready to unleash the very best in movie entertainment. They begin the new fiscal year with Raju Patel, releasing on 4 June with the legend star cast assembled in recent times. Directed by Pankaj Jha, Raju Patel is based on the characters from the greatest epic ever told - The Mahabharata. This is followed by Peter Gopal Kumar's Sporting Raju Patel, who after his critically acclaimed performance in Aamir's *3 Idiots*, is back as Peter - a motorcycle 'star' in *Gen*. The gorgeous Lekha Wadhvani plays his love interest in this race thriller where Peter sets out on a journey to hell.

For the first time UTV Motion Pictures and Kumar's *Gen* Productions join hands for a co-production. *I Hate Love Story* A romantic comedy starring youth heartthrob Imran Khan and the gorgeous Sonam Kapoor backed by music by Vishal and Shekhar, is sure to keep you smiling for more UTV's first film for kids, *Chillar Party*, is the work of debutant director Nandhi Thirani and Vikas



Hold. This is the story of two children and a dog who come together to fight some silly rules made by adults through a Chaudhary.

A documentary on a cinematographer is a rare tribute. Arindam Saha Sardar's film adds to the archive of the biographical documentary in India, says SHOMA A CHATTERJI

Tribute to the master of simplicity



Life focusing on some of his art works he did not create for public display but was persuaded by friends to do. Sourendra Roy mourns the delay in recognizing the contribution of Mitra to Indian cinematography. But he got the Eastern Kodak Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Cinematography in 1992.

When Ghosh took light on the perfectionist, SRUTIL Mitra was a member of the advisory board, looking after the entire cinematography department and had structured the syllabus for cinematography. "He got involved with the camera. I found him monitoring each and every section weighing the foodstuff brought from the market, judging the quality of the stuff, how it was being cooked, whether it was being served right and so on. This gave me an idea about his deep sense of involvement in whatever he took up - be it the Institute's curriculum, or playing the role, or painting or cinematography. His sense of perfection and commitment remained the same in every endeavor," Adinath Das recounts how Mitra started the technical crew of the Hindi film



about realistic yet aesthetic effects. Yet, the National Award bypassed him. He finally got it for his work in *New Delhi* (1985) but it was long overdue.

The film *Indira* Mitra's cinematography in *Indira* was learned as a young man and was asked to Ray both on screen and off. It is by Jyoti Karmali for *Indira*. The film *Indira* was the end of his life. Mitra took on a one-man crusade against the very bad projection qualities in the projection rooms of Kolkata's theatres. He said that no matter how hard and imaginative a cinematographer's work for a film is, and how brilliant the outcome might be, bad projection can kill good cinematography and subsequently, the film itself. The crusade died a silent death with his passing away. Adinath Das says that he found Mitra sitting on the steps of Nandan one day with his head buried in his hands expressing the utter despair he felt at the terrible projection qualities in the theatres at Nandan. The film shows how Mitra began to paint towards the end of his

And the champion is...

WWE heavyweight The Great Khali will soon (4 May) be seen on the silver screen. He is acting alongside Rajpal Yadav in *Kushi*, produced by Venus Films and directed by Rajeev Kumar. Kushi is set in a north Indian village, notorious for its obsession with wrestling. The village temple trust organizes an annual wrestling match for which there are usually two fierce opponents - Jiten Singh (Om Puri) and Avtar Singh (Shant Sinha). Avtar Singh has a young and beautiful daughter Ladi (Nargis) and she is a fan of Salman Khan. One fine day Chander (Rajpal Yadav), the new postmaster, arrives. He has come to take charge of the old post-office, which has remained shut for some time. Chander meets Ladi and falls in love. He is, however, scared to approach her as he finds out that he is the daughter of the ferocious Avtar Singh. Chander in the process of sorting letters finds an envelope addressed to Salman Khan. He reads the letter and decides to play a game to make Ladi thinking he is Salman Khan's best friend. But the main highlight of the story is the amazing sequence between the seven-and-a-half-foot Khali and the five-foot Rajpal Yadav.



Mobile music

SAREGAMA India Limited has launched *wapagamam.com* where India's largest music collection is available for download on your mobile phones. In April 2009 Saregama had introduced full-song downloads on mobile phones using Airtel Live and Vodafone Live through aggregator Technos. The company now goes a step further. Browse through more than 30,000 songs from top artists of India - from Lata, Rafi, Asha, Kishore to MS Subbulakshmi - spread across many genres and languages. On your GPS-enabled phone log on to *mobile.wapagamam.com* or *wapagamam* and you can listen to your favourite song.

Organic farming

ACTOR Emmanuelle Béart has been inspired by his *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai* costar Ajay Devgn. But how? The cast and crew of the film frequented Devgn's farm in Karjat during shoots. Here Devgn grows vegetables and fruits for his family. Emmanuelle also spent a few days learning to farm and has been inspired enough to start his farm near Mumbai.



Natir Pooja completes 80 years

Natir Pooja is the only film ever directed by Rabindranath Tagore, in 1931

By Shoma A. Chatterji

Few outside West Bengal know that Rabindranath Tagore directed a film based on *Natir Pooja*, a dramatised version of his long poem *Poojarini*. This was an all-woman play he wrote on the request of his daughter-in-law Pratima Devi who wished to perform it on the poet's 70th birthday. The first performance was in Uttarayan at Konark, Shantiniketan. It was later performed at the Tagores' Jorasanko residence in Calcutta followed by another ticketed performance at New Empire aimed at raising funds for Viswa Bharati.

An impressed B. N. Sircar, founder-proprietor of New Theatres, invited Tagore to direct a film version in 1931. The studio was flooded with crowds who wanted to have a glimpse of Tagore who directed the film at NT Studio's floor number one. He played the role of Upala which was added later and assembled his acting cast from Shantiniketan. Nitin Bose cinematographed the film and Subodh Mitra edited it. Breaking the conventional rules of cinema, *Natir Pooja* was filmed like a stage play. After editing,



Rabindranath Tagore acting in a scene from his only directorial venture *Natir Pooja*

the footage was 10,577 feet long. It was released at Chitra Talkies on March 14, 1932. Sadly, prints of the film were destroyed in a fire at the New Theatres.

Natir Pooja is the 2,500 year old story of a *nati* (dancer) who sacrifices herself because of her devotion to Buddha. Tagore based the play on a legend in the

Pali sacred book, *Avadhan Shatak*.

Bengal Studio of Uttarpara, a Kolkata suburb, had organised an exhibition of photographs of the film and the salvaged copy of the original manuscript as a tribute to *Natir Pooja*, the film. The exhibition, conceived, curated

Rabindranath Tagore directed a film based on *Natir Pooja*, a dramatised version of his long poem *Poojarini*. This was an all-woman play he wrote on the request of his daughter-in-law Pratima Devi

and organised by archivist Arindam Saha Sardar was inaugurated on June 11 by Tagore historian Rudraprasad Chakraborty, danseuse and academic Amita Dutta, national award-winning Tagore archivist and curator Arun Kumar Roy and Sushobhan Adhikari. A DVD of the photographs was also made available for sale at the venue.

PEOPLE, PASSIONS

For Arindam Saha Sardar, old really is gold, to use a cliché. The 34-year-old archivist and restoration artist makes biographical documentaries, curates exhibitions of rare artefacts, collects old still and movie cameras, and everything he finds of archival interest. Arindam founded Uttarpara Bengal Photo Studio, in Hind Motor, Hooghly, in a rented garage in 2006. A couple of years later, the family relocated to Uttarpara proper and the studio now has a permanent address on the ground floor of his residence.

The most recent work of the self-taught archivist and restoration artist is a landmark. Under the auspices of the Baudha Dharmamankur Sabha, he exhibited 'Chitre Tathagata', with his 110 digitally restored prints of paintings collected from rare magazines, books and photo albums of the 19th and 20th centuries on the life of Tathagata (the Buddha). On display were 112 digitally restored prints of title pages of invaluable publications in Bengali on the Buddha. A similar exhibition was held in May to celebrate Buddha Purnima in Santiniketan. This collection deserves a place among the calligraphic, graphic and printing history of Bengal. Among the painters were Abanindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, Asit Kumar Haldar and Srimati Gouribala Bhanja Choudhury.

Arindam says he first thought of exhibiting restored prints while researching a documentary on Soumendu Roy, the ace cinematographer best known for his work with Satyajit Ray. "While researching the documentary, I collected entire albums of working stills of Soumendu-da with Satyajit Ray. He gave everything away to me — filters, negatives, light meters and eight movie cameras, including two 8mm cameras. I restored the photographs. He was overjoyed to see the quality of the restored prints. I felt, why not hold an exhibition of these restored prints? This led to my first exhibition," he says.

He has made three documentaries linked to Ray — on Soumendu Roy, Subrata Mitra and Bansi Chandragupta. The films were self-financed, helped by his mother and friends. "I make documentaries and curate exhibitions because I

Past Master

He collects objects of archival interest and gives them new life.
Shoma A Chatterji meets a restoration artist for whom old is gold



IN FOCUS: (Above) Arindam Saha Sardar at work; (right) some photographs and old illustrations that he restored — (from top) singer Uma Basu; a still from Rabindranath's only film, 'Naitir Pooja'; Satyajit Ray and Subrata Mitra during the shoot of 'Pather Panchali'; an illustration of the Buddha that Arindam collected from an old publication; (left) a portrait of singer Manada Sundari

never studied film or art or printing formally and this was an intensive learning process guided by Soumendu-Sir, and I felt these films and related exhibitions would help people like me who cannot afford the expense of formal training to learn the techniques of filmmaking," he elaborates.

In *Soumendu Roy and Subrata Mitra*, one discovers the difference between mapping the life of a living technician on celluloid and documenting the work of a

genius who is no more. The ghost-like figure of Satyajit Ray is an hovering around the film scenes. *Subrata Mitra* is more of a biographical documentary

than a technical lesson in cinematography. *Soumendu Roy* is more a technical lesson than a biographical documentary. *Soumendu Roy* is from a first-person perspective. The opening frame is mounted against a Mitchell camera, which Roy began his journey with. One can hear the whirring sound of the reel turning as the credits come up. The film then pauses on an Arriflex to close on digital camera, finally closing on the strains of 'Alo Amar Alo' reflecting on the man who has painted with light all his life.

In 2011, Uttarpara Bengal Studio held an exhibition on music, an offshoot of Arindam's research on 78 RPM records

spanning 1902 and 1971. Some of these songs were played on a recorder while the walls displayed portraits of music directors and vocalists of the time. "These 78s are original records in the Indian recording industry. LPs and EPs are said to be copies. Recording companies stopped recording on 78s from 1970, but a few offshoots came out in 1971. In 2008, I began to interview people in the 78 RPM recording industry — music directors, singers, lyricists, music arrangers, recordists and even the head of the Megaphone Company — on camera, wanting to make a documentary. Private songs, film songs and all modern Bengali songs fell within this area. It was a great learning experience," he says. Another earlier exhibition was on select works of Nandalal Bose.

“I make documentaries and curate exhibitions because I never studied film or art or printing formally, and this was an intensive learning process guided by Soumendu-Sir (Soumendu Roy)”

ARINDAM SAHA SARDAR | ARCHIVIST, RESTORATION ARTIST

June 2012 was witness to an exhibition of still photographs of Tagore's sole film, *Naitir Pooja*, inaugurated by Tagore historian Rudraprasad Chakraborty, Amita Dutta, Tagore archivist and curator Arun Kumar Roy and Sushobhan Adhikari. In January 2013, an unusual and only tribute was paid to photographer Purnendu Bose, who did the still photography for Ray's *Sikim*. Bose was visibly overwhelmed because no one had acknowledged his contribution till then. In February 2013, Arindam collected 78 RPM records, photographs, record players, restored the photographs digitally and organized his first exhibition — 'Female voices on gramophone records'. Select records of the singers were played for the audience and lyrics of two songs of each singer were displayed alongside the portraits. The list includes Rani Sundari, Manada Sundari, Uma Basu, Rajeshwari Dutta, Suprabha Sarkar, Sahana Devi, Amita Sen and Bijoya Debi (Ray's wife). The names cut across social strata and class when these artists reigned supreme. Merit and talent overcame other social stigmas that some of the other singers brought into music. Many singers came directly from theatre, the *jatra* and films because, in the absence of playback, most leading ladies sang their own songs. Kanan Devi, Anurupa, Binodini Dasi, Bedana Dasi, Niharbala came from films but were recognized for their musical talents too. Arindam truly has promises to keep and miles to go before he can sleep.



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Through the eyes of an archivist

shoma a chatterji gets a sense of history from Arindam Saha Sardar



THERE are very few people who have heard of old *Abahoni* songs welcoming the Goddess Durga. Nor have they had the good fortune of witnessing the oldest paintings of the Goddess in history. Add to this old magazines, newspapers, published articles on Durga, on *Abahoni* songs coupled with actual music being played to offer audiovisual enrichment to the paintings that formed the crux of a unique exhibition organised by Jeebomsmiti Digital Archive recently in Uttarpara, a suburban town near Kolkata, that was inaugurated on 12 October and continued till the 18th. Arindam Saha Sardar, self-trained documentary filmmaker, is an archivist who founded the archive some years ago and keeps organising exhibitions of his collections from time to time. Jeebomsmiti organised this exhibition in collaboration with Focus.

Saha Sardar has been organising such unique exhibitions at his studio from time to time and has made three biographical documentaries of historic cinema technicians Subrata Mitra, Soumen Roy and Bansi Chandragupta, all of whom had the honour of working with the great Satyajit Ray. Last year, under the auspices of the Buddhist Dhammankar Sabha, Sardar exhibited *Chitra Itihasa*, with his 110 digitally restored prints of paintings collected from rare magazines, books and photo albums of the 19th and 20th centuries on the life of Itihasa (Buddha) from 22 to 24 June 2014 at Kripasaran Hall in Kolkata. Also on display were 112 digitally restored prints of title pages of invaluable publications in Bengali on the Buddha. A similar exhibition was held in May to celebrate Buddha Purnima at Shanti Niketan's Rabindra Bhawan. This collection deserves place among the calligraphic, graphic and printing history of Bengal. Among the painters were Abanindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, Asit Kumar Haldar and Srimati Gourabala Bharya Choudhury.

In June 2011, he organised an exhibition on music, an offshoot of his research on 78 rpm records produced between 1902 and 1971. "These 78 rpm records are considered to

be the original in the Indian recording industry. LPs and EPs and 45 rpm records are said to be copies. Recording companies stopped recording on 78 rpm from 1970 but a few offshoots came out in 1971. I wanted to make a documentary on this subject. In 2008, I began to interview people directly involved with the 78 rpm recording industry. These included collectors of 78 rpm records, music directors, singers, lyricists, music arrangers, recordists and even the head of Megaphone Company on camera with the aim of making a documentary on the subject. Private songs and film songs and all modern Bengali songs were within the subject of my research. I collected 78 rpm records, photographs, record players, restored the photographs on Photoshop and organised my first exhibition on 'Female voices on gramophone records'. This is my second exhibition on music. We have also brought out a CD for fans of old Bengali songs available for sale because funding has been a critical problem," Sardar sums up.

This time the exhibition was unique in every sense of the term. Digging into the past history of paintings on the Durga icon over nearly 200 years, he fetched a classic collection of paintings of the Mother Goddess by painters who are anonymous with those of international renown such as Nandalal Bose and Abanindranath Tagore. He gathered around 57 sketches and paintings in black-and-white and colour reproductions published during the 19th and 20th centuries in Bengali magazines such as *Bharat Baran* and *Banumat* and the Bengali almanac printed and published by Gupta Press, which prides itself on a massive collection of sketches of different kinds of Durga. The Bengali almanac or *Pangshu*, as it is known in Bengali, is a historical archive unto itself, published annually just before the Bengali New Year that falls in mid-April of the Gregorian calendar. For the uninitiated, the Gupta Press *Pangshu* was first published in 1869 from Kolkata to fulfil the growing demand of having a codified book of ceremonies. It is like a detailed and precise frame of reference of lists, dates, times and events marked in the current calendar year for fixing the date of marriage, thread ceremony, *annaprasad*, funerals and everything else with which rituals are associated. Filled with illustrations in black-and-white executed often adapting the Kalighat Pata School of Paintings, the *Pangshu* offers a cultural and aesthetic history through its evolution as the most successful commercial venture where art has played a distinctive role.

Among the painters whose works found representation at the exhibition were — apart from the great painters mentioned above — Viswamvar Acharya, Nityalal Dutta, Bindu Bhusini, Ramdhan Swarnakar, Karik Chandra Basak, Hirshil Bose, Ramkinkar Ray, Kalkinikar Ghosh Dasgupta, Pramodkumar Chatterjee and many others. The late music aficionado Upendranath Mukhopadhyay had edited a volume called *Sangeet Kosh* in 1899. Sardar has collected 57 *Agamoni* song lyrics from this volume and displayed these in the exhibition. The *Pangshu* collected span 1885 and 1886 and the magazines that provided the source material for the paintings have been gleaned from old collections of *Probaski*, *Jamuna*, *Bharatbaran*, *Sangeet Jigyan*, *Probodh*, *Madhuk*, *Bodhoni*, *Shardulaya Anurita*, *Shardulaya Madhuranaghar*, *Shardulaya Bazar Anurita*, *Shardulaya Nalabadi*, *Shardulaya Ananda Bazar Patrika* and *Shardulaya Desh*, among others. Most of the magazines that map part of the cultural and literary history of Bengal and the Bengali identity are extinct today. This makes such exhibitions all the more archival and significant, marking a milestone in the history of archiving artefacts and art in Bengal.

কলকান্ডে ওয়ালি

এই সময়

18 november 2017

গৌতম বুদ্ধ বিষয়ক ছবি ও বাংলা বই

উনিশ ও বিশ শতকের ছাপাছবিতে গৌতম বুদ্ধ ও বুদ্ধ বিষয়ক বাংলা বই নিয়ে চিত্রপ্রদর্শনী ১৯ থেকে ২৬ নভেম্বর (প্রতি দিন সন্ধ্যা ৬টা থেকে রাত ৯ টা), উত্তরপাড়া জীবনস্মৃতি কক্ষে। ছাপা ছবির মধ্যে রয়েছে গগনেন্দ্রনাথ, অবনীন্দ্রনাথ (সঙ্গের ছবি), নন্দলাল বসু প্রমুখ শিল্পীর ছবি। ভাবনা ও রূপায়ণে অরিন্দম সাহা সরদার। সূচনা সন্ধ্যায় 'গুগল যুগে গ্রন্থাগারের প্রয়োজনীয়তা' নিয়ে বলবেন স্বাগতা দাশমুখোপাধ্যায়। ওই দিন শিল্পী রেবতীভুষণের পরিবারে পক্ষ থেকে একটি ব্যঙ্গচিত্র জীবনস্মৃতি আকর্ষিত দান করা হবে। ২৫ নভেম্বর, 'রবীন্দ্রমননে বুদ্ধ' বিষয়ে বলবেন হেমেন্দুবিকাশ চৌধুরী। ২৬ নভেম্বর, 'আকর্ষিত' নিয়ে বলবেন গোপী দেসরকার। পরে প্রদর্শিত হবে তথ্যচিত্র 'সাগা অফ লাইফ', ভাবনা ও পরিচালনা সৃজন দেসরকার। পরে একক সঙ্গীত পরিবেশন করবেন দেবাশিস গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়। তিন দিনই মূল অনুষ্ঠানের সঙ্গে থাকবে জীবনস্মৃতির সদস্যদের পরিবেশিত বৃন্দগান।

