

METROPLUS

Inspired by love and war



From Haqeeqat

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Looking back at Chetan Anand's work on the big screen

“Chetan, saw Haqeeqat. Strong visuals, excellent music but no story,” Satyajit Ray had reportedly said to Chetan Anand at the Oberoi Grand lobby in October, 1964. Both were to receive the coveted BFJA awards for Charulata and Haqeeqat. Chetan smiled and replied, “ Haqeeqat is not a film. It's a mosaic.”

Ray confessed a number of times that he was inspired to work with maestros Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan after listening to the music of Neecha Nagar and Aandhiyan. However, it was Chetan Anand, whose birth centenary was celebrated in January this year, who introduced Ravi Shankar (Neecha Nagar) and Ali Akbar Khan (Aandhiyan) as composers in films.

The eldest of the talented Anands was a recluse by nature, but versatile as a filmmaker and actor. Winning the Grand prize at Cannes for Neecha Nagar (1946), along with David Lean (Brief Encounter), is a proud testimony to his filmmaking skills. In his 50-year career, Chetan directed 18 films and a tele-serial Param Veer Chakra. Though a majority of his directorial ventures were flops, he has carved a niche in the annals of Indian cinema.

When Chetan directed Neecha Nagar in 1946, he was greatly influenced by the leftist leanings of the IPTA and the works of Sergei Eisenstein and Pudovkin. The film too was avant-garde and anti-imperialist. Despite it being a masterpiece, Neecha Nagar bit the dust. It hurt Chetan, but did not demoralise him.

In 1950, along with younger brother Dev Anand, he started Navketan films. Chetan directed Dev Anand in Afsar, Aandhiyan, Taxi Driver and Funtoosh. Aandhiyan, though a flop, was India's official entry to the Venice, Moscow and Peking International Film Festivals in 1953-54. In Taxi Driver, Chetan shot the song 'Jaaye To Jaaye Kahan' picturised on Dev Anand, who pulled off the sorrowful scene with sensitivity and restraint.

Dev Anand, it is said, idolised his brother. However, after Funtoosh, creative differences arose between the two and each struck out on his own. Chetan eventually handed over Navketan's creative reins to his youngest brother Vijay Anand. Venturing on his own, Chetan directed Anjali in 1957. A print of the film is said to have been purchased by Francois Truffaut.

Anjali did not fare well at the box office and Chetan was almost without work for eight years. But, this did not stifle his creativity, for he directed the Son et Lumiere both in English and Hindi for the Ministry of Tourism in 1963. The show at Red Fort was a tourist's delight. With his never-say-die-attitude, he bounced back in 1964 with his magnum opus Haqeeqat. Based on the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict, it is still considered

one of the best war films to have been made. No less a genius than Andrzej Wajda marvelled at Chetan's handling of the one-year-old Master Bunty in Aakhri Khat and, that too, without a bound script. Heer Raanjha was acclaimed as being sheer poetry on celluloid and in colour.

After Heer Raanjha, Chetan seems to have lost his magic touch. Confusion over whether to follow off-beat or commercial cinema left him in a creative dilemma. "Love and war inspire me," he said, and these seem to be dominant themes in most of his films.

Reference:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/inspired-by-love-and-war/article7024660.ece/amp/>