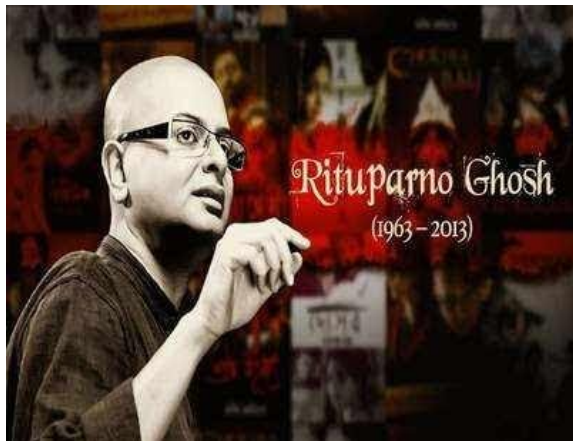


ENTERTAINMENT

Rituparno Ghosh: Cinema, gender and art

Sankha Ghosh | [TIMESOFINDIA.COM](https://timesofindia.com) | May 30, 2021, 08:00 IST



Rituparno Ghosh, the young avant-garde director of Bengali cinema in the nineties, literally heralded the current Renaissance of Bengali cinema. He ushered a movement in which filmmakers such as Kaushik Ganguly, Anjan Dutta and Srijit Mukherji among others propelled Bengali cinema back into the elite class of Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen movies. With Rituparno, Bengal returned to the map of international film awards. These new-age directors managed to create a niche multiplex audience who after a long time rediscovered the enriched culture of Bengali literature, especially poetry.



On Rituparno Ghosh's death anniversary today, it seems more and more relevant to acknowledge how he achieved an enviable fusion between high art and commercial success which only a few filmmakers in Bengal enjoyed with such consistency.

An honest attempt to compete with Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen



Rituparno Ghosh's films often seemed an honest attempt to compete with Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen, when he would invest a lot in setting the frames and stories from these two masters' films. If you closely watch 'Bariwali', you would notice there was a certain punch of Mrinal Sen's 'Khandar' and to some extent 'Akaler Sandhaane' while 'Andarmahal' and 'Sob Choritro Kalponik' borrows inspiration from Satyajit Ray's 'Debi' and 'Charulata' respectively.

Affectionately called Ritu by his close ones, Ghosh's timeline as a filmmaker starting from 'Hirer Angti' in 1992 to 'The Last Lear' in 2007 looks like a constant process of unbelievable progress exploring the film medium. The level of film craft he delivered in the later film works, particularly 'Sob Choritro Kalponik' is no doubt globally without peer.

His works, a reflection of our delusional society

Rituparno used to see cinema as not just a medium of an intellectual culture but also used to make us see the elegant standard of living the elitist echelons of our society enjoy. Starting his career as an advertising professional and thereafter working as an editor of a film gossip magazine, Ghosh had ample opportunity to combine both styles in his cinematic works. It was like a sneak peek into the lives of people who despite not being super-rich, obviously belonged to the celebrity class. His films focus as much on dress, jewelry, designs, and lifestyles, as they explore the characters and their emotions.

Using the unique lives of this creamy layer – not bowed down by common everyday barriers and occasionally the pitfalls of adjusting with the uncertain future of earning a livelihood – he aspired to develop his own views of the realistic world. Through these portrayals, he tried to analyze the ever-increasing mass culture depending on high decibel, emotional ups and downs and last but not least the assertion of aggressive masculinity.

A universe of gracious culture

In most of his films, RituParno created a universe of gracious culture that always manifested the purified sensibilities of Bengali Renaissance left behind by Rabindranath Tagore. Ghosh in so many ways revived Bengal's Tagorean heritage, the essence of classical homes, flaunted our saree and jewelry tradition and every Bengali's pride in hosting Durga Puja – all of those looking to have banished in the wilderness during the decades of Communist rule.

Remember 'Raincoat' where he wrote poetry in Brajabuli, the language in which Tagore had composed his Vaishnava lyrics Bhanushingher Padabali and perhaps Ritu emerged as the only Bengali after Tagore, in modern times, to have explored the language.

Breathed new life to talk shows

He had also hosted two TV shows – ‘Ebong Rituparno’ and ‘Ghosh and Company’ - where he used to interview celebrities in a typical, relaxed drawing room setting, giving an essence of the privacy of a home. He often asked personal questions which you can say a bit gossipy but more than that was deeply philosophical – exposing the humane along with the cerebral personality of a celebrity.



Rituparno Ghosh faced a lot of mirths when he indulged in extreme familiarity, addressing almost everyone, including celebs, ‘tui’ – or what will be ‘tu’ in Hindi. In a society that is chained in social entitlements where high connections count, his journey outwards from the shadows of his middle-class home (his father used to be a technician in the film industry) looked to have shackled many glass ceilings.

Created a ‘shock value’ to break the entry barriers

repeated sex surgeries were the reason behind his death, others believe excessive work killed him. Some used to say he was gay but think deeply; he was actually a person who pretended to be gay to effectively create a ‘shock value’ so that he can break the so-called entry barriers to the film fraternity often jealously guarded by an elite class.



Nobody can deny his influence on contemporary culture. Be it his early feminist work to his later works as an openly gay filmmaker, he set trends and brought in some uncomfortable questions about sexual identity and social norms in family dramas.

Reference:

<https://m.timesofindia.com/entertainment/bengali/movies/news/rituparno-ghosh-cinema-gender-and-art/articleshow/82999750.cms>