

## MOVIES

# Satyajit Ray birth anniversary: A picture in contrast



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The 96th birth anniversary of Satyajit Ray on Tuesday in Kolkata brought forth a picture of contrasts that simultaneously provides joy and despair to film buffs and fans of the great filmmaker.

On the one hand, there has been a tremendous response to an exhibition on Feluda, the famous Kolkata-based detective created by the master, and on the other, the Calcutta Film Society, set up by Ray in 1947, languishes in a state of neglect due to paucity of funds.

Celebrating 50 years of the iconic sleuth Feluda, a display of over a hundred exhibits at the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in south Kolkata is drawing large crowds. The exhibition includes a poster of Feluda, book covers and films, scanned copies of Ray's hand-written manuscripts, first drafts of the stories, as well as details in Ray's own hand, on shooting scenes and schedules of the two Feluda films he had directed — Sonar Kella, and Joi Baba Felunath.

There are also drawings and sketches made by Ray for his Feluda books, and shooting stills from the two Feluda films he directed.

Visitors can have a look and even purchase a blow-up of a first page draft of the first Feluda story 'Feludar Goendagiri' ('Danger in Darjeeling', 1965), the first page of the first draft of the novel 'Badshahi Agnti' ('The Emperor Ring', 1966), and the shooting schedule of Sonar Kella.

Though Ray directed only two Feluda films, subsequently, his son Sandip Ray, an eminent film director in his own right, made a large number of Feluda films and serials for television. Pictures of these films, too, have been displayed. In many ways, the evolution of the character of Feluda is evident in the exhibition.

As collectors and fans flocked to the exhibition, organised by the Society for the Preservation of Satyajit Ray Archives, more than ₹50,000 worth of artefacts were sold on its very first day.

Dire straits

While Feluda remains as vibrant in mass popularity as when he first came into being, the Calcutta Films Society, one of the oldest film societies in the country, is in dire straits.

At its 250 sq. ft. office located at Bharat Bhavan, a crumbling mansion in Central Avenue, its 85-year-old working president Pradipta Sankar Sen is trying to keep the society alive.

"This is the oldest film society in the country, which was set up by Satyajit Ray and Chidananda Dasgupta in 1947," Mr. Sen said. There has been no screening of films at the society since last October due to a paucity of funds.

Mr. Sen recalled that a young Ray supplied books and film magazines to the society's members. and Sergei Eisenstein's 'The Battleship Potemkin' (1925) was the inaugural film of the society.

Prior to the formation of the Calcutta Film Society, there was only one film club in India — the Mumbai Film Society. It was, however, disbanded before the Calcutta Film Society was launched, which makes this the oldest running film club in the country.

Mr. Sen admits to a cash crunch and said that he, along with other members, is trying to bring film screenings back to the society.

“The monthly rent is about ₹5,000, and along with other miscellaneous expenses, the cost of running the society comes to ₹10,000,” he said, adding that the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) has been kind to waive interest on the rent pending for the society’s office.

Mr. Sen said that the society has about 200 life members who make a nominal one-time yearly contribution. He expressed the hope that the government may recognise the society as having heritage value, or that new members would join to keep it afloat. The members are also trying to revamp and open the society’s library, which has a collection of old and rare books on cinema.

Reference:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/entertainment/movies/satyajit-ray-birth-anniversary-a-picture-in-contrast/article18384804.ece/amp/>