

Movie Screening

Saina

Stockholm

25 August 2022

Remarks

Ambassador Tanmaya Lal

Good evening everyone,

I would like to thank Ms. Kunnie Topden for bringing together this Film Festival.

It is not an easy task, and our compliments to her for this great initiative.

Cinema is a wonderful audio-visual medium for telling stories.

When it works it is like magic.

It is not only a hugely creative and collaborative process but often also big business.

I have always been amazed to realise that for a film to become a success, so much has to fall in place – with so many artistes and technicians from such diverse backgrounds and visions.

If we look at Indian cinema, its history is as old as that of major world cinema.

Moving pictures were already being shot in India in late 1890s. The first feature film, a silent movie came out in 1913. By 1920 nearly 30 films were being produced annually in India.

The first talkie in India is considered to be Alam Ara in Hindi & Urdu in 1931. However, it is not often realised that the same year, talkies also came out in Bengali, Telugu and Tamil languages.

Even at that time, nearly hundred years ago and much before India's independence, cities like Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai) had become leading film hubs.

Today Bangalore and Hyderabad are also among leading hubs.

Films are being produced in all major languages including for instance not only Kannada, Gujarati, Punjabi but also Bhojpuri, Assamese or Manipuri.

The biggest commercially successful films to come out in India in recent months have not necessarily been in Hindi but those made in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam or Marathi.

Although Indian cinema is usually associated with a certain stereotypical formula or masala type escapist movies with song and dance, the Indian cinema has always been much more than that.

There has been a strong tradition of so-called art or neo-realist cinema.

Today, the situation is even more different with low budget experimental films with a proliferation of new and bold themes targeted for different audiences.

Many mainstream Hindi films enjoyed huge popularity across countries in Asia and Africa especially in 1960s-90s.

Today Indian cinema is a global phenomenon.

In part due to the hugely successful Indian Diaspora across continents.

The biggest Hollywood production houses compete with Indian ones in Indian cinema. The scene is also fast changing with OTT platforms.

A very welcome development in recent years has been films being made in sports biopic genre.

Chak De India on women hockey, Dangal on women wrestling, Mary Kom on the legendary woman boxer, Bhaag Milkha Bhaag on another legendary athlete, Paan Singh Tomar on another athlete, Lagaan on cricket, Shabaash Mithu and MS Dhoni on great Indian cricket woman and men captains and 83 on India's winning the first cricket world cup forty years ago.

These films tell the inspirational stories of remarkable athletes, who face even greater social and other hurdles to realise their dreams.

Most of these films have been very successful.

Today's movie is from the same genre.

It celebrates Saina Nehwal who has broken so many barriers and taken India to glory in world badminton.

She became World's top-ranking player in 2015 and is an Olympic medalist. She has inspired so many women to take up competitive sports.

Her story is reflective of today's India. A fast-changing confident India.

India at 75 years of her independence.

Where Indian women are competing successfully at global level in so many disciplines such as gymnastics, fencing, sailing, athletics, swimming, archery, shooting, football, boxing, wrestling, weightlifting, chess.

And not only Sports.

Women are among leadership positions in business and politics.

Indian women scientists and engineers have led Indian space missions. The current Head of the Indian scientific establishment is also a woman.

I understand that as part of this festival, 10 Indian films in different languages, not necessarily big budget films will be screened. This will show the diversity of Indian film making.

I would like to again thank Ms. Kunnie Topden and her partners and sponsors to making this film festival possible here in Stockholm in this special year.

Hope you will enjoy this and other movies that are planned.

Thank You