



You are here: [Home](#) » [Supplements](#) » [Sunday Herald entertainment](#) » Thinker's cinema

Thinker's cinema

Santosh Mehta, June 23, 2013, DHNS :

Experimental



Young Indian filmmaker Ajita Suchitra Veera has reasons to feel on top of the world. Recently, she got the rare distinction of becoming the first and the only Indian director in 20 years to be part of the Prague International Film Festival. This put Ajita in the league with the best directors of world cinema.

Earlier, Ajita was awarded the best director in the 12th Osian Cinefan Film Festival, New Delhi, in August last year, for her debut film Ballad of Rustom, and also went on to win laurels at the 61st International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg and the 17th IFFK Kerala. Ajita, a graduate in science, was destined to be a filmmaker. Hailing from a film family, she went on to train as an actor and did her Masters in Theatre before joining the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, to follow her passion for cinema.

“While I was in high school, my father made me watch Satyajit Ray’s Pather Panchali repeatedly. It was very difficult for me to be interested in watching it. I would run away, but he would make me watch it several times. Over a period of time, while I was in college, I realised how fabulous Ray’s cinema was. He was an artiste in the true sense.”

A filmy beginning

At 19, Ajita became a producer for the regional version of the highly acclaimed Academy winning film *Gandhi* by Richard Attenborough.

Her short feature film, *Notes on Her*, was nominated for the Oscars in 2003 in the short film category, and her graduate film *Solitary Sandpiper* won her the Best Art Director award in 2004 at Festival Sesily, followed by the Best Director award for *Ballad of Rustom* in 2012.

Ajita worked as a freelance director till she founded Imaginem Cinema Pvt Ltd in 2009 — a motion picture company for producing imaginative and original cinema from India.

Ballad of Rustom was fully shot on 35 mm film on cinemascope format with sync (live) sound since it was an aesthetic and artistic decision by Ajita to shoot only in the traditional way. She also wanted to create a visually different scheme for the film. The negative went through a unique process to create a very different look. The film itself took four years to make, since Ajita was very particular about the right location, shooting only in the right light, also about casting actors who are not stars. The music was also something she collaborated extensively with composer Andrew T Mackay for a powerful score, which took two years to evolve.

Asked about plans to release *Ballad of Rustom* in India, Ajita says, “I am in touch with Prasad Film Laboratories. I have a team of people who are helping me for this film’s release and I’m visiting Delhi for discussions about the same.”

However, she is not in a hurry to release it, as she wants to show her film to the Indian audience in a proper way, “because *Ballad of Rustom* is a classic and serious film”.

Ballad of Rustom is about imagination, dreams, of the passion for life, love, hope, despair and conflicting philosophies of a few people in a small Indian township.

“My forthcoming films have diverse themes. I love the countryside, so the next one is based in the countryside and the coastline of south India. I have others, which are in the pipeline — thriller, fantasy. I would love audiences in India to watch unique cinema such as mine, and I want them to engage with my cinema unabashedly,” says Ajita.

According to Ajita, she has already started working on a film about a young fisherman who is madly in love with a woman. “It’s a great love story and I am excited about this film. It has the sea, the waves, magical moments and lots of emotions, and more importantly, life, love, passion and madness.”

Filmmaking, according to Ajita, is her passion and also her life. After showing her film *Ballad of Rustom* in Cannes to a select audience, Ajita was not happy at all. She felt that her film should have been shown to the Indian audience first.

Screen International termed *Ballad of Rustom* as “one of the most highly anticipated films coming out of India,” while critics, both in India and abroad, heaped praises on her.

The jury citation read: “For her powerful choice of a daring cinematic language, the judicious treatment of a brave thematic subject rarely explored in Indian cinema, and a compelling perspective on the relation between humanity and environment.”

Ajita feels that the audience should take cinema seriously and regrets the fact that even legendary filmmakers like Satyajit Ray and others got recognition only after they died.

[Go](#)