

20th Dhaka International Film Festival: Better Festival, Better Film Culture, Better Fraternity

By Bidhan Rebeiro

In the late nineteenth century, movies began to entertain and make money. Then the artists became aware of the power of the medium. Viewers also felt that, films are not just a commercial product; they have a different dimension and attraction. So, surrounding the combined industry, the collaborative practice also started.

A film festival is a form of that collaborative practice. If a festival is international, there is no need to talk about collectiveness; people can watch local and international films from home and abroad. Many talented people come from different industries and get a chance to exchange their thoughts and views.

The same thing happens at Dhaka International Film Festival, and this year, it happened again during the 20th edition.



1. Different Shades of Cinema

Two hundred twenty-five films from 70 countries, including Bangladesh, took part. Of these, 129 films are more than 50 minutes long, and 96 are short and independent films. If we talk about Bangladesh separately, we can see 38 movies in Bangladesh, 22 are short and independent, and 16 are full length.

Not only films, but Dhaka city also became a gathering place for more than 50 foreign filmmakers, producers, film pickers and coordinators, film critics, and juries.

The festival included Afghanistan, Armenia, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Congo, Egypt, Germany, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Estonia, Finland, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Norway, Pakistan, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, Rwanda, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Although delegates from Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and Yakutia were due to arrive, many could not catch flights to Dhaka due to the Covid situation. However, the viewers of this country had the opportunity to watch the films of the mentioned countries.



2. When the Curtain Rose

The 20th Dhaka International Film Festival started on 15 January with a glittering event. Rainbow Film Festival Society organizes the country's largest and three-decade-old festival with a slogan- 'Better film, Better Audience, Better Society'.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen inaugurated the Dhaka International Film Festival in the auditorium of the National Museum. During his inaugural speech, he said, "The young society of Bangladesh is enlivening today. They watch movies from different cultures in tandem with globalization. There are many movies from which we can learn. Dhaka International Film Festival is an international quality festival, where the culture of the country merges with different countries."

Ahmed Muztaba Zamal, director of the festival, said, "Due to Corona, the full image of Dhaka International Film Festival is not visible this time. Many foreign guests are expected to attend but are unable to attend. I wish this festival success."

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram K Doraiswami, the special guest, said, "Dhaka Film Festival, an international standard festival, will show 34 Indian movies. The film industry of Bangladesh has done very well in the world arena. Recently 'Rehana Maryam Noor' went to Cannes Film Festival. Bangladesh also did very well at the Goa Film Festival."

State Minister for Culture KM Khalid, the special guest at the festival, said, "A nation retains its heritage through film. Our young society is getting acquainted with the international culture that enriches our culture."

Minister of State for External Affairs Shahriar Alam presided over the event; as a Chief Patron of the Festival he said, "Rainbow Film Society organizes a grand international film festival every year, which is prestigious in the international arena. Every film here is enriching our culture."

'The Anger,' a film co-produced by Lebanon and Germany and directed by Maria Ivanova Jade, was the opening film on the first day. And considering the pandemic situation festival arranged an OTT platform to watch the



movies with the help of BongoBD. The audience appreciated the hybrid nature of the festival.

3. New Windows, Old Doors

3.1 Wide Angle

The festival opened a new section, 'Wide Angle.' Many talented and capable filmmakers in the country and abroad have not come to the limelight, or they have remained undiscovered for some reason.

Shaheen Dil-Riaz, a German-based Bangladeshi filmmaker, was the festival's primary focus for the 'Wide Angle' section. Although he is already well-known in foreign lands, he is still underrated in Bangladesh. Thus, in order to introduce Shaheen Dil-Riaz to the native audience, Star Cineplex screened four documentaries in Bashundhara City.

There were other important sections-

3.2. Asian Cinema Competition

This competition consists of about 21 films from different countries of Asia (minimum 70 minutes long fiction film). There was an international committee of five members to judge these films.

3.3 Retrospective Category

This year, the Retrospective was dedicated to Yasujiro Ozu (12 December 1903 - 12 December 1983), an essential Japanese filmmaker in world cinema. Ozu started making films in the silent era. Initially a short comedy filmmaker, Ozu began making thought-provoking films in the 1930s about Japan's family structure, marriage, and inter-generational relationships. These things became the main subject of Ozu's films. During the 20th DIFF, the festival screened Ozu's five films at the National Museum main auditorium. The movies are 'Tokyo Story' (1953), 'Tokyo Twilight' (1956), 'Equinox Flower' (1958), 'Late Autumn' (1970) and, 'An Autumn Afternoon' (1982).

3.4 Tribute

The late internationally acclaimed French actor Jean-Paul Belmondo was honored in this section. Born not far from Paris, the artist grew up in a cultural setting. He was focused on sports early, starting his career as a boxer. But out of love for acting, he started working on stage as a professional actor in the 50s. Later he became renowned by working on films by French New Wave director Jean-Luc Godard. Those were the golden moments of his life. Belmondo died in 2021 at the age of 88. The films 'Breathless' (1970) and 'Pierrot the Fool' (1975), starring Belmondo and directed by Godard, were screened in the tribute section at the auditorium of Alliance Française de Dhaka.

3.5 Bangladesh Panorama

This section included nine Bangladeshi films. The festival committee has added this section to promote Bangladeshi movies and develop the international market. In this category, nine selected films made by Bangladeshi producers got a chance to compete. On behalf of the International Federation of Film Critics, FIPRESCI, three judges gave the 'Best Film' award in the Bangladesh Panorama category.

3.6 Cinema of the World Category

This section showed the top 47 contemporary films from different countries.

3.7 Children's section

This section screened eighteen children films. As always, the exhibition was open to all children. Disadvantaged children got the special arrangements to watch movies in this category and it has become a tradition during the festival.

A film from this category earned a nomination for the Best Juvenile Audience Badal Rahman Award.

3.8 Spiritual Films

This section screened 29 films, mainly religious beliefs, respect for other religions, and humanitarian films. The Interfaith jury selected the best story and one best documentary for the spiritual films.

3.9. Women Filmmakers Session

In this section, films and women producers from home and abroad also took an active part. It included 26 local and foreign full-length and short films and documentaries. Five established women associated with films from home and abroad selected one of the best story films and one of the best documentaries in the category for the award. The best female producer from this category also got awarded.



3.10. Short and Independent Films

It included 61 domestic and foreign short films and documentaries. The festival opened this section to create an opportunity for independent filmmakers to enter the international arena.



4. The Screening Places

The screening places of the festival were the main auditorium of the National Museum and Poet Sufia Kamal Auditorium, Shawkat Osman Memorial Auditorium of the Central Public Library, National Gallery and Dance Auditorium of Shilpakala Academy, Alliance Francaise Auditorium, Academy Auditorium of the Ministry of External Affairs, and Star Cineplex of Bashundhara City mall.

5. Audience Feedback

The audience very naturally responded more for Bangladeshi films. This year too, the festival has experienced hundreds of film lovers flocking to the halls screening Bangladeshi films.

Bangladeshi films, especially 'Ajab Karkhana,' 'Lal Morger Jhunti,' 'Chandrabati Kotha,' 'Dhaka Dream,' 'Bishwa Sundari,' etc. were in the center of attraction. Although people were not interested in Bangladeshi films in the theaters, the middle-class audience showed interest in the festival.

In addition, the general public, especially students have always been interested in foreign language films. This time too, there was no exception.

On one of the festival days, five friends of Dhaka University went to the film exhibition of Shilpakala Academy in a group. Everyone was very excited to see the 'Kalakaksha' starting at 5 pm.

Sharmin Shanti, studying economics at Dhaka University expressed, "The environment is essential for watching movies. I got that impression from Dhaka International Film Festival and felt very good. We just finished watching 'Kalakaksh.' I like the story of the film very much."

On 18 January, several screenings happened at the Shilpakala Academy's Art Gallery and Music and Dance Auditorium. In both the venues of Shilpakala, many visitors gathered in the evening.

Piyas Talukder came to see movies with his family every afternoon. He told the media, "Every day after my office, I come to watch movies with my family. They show many good movies here. Introducing young children to the diversity of culture is also a reason to come here."

6. Women in Film

As a significant component of the cultural industry, cinema undoubtedly has a substantial impact on the subcon-

scious mind of the common masses across the world. Films reflect early social identities and cultural values as an effective medium. Filmmakers portray the conventional images and gendered stereotypes for many decades. Positive changes regarding gender roles in cinema are still phenomenal with usual typecasting.

Therefore, the significance of women's films as a particular genre lies in identifying the women-centered narratives, female protagonists, and designed portrayal of women's concerns regarding domestic chore, motherhood, or the stories of self-sacrifice romance. Rather than encompassing women filmmakers, women's films usually mean- the films specially made for women, predominantly by men screenwriters, directors, or producers.

Although women's cinema in both Hollywood and Bollywood in the second half of the twentieth century tried to address the ground reality of women's lives, the continuity of this trend disappeared in the sixties. Bollywood and Hollywood undoubtedly are two significant sources of stereotypes, which remain prevalent in films of many other countries.

Hollywood and Bollywood cinema portray women as passive objects of desire and, it is no different in Bangladeshi films. Exposures of girls as sexual objects are the major trend of showing women in these films.

Although glamorization of the female body is the major trend of mainstream cinema in this part of the world, independent filmmakers in many countries made films that portrayed women's potential as human beings. Independent filmmakers of the South Asian region have also made some good films on women.

The content of the films based on women requires having more discussion and interaction among scholars, activists, film critics, and the filmmakers themselves. And for this very purpose of making women-based cinema better and more relevant, the festival has arranged a two-day international conference on women in cinema.

A two daylong conference organized by Rainbow Film Society in association with the Department of Women and Gender Studies, Dhaka University, was held on Sunday 16 January and Monday 17 January 2022 at the Dhaka Club Samson Lounge 2nd floor, Shahbag, Dhaka-1000.

6.1. The objective of the conference

To improve the standard and content of women-based cinema and create an interaction among the women involved in the medium of cinema through exchanging ideas and sharing diverse experiences.

6.1.1. Day 1, Sunday, 16 January 2022

The inaugural program started with a cultural program attended by many distinguished personalities





from home and abroad.

Mr. K. M. Khalid, State Minister of Cultural Affairs of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was the Chief Guest at the opening ceremony. H.E.Mr. Charles Whiteley, Head of Delegation, EU Delegation to Bangladesh, was also present there. Dr. Umme Busra Sultana, Chair, Department of Women and Gender Studies, Dhaka University, and Ms. Meral Melika Duran, Producer, Film Festival Programmer, and EU strategist from Paris, France. Professor Kishwar Kamal, Chairperson of the Dhaka International Film Festival, presided over the ceremony.

Now session-wise, the speakers, discussant, and chair names are given below, along with the keynote paper's title and presenter.

Session 1

Keynote: "New generation Turkish female directors from Pelin Esmer to Deniz Gamze Ergüven."

This keynote paper was presented by: Ms. Oya Doğan, Journalist, Film Critic, scriptwriter, and consultant for many television series and feature films from Istanbul, Turkey.

Discussant: 1. Ms. Meral Melika Duran, Producer, Film Festival Programmer, and EU strategist from Paris, France.

2. Ms. Yana Lekarska, Bulgarian filmmaker, graduated with an MFA in Film Directing from Chung-Ang University, Seoul, with the award-winning short film The Bridge.

Session 2

Keynote: "Samsodhan to Thalaivii" Patriarchy Vs. Political empowerment of Women: A film contemplation."

Dr. Debjani Halder, Film Research Officer, Film and Television Institute of India (Pune), wrote this keynote paper.

Discussant:

1. Dr. Ipsita Barat, Head Mass Communication & Videography Department, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, India.

2. Ms. Samia Zaman filmmaker and media personalities from Bangladesh.

Ms. Gyda Velvin Myklebust, Producer, and Head of the New Nordic Films of the Norwegian International Film Festival in Haugesund, presided over the session.

Session 3

Keynote: "Women in cinema: between documentary and human rights defending."

Ms. Evdokia Moskvina presented this keynote paper, is a Russian/ French-based awarded filmmaker and actress, HRs defender. Her films touch the sensitive subjects of children in the zones of World conflicts.

Discussant:

1. Ms. Dalia Alic: Film Producer (Student Oscar Finalist 21'), Former Festival Artistic Director, and Human Rights Law Graduate from Croatia.
2. Ms. Sreyashi Sengupta: Producer, Film Distribution Specialist, Managing Director Darpan Global, and CEO Continental Entertainment Singapore.

Ms. Shameem Akhter, an Independent Filmmaker from Bangladesh, presided over the session.

6.1.2. Day 2, Monday, 18 January 2022

Session 1:

Keynote: "Rehana Maryam Noor: A Feminist Story as Told by Men with Vision"

Sydney Levine presented this keynote paper; she is a trainer/ educator, writer, and consultant for festival, international sales, and financing strategies from LA, USA.

Discussant:

1. Ms. Meral Melika Duran, Producer, Film Festival Programmer, and EU strategist from Paris, France.
2. Ms. Fatima Amin, a media personality and faculty in the film and television department, Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Mr. Mofidul Haque, Cultural activist and Trustee Bangladesh Liberation War Museum, presided over the session.

Session 2

Keynote: "Characters depicted by female directors – a matter of choice or responsibility?"

Ms. Yana Lekarska presented this keynote; Bulgarian filmmaker has graduated with an MFA in Film Directing from Chung-Ang University, Seoul, with the award-winning short film The Bridge.

Discussant:

1. Dr. Ipsita Barat, Head Mass Communication & Videography Department, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, India.
2. Ms. Sreyashi Sengupta: Producer, Film Distribution Specialist, Managing Director Darpan Global, and CEO





Continental Entertainment Singapore

Syed Salahuddin Zaki is a Bangladeshi film director, producer, and film writer who presided over the session.

Session 3

Keynote: "European Cinema: a close up to women and diversity policies."

Ms. Meral Melika Duran presented this keynote paper; she is a producer, Film Festival Programmer, and EU strategist from Paris, France.

Discussant

1. Ms. Gyda Velvin Myklebust, Producer, and Head of the New Nordic Films of the Norwegian International Film Festival in Haugesund.

2. Ms. Naeema Chaudhury- Connoisseur; fan of Bangladesh's creative, cultural, and innovative things. Ms. Samia Zaman, filmmaker and media personalities from Bangladesh, presided over the session.

Closing Session

Ms. Meral Melika Duran, Dr. Ipsita Barat, and Ms. Dalia Alic ended the conference with their speech. Ms. Sydney Levine was the conference director. She has 40+ years of experience in the film industry, where she currently is a trainer/ educator, writer, and consultant for festival, international sales, and financing strategies. And Ishrat Khan Barsha was the conference coordinator. She is a faculty at the Department of Women & Gender Studies, University of Dhaka. As a Commonwealth Scholar, she is currently doing her Ph.D. at the University of Sussex, UK.

7. Reward means recognition

7.1. Best Children Film Badal Rahman Award
Africa, Dir: Daria Binevskaya, Dur: 54min.| Russia

7.2. Audience Award

Chandrabati Kotha (The Tales of Chandrabati), Dir: N. Rashed Chowdhury, Dur: 104min.| Bangladesh
Lal Moroger Jhuti (Call of the Red-Rooster), Dir: Nurul Alam Antique, Dur: 105min.|Bangladesh

7.3. Special Audience Award

Semkhor, Dir: Aimee Baruah, Dur: 93min.| India

7.4. Bangladesh Panorama Best Film Award by FIPRESCI Jury

Ajab Karkhana (Song of the Soul), Dir: Shabnam Ferdowsi, Dur: 109min.| Bangladesh

7.5. Women Filmmakers Section

Best Feature Film:

Shahrbano (Lady Of The City), Dir: Maryam, Bahrololumi, Dur: 78min. | Iran

Best Documentary:

Join Toisella Puolen (The Other side of the River), Dir: Antonia Kilian, Dur: 92min. | Germany, Finland

Best Short Film Award:

A Summer Place, Dir: Alexandra Matheou, Dur: 21min. | Cyprus, France

7.6. Spiritual Film Section**Best Feature Film:**

Yangzhen's Journey, Dir: Chengxu Lan, Dur: 95min. | China

Best Short Film:

Fatma Kayaci'nin Bilinmeyen Hikayesi (Untold story of Fatma Kayaci), Dir: Orhan Tekeoglu, Dur: 40min. | Turkey

Best Documentary:

Nane Moghadas (Holy Bread), Dir: Rahim Zabihi, Dur: 54min. | Iran

7.8. Asian Film Competition Section**Best Cinematography:**

Zhou Wencao for the film: Café by the Highway, Dir: Shi Xiaofan (Quentin Shih), Dur: 108min. | China

Best Script Writer:

Mr. Indranil Roychowdhury and Mr. Sugata Sinha for Mayar Jonjal (Debris of Desire),
Dir: Indranil Roychowdhury, Dur: 102min. | Bangladesh, India

Best Actor:

Mr. Jayasurya for the film: Sunny, Dir: Ranjith Sankar, Dur: 92min. | India

Best Actress:

Best Actress Ms. Sussan Parva for the film: Botox, Dir: Kaveh Mazaheri, Dur: 75min. | Iran, Canada

Best Director:

Sujit Bidari for the film: Ainaa Jhyal Ko Putali (Butterfly on the Windowpane), Dir: Sujit Bidari, Dur: 97 min.| Nepal

Best Film Award:

Koozhangal (Pebbles), Dir: P S Vinothraj, Dur: 74min.| India

8. Thousands of Dollars for Screenwriting

The finalists for the "West Meets East Screenplay Lab" had been selected before the festival. The announcement came on Sunday, 22 August, after careful deliberation of a five-member international jury board.

The jurors mentored the finalists. Berlinale's South Asia delegate Meenakshi Shedde (India), film festival programmer Hannah Fisher (Canada) and film festival programmer & producer Meral Melika Duran (France), director/producer Abu Shahid Emon (Bangladesh), and art & film critic Moinuddin Khaled (Bangladesh) mentored the participants.

The lab, which took place from January 16-19, 2022, as a part of the 20th Dhaka International Film Festival, was set to host promising filmmakers from all over South Asia. All 11 of these projects were mentored at the lab and pitched at the Film Hut at DIFF, where film producers and distributors, including OTT representatives, presented to bid.

The three winners awarded \$5,000, \$3,000 and \$2,000 respectively.

The winners were:

Putali Ko Sapna – Kiran Pokharel, Nepal

Fear-y-Tale- Tasmiah Afrin Mou, Bangladesh

Kanda Vanda – Gaurav Madan, India

The jurors were overwhelmed by the quality of the projects and congratulated the winners and the projects. These projects hold immense potential in terms of story and visuals, they mentioned in their deliberation.

Co-convenors of West Meets East, AKA Reza Ghalib and Sadia Khalid Reeti, facilitated the screenplay lab and South Asian film market- Film Hut.

In this fourth edition of West Meets East and the first edition of Film Hut, prominent film personalities from all over the world gathered to exchange knowledge, network, and collaborate on meaningful projects that aim to eliminate cultural barriers.

9. Jurors of 20th DIFF

Fifteen jurors from home and abroad were the judges in this huge event. Among them were three jurors from FIPRESCI, the International Federation of Film Critics. Names and short introductions of jurors are:

9.1. Asian Film Competition Section

Gyda Velvin Myklebust: She has a university degree in Cultural Science and a Master of Fine Arts in Film from the National Film School in Norway. She is the Director of New Nordic Films, the film market of the Norwegian International Film Festival in Haugesund, Norway; she has had the position since 2003. New Nordic Films is a Nordic film market and an international co-production and film financing market for feature films annually in Haugesund every August. As a producer Gyda has made two feature films, As I Fall (Når jeg faller, Dir. Magnus Meyer Arnesen 2018) and The Comet (Kometen, Dir. Bård Røssevold 2017).

Meral Melika Duran: She is a political-sociologist, women's rights advocate, and a very engaged strategist, producer, cinema critic, and consultant in the entertainment sector. She has more than 20 years of experience, including being in charge of Eurimages at the Cabinet of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe. Dedicated board member of several international organizations on issues related to women empowerment, as well as prominent international film festivals; Ms. Duran is a speaker, advocate, and an organizer of initiatives in the field of cultural diplomacy, gender issues, international affairs, culture, media, arts, and entertainment.

Pierre Filmon: French screenwriter, director & producer Pierre Filmon made four short films which screened in more than 50 Film Festivals before his 80mn-documentary Close Encounters With Vilmos Zsigmond (with John Travolta, Isabelle Huppert, Peter Fonda, John Boorman...). Chosen for the Official Selection at Cannes in 2016, before its theatrical release in France, 17 international Film Festivals endorse this film, now available on DVD



& Amazon Prime US, UK, DE & JP. He directed his latest short film as director during the pandemic, called "Masque à Maman." He wrote "Dear Mother," a short animation film, one of the first franco-Emirati co-productions.

Roman Dorofeev: He is an expert in cinema history and theatrical distribution. Since 2005 he has been working in the film industry. He organized several festivals retrospectives and programming for the first art-house cinema theater in Moscow. Then he started to work for the Russian Report distribution company, focusing on distributing independent festival films and art-mainstream. As a director of theatrical distribution, he arranges screenings of new movies in the CIS and the Baltic region. He cooperates with international film festivals and participates in panel discussions, conferences on the issues of European and independent cinema, and several film markets. From 2014 to 2017, he was a program director of the VOICES International Festival of Young European Film in Vologda.

9.2. Women Filmmakers Section

Oya Doğan: She graduated from Istanbul Bilgi University Political Science department; Oya Doğan started her broadcasting career on Mehmet Ali Birand's 32. Gün program. At 24, she was chosen as Turkey's youngest and most successful journalist and represented Turkey at the Festival of Politics in Scotland. She worked as a political communication consultant for a while. She worked as a script consultant for many television series and feature films. Oya Doğan is also the author of the novels Boşan da Gel and Hadi Ben Kaçtım. A screenwriter, Doğan, is currently writing her third novel, "I Am Here."

Yana Lekarska: She is a Bulgarian filmmaker. She has graduated with an MFA in Film Directing from Chung-Ang University, Seoul, with the award-winning short film The Bridge. She has interned at PineHouse Film in Seoul and Chuchkov Brothers in Sofia (Western by Valeska Grisebach, Cannes Film Festival – Un Certain Regard 2017). She is an alumnus from Berlinale Talents 2020, Sarajevo Talents 2018, Tokyo Talents 2017, and a participant at the Film Production Residency Program organized by the Busan Independent Film Association in 2017. Yana Lekarska is an associate producer of the Myanmar-South Korea feature co-production Mama (2019) and executive producer of the Bulgarian feature film Ashes over Sun (2020). In 2018 She was a



jury member at the Canton Short Film Festival, China, 2019.

Elaheh Nobakht: She is one of the pioneer women in the Iranian Cinema industry. She is the CEO of the International Production and Distribution Film Company, ELI Image. She is also an active member of the Iranian Producers Association (IPA) and a member of the Iranian documentary producer Association, also the Jury member of various international film festivals such as the International Oriental Film Festival of Geneva Switzerland 2018, Beirut International Women Film Festival, Labanon2019, and Mena International Film Festival 2021 – Netherland, Religion Today Film Festival. 2021

Ms. Mehzaad Ghalib: An independent film activist, documentary filmmaker, and editor. She has completed her diploma in filmmaking and Masters in Media and Communication (Major in Film). She has been involved in the film society movement for twenty years. Her first documentary was 'A Day in the Armenian Church.' It went to a few prestigious film festivals in Europe, Russia, and South Asia. She is currently working on a documentary project named "Bindu Theke Britto-Ekjon Bokuler Akhyan," funded by the Information and Broadcast Ministry. This film is about the life of the first woman filmmaker in Bangladesh, Rebecca.

9.3. Interfaith Jury for the Spiritual Films Section

Igor Soukmanov: He is a well-known Belarussian film expert and journalist. He is a member of the European Film Academy, a vice-president of the Byelorussian section of the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI). Igor Soukmanov is a Commander of the French Order of the Arts and the Letters. Also, he is a permanent writer of the film magazine- Iskusstvo Kino (Film Art), the earliest magazine in Europe, which specializes in film studies. Program Director of the Odesa International Film Festival.

Rajni Basumatary: She is a scriptwriter, director, actor, and producer. She hails from Assam, India, and firmly believes that culture and creativity can engender social change in communities! She wrote and produced her film "Anuraag" in 2004, which received several Assam State Film Awards. She debuted as a director in 2014 with "Raag, the rhythm of love." The 2019 film, "Jwlwi - The Seed," was written, directed, and produced. She has acted in a few highly successful and acclaimed films, including "Mary Kom," "Shaukeens," "III Smoking Barrels," and her movie "Jwlwi - The seed." Currently, she is working as an actor in the Hindi film "Goodbye" and Netflix series "Rana Naidu." Her latest film project, "WILD SWANS" (Gorai Phakhri), is a Work-In-Progress.

Negin Ahmadi: She is an Iranian film director. In 2013, she studied economics at Qazvin International University. In 2014, she became a member of the Young Cinematographers Association in cinema, and after two years, she received her degree in directing from this association. She produced her first film in 2014 entitled "Connie Bell" on dam construction and its effects on nature in Kurdistan and then made several documentaries about women and the environment. She made "Shirin days," a documentary on acid spraying, "Zhivai" on protecting Zagros forests, "Zahra Goli" on a pregnant woman.

Nader Chowdhury: He is a multi-talented personality in the Entertainment Industry of Bangladesh. He's a performer in movies, TV shows, and theatre dramas. He has been honored with countless local and international awards as an actor and director. His film-"The Women," is a winner of five national awards. Another film, "RED Sands," has won the prestigious Special Mention Award in the 15th Dhaka International Film Festival.

9.4. FIPRESCI Jury: Bangladesh Panorama Film Section

Mohamed Sayed Abdelrehim: He is an Egyptian film critic, writer, journalist, translator, and scriptwriter. He is a journalist and translator at the Middle East News Agency. He is a programmer at Ismailia International Festival for Documentaries and Short Films and Alexandria Mediterranean Film Festival. Former artistic director of Sharm El-Sheikh Asian Film Festival. He wrote a book titled Khairy Beshara: The Rebel, published by the Red Sea Film Festival in 2020. Abdelrehim contributes articles in various papers, magazines, and websites in Egypt and other Arab countries. Member of juries in several film festivals. He published two other books of short stories that won best books in 2009 and 2013.

Siraj Hashim Syed: He is a FIPRESCI Jury Member from India. He is a veteran of over 160 international film festivals in India and abroad, Mumbai-based Siraj Syed has served on the FIPRESCI Jury of the Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFFes), The Indian Panorama Jury of the Aurangabad International Film Festival, Selection Juries of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) and Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF). He has been a film critic since 1969 and has been attending international film festivals since 1976. During 1974-80, he was the Chairman of two film Societies, Cine Circle and Film Circle. Currently, he teaches acting.

Bidhan Rebeiro: He is the editor of Cinema Dorshon, a little magazine on cinema. Since 2005, he has been working as a journalist. He has worked for RTV, Boishakhi Television, ATN News, NTV Online, and other media contractually and temporarily. He graduated in computer science and has completed his Masters from the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Dhaka University with a scholarship from the Norwegian government. He also completed his second Master's from Stamford University with a film and media studies degree. Later, he completed a Film Appreciation Course from FTII, Pune, India. At Jahangirnagar University, he teaches as an adjunct faculty member in the Journalism department. His notable books are Film Lesson Guide, Film Judgment, Shahabag: Politics, Religious Consciousness, and more. He had the opportunity to participate in the 20th Dhaka International Film Festival as a FIPRESCI jury in 2022. As an Independent jury, Rebeiro participated in Dhaka Mobile Film Competition for three consecutive years (2017, 2018, 2019). 8th International Liberation Docfest Bangladesh, organized by Liberation War Museum, 2020, selected Rebeiro as a jury member.

10. Statement of the Festival Director

As the director of the Festival, Ahmed Muztaba Zamal had to face many difficulties. He told the media, "We have to go through the challenges because everyone was in panic because of the pandemic."

In addition to the COVID situation, the festival has its crisis too, such as a lack of a permanent place to show films or a specific open space for the celebration, as in foreign countries, which have not yet happened in this country. Zamal said, "We don't have a permanent venue yet, where we can do film screenings, where there will be digital screening, there will be a good sound system; there will be an environment."

He added, "There needs to be a cafeteria in the film festival area. We need a complex, where everyone will come, like the Cannes or Berlin Film Festival. The locals go there for a walk. However, we should not stop. We have to continue."

The festival director is optimistic; he said, "I will try to make the next festival more beautiful and add more young filmmakers. I will bring more good guests. We can add new sections along with the other sections. I will try to do better next year."

11. The End Means a New Beginning

The 9-day film festival ended with the plague of the epidemic. On the evening of 23 January, the massive arrangement of the festival came to an end with the award ceremony.

The names of the winning films, documentaries, producers, actors, and actresses were announced by the program director in the presence of guests, jury, filmmakers, and producers from different countries in the main auditorium of the National Museum in the capital. Information Minister Hasan Mahmud was the chief guest at the event.

President of FIPRESCI Bangladesh Mofidul Haque, Director General of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Liakat Ali Lucky, and President of Dhaka Club Khandaker Mashiuzzaman attended the ceremony as special guests. The closing ceremony was conducted by the festival director Ahmed Muztaba Zamal. At this time, the guests handed over the prizes to the winners.

About the Author

Bidhan Rebeiro is the editor of Cinema Dorshon, a little magazine on cinema. Since 2005, he has been working as a journalist. He has worked for RTV, Boishakhi Television, ATN News, NTV Online, and other media contractually and temporarily. He graduated in computer science and has completed his Masters from the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Dhaka University with a scholarship from the Norwegian government. He also completed his second Master's from Stamford University with a film and media studies degree. Later, he completed a Film Appreciation Course from FTII, Pune, India. At Jahangirnagar University, he teaches in the Journalism department as an adjunct faculty member. His notable books are Film Lesson Guide, Film Judgment, Shahbag: Politics, Religious Consciousness, and more.