

Answer to Q. 1

Very recently, while addressing my colleagues as the Chairman of the Jury for the documentary & short films at 'CMS VATAVARAN Festival on Environment & Wild Life', I had put forth a few guidelines to be followed by us - NONE of us should have conflict of interest with any film that was in the selection pool; no lobbying for any entry; no decision should be arrived at by sheer majority which aggressively nullifies any dissent or respect for a minority opinion.

Besides these, I believe that juries ought not to dictate their own ideas of content, form and style of story telling but should accept the filmmaker's design and assess it at comparative levels. I feel juries ought to scale the work in the context of Indian cinema and also the World Cinema.

I also strongly believe that juries should keep the selection process confidential without exposing the fellow juries. Undignified situations like the chairman of the Jury, Gautam Ghosh going to town about how 'Lunch Box' was his choice and yet how 'The Good Road' was preferred by rest of his co-juries for Oscar nomination from India, ought to be avoided.

Q. 2

When almost every 'film awards nite' is designed only to be a GLAMOROUS EVENT, why look for reliability and relevance? We should look at these film awards only as entertainment events devoid of genuineness and merit. At least I have stopped taking these seriously. However whenever I am on the jury, I fight for real substance than the frills for it - then you see film like 'Udan' getting the Best Film Award in competition with 'Dabang' and 'My Name is Khan'.

Today, even at the National Award level, the antagonism between commercial/mainstream cinema versus non-mainstream cinema, big budget formula films versus low budget original cinema, box office hit versus flop good film, well marketed mediocre/bad films versus films released in 20 cinema halls, Hindi cinema versus regional cinema, etc gets surfaced. Regional lobbying at the National Award level has been the practice for a long time.

In short, over the years, juries as well have contributed in lowering the credibility of awards, and we as audience have a carefree attitude towards the same.

Q. 3, 4 & 8, 9

Historically, the parallel cinema emerged during 1960 and continued to co-exist with the mainstream cinema till 1990s. Amol Palekar was the 'Aam Aadmi' of Hindi cinema who could and did win Screen and Film fare awards as Best Actor. Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil, Sadhu Meher, Shankar Naag also could and did bag the ace awards during that era. The blockbuster heroes of 'Larger than Life' cinema like Amitabh Bachchan, Rajesh Khanna, Rishi Kapoor, Dharmendra etc were their competitors. Shyam Benegal for 'Junoon' against Yash Chopra for 'Kaalaa Patthar' OR

Govind Nihalani for 'Aakrosh' against B.R.Chopra for 'Insaaf Ka Tarazu' could bag the 'Best Director' Film Fare Award. However, such scenario is not seen for last two decades.

National Awards were most credible till 2000 though lobbying from Malayalam, Bengali cinema was prevalent. Fortunately the films and the directors they lobbied for had made world class cinema. For last decade, the Bollywood lobby has been actively pursuing the National Awards and we do hear more controversies. In the same breath, Bollywood is running after Oscar nominations race. Do we really think that whichever film gets the Oscar for that year is indicative of its excellence? I have no clue why are we engulfed in such a superfluous activity??

The popular awards always had the flavour of box office success. It's not surprising that Wednesday, Udaan, Kahani, Dev D, Paan Sing Tomar, Lootera or such small budget films do not get chosen for Best Film category despite its critical acclaim and also its box office success though nothing to match the 100 crore club winners. Lobbying in the unprofessional, unethical and bad sense is prevalent all through our history of popular film awards. Interestingly, the TRP equations and the sponsors' pressures for 'star presence' at the award function caused the organizers to innovate 'popular awards'. These are the 'management seats' in an academic institution allowing the backdoor entry to the non-meritorious student!!!

Needless to say, in such a scenario, the composition of juries itself is well designed in such a manner that awards can be allotted without internal disputes.

Q. 5

Film reviews? Why are we even talking about those as if they have some sanctity? In today's times of 'paid news' and 'promotional media partnership', critical acclaim has also lost its stature and credibility. As long as film reviews are 'managed', let's not take those seriously.

Q. 6

I guess this category must have been evolved as redemption for choosing a film for the best film award knowing its unworthy!!! Jokes apart, this might be a genuine effort to acknowledge a good film though it might not have passed the benchmark criterion set for the Best Film of that year, but certainly deserved to be applauded.

Q. 7

I still feel that National Awards are the most credible awards in India.

(The 2nd question you have raised is not very clear to me.)

Q. 10

We ought to have consensus that we need to restore faith in our awards. Juries ought to have the ethical compulsion to be impartial to their best. The process of selection of juries is very crucial. Anybody who is chosen must have knowledge of World Cinema; he/she must not have conflict of interest with any film that is in the pool.

I have also been suggesting that the names of the jury should be announced in advance rather than keeping it as a secret. Apparently it's not done due to the fear of participants trying to lobby/pressurize them. However, influencing the juries is regularly done overtly or subtly! If the names are announced then the participants have the choice to raise an objection to a particular jury, if any.