

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA (IFFI) – AN OVERVIEW OF GOLDEN JUBILIEE YEAR 2019

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Abstract:

India is a land of stories. It has a long history in storytelling, from folk tales to epics, from short stories to ballads, from plays to films. This legacy should be exhibited to the world on a proper platform. To that end, the Government of India has begun showcasing Indian cinema to an international audience with the annual International Film Festival of India (IFFI).

Indian Film Festival of India (IFFI) has celebrated its 50th festival from November 20th to November 28th, 2019. This paper attempts to explain the short history of IFFI, genres of films which were screened in Golden Jubilee of IFFI, awards issued and Film Bazar. It is a qualitative research. The descriptive writing has been used for this paper.

Keywords:

IFFI, Golden Jubilee, History of IFFI, Film Screening, Awards, Film Bazar.

Introduction:

India is a land of stories. It has a long history in storytelling, from folk tales to epics, from short stories to ballads, from plays to films. This legacy should be exhibited to the world on a proper platform. To that end, the Government of India has begun showcasing Indian cinema to an international audience with the annual International Film Festival of India (IFFI). It was started soon after India established its constitution. In 1952, this film festival started its first edition with the aim of providing a common platform for the cinemas of the world to project the excellence of the film arts and also contributing to the film community's understanding and appreciation of film cultures from different nations and Indian states. These films brought more social values, various contexts, economic situations and ethos to the limelight. It also extends a hand to welcome our neighbouring countries and promotes global cooperation.

International Film Festival of India:

The very first edition of IFFI was held in Bombay, now Mumbai. But it was conceived six months prior in the Kashmir Valley. It was proposed to the Prime Minister Office by the Films Division. Chief Producer of Films Division, Mohan Dayaram Bhavnani conceptualized this India's own film festival after attending a meeting of the Film Experts Committee of UNESCO at Paris in 1948.¹

Its inauguration ceremony was organized by the Film Division of India on 24th January and closing ceremony was held on 1st February of 1952. In later years, they took this IFFI to Madras, Delhi, Calcutta and Trivandrum. All these editions had 40 features and 100 short films. Few of these festivals were non-competitive, even the first two editions are non-competitive. The very first edition of IFFI invited 23 countries including the United States of America. Indian Entries were like 'Awara' (Hindi), 'Pathala Bhairavi' (Telugu), 'Amar Bhoopali' (Marathi) and 'Babla' (Bengali). Since it was the first International Film Festival held in Asia, it brought Italy's 'Bicycle Thieves', 'Miracle in Milan', 'Rome', 'Open City', likewise Japanese 'Yukiwariso', Britain's 'The Dancing Fleece', America's 'The River' and USSR's 'The Fall of Berlin'.

The first competitive edition of IFFI was held in January 1965. It was hosted in Trivandrum, Kerala. The third edition was chaired by Satyajit Ray and graded "A" category by the Federation International de Producers de Films, Paris. After this recognition, IFFI adopted its fifth edition in 1975 with a permanent insignia, "Peacock". It also has a permanent motto, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" which means "the whole world is a family". In 1975, the Filmotsav, a non-competitive edition was introduced and held in different filmmaking cities of India in alternate years. Later it was merged with IFFI. In 2004, IFFI got the perfect place for it, Goa.² It was converted into an annual event and competitive. From its sixth edition (1977), Silver Peacock for best actor, actress and director was awarded. In following years, the awards were increased including best actor male, best actor female, best director, best debut director, ICFT UNESCO Gandhi Medal, Lifetime Achievement Awards, Second Best Film, Special Jury Awards. In 2013, on the occasion of 100 years of Cinema of India, the "Centenary Award" for the Indian film personality of the year was introduced. This award winner will get a Silver Peacock Medal, a certificate and a cash prize of Rupees 10,00,000/-.

Review of Literature:

The research paper on "Analysis of the film selection process for a film festival", by Masashi Inoue et al (2014), analyses the film selection process for the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF). The selection of films characterises the festival, which then attracts audiences. Since the criteria for selection are fundamentally decided by members of the selection committee, the investigation has been done on if computation can characterise the selection process by utilising available data in this study. Selections are made by watching films and not by checking the associated information. However, the author considered the difficulties in

¹<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/art-and-culture/international-film-festival-of-india-a-film-festival-is-born-6134748/>

²<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/new-mou-needed-for-go-a-as-permanent-venue/articleshow/942443.cms>

semantically understanding the video content for computers when they attempted the analysis of the selection process based solely on associated information, including textual, numerical or categorical data.

Ratheesh Radhakrishnan (2017), "We need to talk about Indian Panorama: A report from the International Film Festival of India" study is about focussing on the 2017 edition of International Film Festival of India (IFFI), attempts to think through its pasts and futures, in relation to the larger film festival ecosystem. While issues of censorship and Government interference were much publicised, there were micro shifts in the positioning of the festival that mostly went under the radar.

The number of research based on International Film Festival of India are less. And especially this paper focuses on International Film Festival of India's Golden Jubilee edition which was held on 2019.

Research Methodology:

The Autoethnography research method is used for this qualitative study. The researchers visited the International Film Festival of India, Goa at 2019, the Golden Jubilee Celebration of IFFI. There they watched the movies and collected the secondary data like Peacock (IFFI Magazines), Indian Official Catalogue of Indian Cinema and International Cinema – 2019 and interpreted.

Overview of the Golden Jubilee Edition of IFFI:

Golden Jubilee Edition of International Film Festival of India (IFFI), the 50th International Film Festival of India, 2019 was witness nearly 200 best films from 76 countries, 26 feature films and 15 non feature films in Indian panorama section and around 10,000 people and film lovers attended in the Golden Jubilee Edition. 12 prominent films in different languages that have completed 50 years in 2019, were showcased from 20th to 28th November. "Dadasaheb Phalke Award winner *Shri. Amitabh Bachchan's* outstanding contribution to Cinema had been honoured and celebrated through a package of his impactful and entertaining films in the 50th edition.

Films Sections and Categories:

Welcoming and closing ceremonies are the essential parts in Film Festivals, one can feel the grandeur feel of that film festival in those. But the most essential part of these events are the film screenings, it is the heart of a film festival. Organizers should spend a lot of time in the film selection for the screening. Juries who select those films for awards should feel the pain of rejecting the films.

Most of the International film festival costs are heavy for the organizers. The budget allocated for this edition was Rupees 18 crore. Considerably it is a successful film festival, which was resulted by Rupees 5.5 crore budget being brought into the fund as a sponsorship. Also the branding and marketing strategies were worked with the invitations to the top most stars of Indian cinema such as Amitabh Bachchan, Rajini Kanth and more

mainstream artists³, like the previous most grandeur invite of these stars in 2014. This festival always boosted the state's economy and this edition was a special with 12,000 delegates' invitations.

As said earlier in this section, Opening and Closing Ceremony are essential for every film festival, likewise the opening film and closing film should be sensual and quality films. For the Opening Ceremony, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium was decorated for an invite-only event. Since it is an invite-only event, even participants with delegate passes are not allowed. Amitabh Bachchan and Rajinikanth graced the edition and singer Shankar Mahadevan enthralled fusion music glittered gorgeously. To compete with the glittering ceremonies, film screenings were started with the opening film from Italy, 'Despite the Fog', directed by Goran Paskaljevic⁴. This particular film revolves around a child refugee Ali-Musa Sarhan and his struggle in the streets of Europe. And the closing film of this edition was 'Marghe and Her Mother' directed by Iranian Director Mohsen Makhamalbaf. This film also deals with the life of a six year old kid and her life struggle.

IFFI film sections are divided into competitive and non-competitive categories. In Indian Panorama sections Feature Films, Non-Feature Films were screened. To open the feature film section, a Gujarati Film, titled 'Hellaro' was picked by a jury team headed by Filmmaker Priyadarshan. In total, 26 feature films were screened including a few mainstream movies like 'Uri: The Surgical Strike', 'Gully Boy', 'Super 30' and 'Badhaai Ho'.

Non-Feature films sections were opened with 'Nooreh', a Kashmiri short film which also revolves around the life of a six year old girl. This film was selected by a jury team headed by Filmmaker Rajendra Janglay. This team selected 15 non-feature films including 'Bohubritta', 'Letters', 'Bridge', 'Maya', 'Iravilum Pakalilum Odiyan' and 'The Secret Life of Frogs'. Apart from Indian Panorama Sections, this edition had other different sections like Festival Kaleidoscope, Soul of Asia, Oscars Retrospective, Mid-Fest Film, Restored Indian Classics Section, International Competition Section, Special Goan Film Sections, Open Air Screening Section, Accessible India Section, Golden Lining Indian Films Section, Master Frames, Golden Peacock Award and Best Debut Feature Award.

Tributes like Masters of Cinema, Sports Package, Special Screening, Country Focus-BRICS, Tribute to the Legend-Sir Sean Connery, Homage were conducted in this 50th edition of IFFI, Goa. On the top of the cake, IFFI

³https://twitter.com/IFFIGoa/status/1191297535412850688?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1191297535412850688%7Ctwgr%5E2d486be5a38176920676f8744526478e85c6c256%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2FIndianexpress.com%2Farticle%2Fentertainment%2Fentertainment-others%2Fiffi-2019-movies-film-sections-awards-date-venue-6103921%2F

⁴https://twitter.com/IFFIGoa/status/1191969997435887616?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

2019, screened 50 films of 50 women directors⁵. In this edition, Russia was the country of focus with eight Russian language films screening.⁶

In the competition, 'Particles', a French-Swiss co-produced film directed by Blaise Harrison won the Golden Peacock Award-Best Film. In the same year this film was screened in the Directors' Fortnight Section at the Cannes Film Festival. Best Director award was given to Lijo Jose Pellissery for the Malayalam Film 'Jallikattu', it was an independent film based on a short story Maoist by Hareesh, premiered at 2019 Toronto International Film Festival, 2019 Busan International Film Festival before its release in Kerala. Best Debut Film of a Director Award was given to Amin Sidi-Boumediene, Franco-Algerian Filmmaker, for Abou Leila and Marius Olteanu for 'Monsters'. IFFI Best Actor Award Male was given to Brazilian Actor Seu Jorge for 'Marighella'. IFFI Best Actor Award Female was given to Marathi and Hindi Actor UshaJadhav for 'Mai Ghat: Crime No 103/2015'. Life Time Achievement Award was given to the French Actor Isabelle Hupert. She also won two Cesar Awards, one BAFTA Award and one Golden Globe Award. She won 9+ International Awards and 30+ Film Festival Awards, 20+ Critics Associations Awards and 20+ other awards and nominations. She got Legion of Honor-Chevalier in 1999, Officier in 2009⁷ and National Order of Merit-Chevalier in 1994 and Officier in 2005⁸ titles too. The ICFT UNESCO Gandhi Medal was given to Riccardo Salvetti for the Italian Film 'Rwanda'. A Special Jury Award was given to PemaTsedon for the Chinese film 'Balloon'. Special Mention Jury Award for 'Hellaro', the opening film for the non-feature film section this edition. Special Mention under ICFT UNESCO Gandhi Medal was given to the Hindi Dark Comedy film 'Bhattar Hoorain'.

First-Day-First-Show (FDFS) is another prime event in this festival, that too with the presence of cast and crew. This event grows bigger every year with the celebrities in the most glamorous outfits. The red carpet sessions are for celebrations and the Master Classes are knowledge sharing sessions. Aspiring filmmakers will learn from the legends from various disciplines of the film industry. It also gives an opportunity to have discussions, attending workshops for a real deal. These Master classes, workshops and other film screenings were hosted in Maquinez Palace. Main Venue for the IFFI 2019 was Inox.

Since it is an international film festival, discussions with like-minded people will only broaden film goers' horizons. Along with these events, one can enjoy hassle-free commuting for local sightseeing, rental bikes and cars will be available.⁹

⁵https://twitter.com/PrakashJavdekar/status/1190505180304830464?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1190505180304830464%7Ctwgr%5E277315adbaa2d72a3a87b7e94dad7c9125302d45%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thequint.com%2Fentertainment%2Findian-cinema%2Frajinikanth-isabelle-huppert-iffi-2019

⁶<https://www.news18.com/news/movies/with-russia-as-focus-country-iffi-2019-looks-to-revive-old-ties-2395779.html>

⁷<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000020020329>

⁸<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000445605>

⁹ <https://blog.savaari.com/international-film-festival-india-2019/>

Entry, Venue & Schedules:

To attend the International Film Festival of India, one must register online for virtual and in-person attendance. Registering as a delegate will give access to workshops, master classes, film screenings, Free Wi-Fi and a delegate kit. Tickets for different categories will be sold, but the fees are subjected to change every year¹⁰.

There are different rules derived to provide opportunity for all the on-spot delegates. It is called Ticketing Policy¹¹ of IFFI, Goa. In recent days, all the ticketing possibilities have been digitized. One should get an e-ticket to gain entry into the theatre. All delegates will gain access to the IFFI Digital Newsletter titled, "Peacock". Help desks will support the technical issues facing by the delegates in receiving the e-tickets. Bar-Coded/Rfid technologies are too used. Delegate Professionals, Cine Enthusiast, Student Delegate, Media Camera Person, Media Correspondents will get quota for tickets every day. Tickets can be booked a days prior to the screening. These accreditation cards should not be shared with others, if shared, it shall be blocked/terminated. Delegates cannot book parallel screenings. Theatres are equipped with the support of differently abled persons. No one can sit on the aisle and non-designated seating area inside the theatre. If anyone violates these rules they will be barred from further screenings of the festival.

National Film Development Corporation of India's Film Bazaar:

Every film festival is a hub for film business. IFFI is not an exception. During IFFI, Film producers, filmmakers, film enthusiasts always engage into this separate Bazaar which is the largest South Asian film market. This market encourages creative and financial collaboration between the South Asian and International Film Communities.

It all started by the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC). It created and is still organizing the Film Bazaar from 2007, with National and International participants. Over the years, films such as 'Lunch Box', 'Margarita with a Straw', 'ChauthiKoot', 'Qissa', 'Ship of Theseus', 'Titli', 'Court', 'Anhe Ghode Da Daan', 'Miss Lovely', 'Dum Lagake Haisha', 'Liar's Dice' and 'Thithi' have been through one or more program of the Bazaar. Basically, Film Bazaar is a five day event. It acts as a convergence of Film Buyers and Sellers from all over the world. Discovering, supporting, showcasing South Asian content and talent in filmmaking, production and distribution is the main focus of this Bazaar. It also encourages world cinema sales in the South Asian region.

Conclusion:

From the inception of IFFI, it has become the star-studded event which contributed enormously to bring Indian cinematic masterpieces to the world. In the entire Asian continent, IFFI has its own pride of inviting participants from all over the world, guests and celebrities from the different film industries with grace. Most of the IFFI goers celebrate this festival as an exotic destination, since its permanent venue is Goa.

¹⁰<https://www.holidify.com/places/goa/the-international-film-festival-of-india-iffi-sightseeing-1253622.html>

¹¹ <https://filmguide.iffigoa.org/ticket-policy/>