

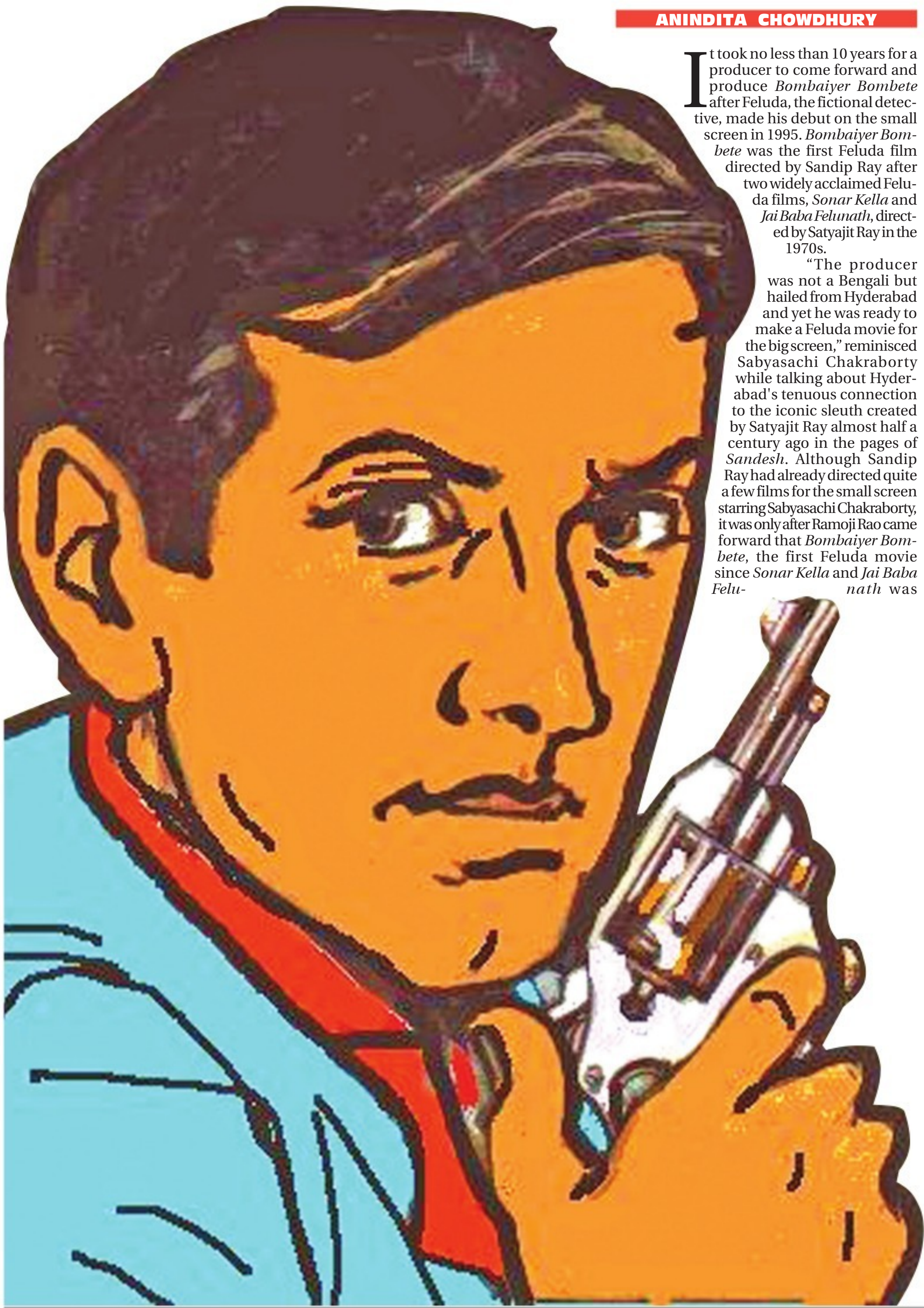
SATURDAY, 29 JULY 2017

# An adda with Feluda

In the City of Pearls for the Hyderabad Bengali Film Festival, Sabyasachi Chakraborty spoke at length about the iconic detective and director Sandip Ray's search for the next Lalmohan babu



ANINDITA CHOWDHURY



It took no less than 10 years for a producer to come forward and produce *Bombaiyer Bombete* after Feluda, the fictional detective, made his debut on the small screen in 1995. *Bombaiyer Bombete* was the first Feluda film directed by Sandip Ray after two widely acclaimed Feluda films, *Sonar Kella* and *Jai Baba Felunath*, directed by Satyajit Ray in the 1970s.

"The producer was not a Bengali but hailed from Hyderabad and yet he was ready to make a Feluda movie for the big screen," reminisced Sabyasachi Chakraborty while talking about Hyderabad's tenuous connection to the iconic sleuth created by Satyajit Ray almost half a century ago in the pages of *Sandesh*. Although Sandip Ray had already directed quite a few films for the small screen starring Sabyasachi Chakraborty, it was only after Ramoji Rao came forward that *Bombaiyer Bombete*, the first Feluda movie since *Sonar Kella* and *Jai Baba Felunath* was

shot in the post-Satyajit Ray era. "We are truly indebted to Ramoji Rao," he said.

Perhaps, it did not cross the actor's mind but Feluda and Hyderabad share an even stronger bond. In those days when smoking was yet to be declared politically incorrect on screen, Feluda smoked Charminar, a brand of cigarettes manufactured by the Hyderabad-based Vazir Sultan Tobacco Company. The company was established during the reign of the Nizam and most remember the orange-hued pack with the red outline of the Charminar printed on it.

With such a strong connection between the ace detective and the City of Pearls, it was imperative to celebrate 50 years of Feluda's appearance in Hyderabad as well. And Feluda aficionados got the perfect opportunity during the three-day-long Hyderabad Bengali Film Festival, an annual event, organised by Bengalis in Hyderabad where *Bombaiyer Bombete* was screened along with a documentary on the sleuth by Sagnik Chatterjee. But the cherry on the cake was definitely the *adda* with Sabyasachi Chakraborty, who shared with the audience various anecdotes, his love for Feluda and his thoughts on essaying this role.

Chakraborty admitted he had seen himself essaying the role ever since he started reading Feluda though most youngsters would like to think of themselves as Topsy, Feluda's young assistant. "I found him to be extremely erudite, polite and well mannered, eager to help others and just like me, one who steered clear of the opposite gender!" Recalling with his meeting with Satyajit Ray (he straight away told him that the serials Chakraborty was acting in were quite bad), he said how the auteur turned down his request to make more Feluda movies after Santosh Dutta, who played Lalmohan Ganguly, passed away.

Chakraborty offered a rare comparison between the Feluda films by Ray and those by his son. "Satyajit Ray's Feluda films revolved around Jatayu while those of Sandip Ray focus more on Feluda as the central protagonist. Ray even changed the way he had characterised Lalmohan *babu* to bring in closer resemblance with Santosh Dutta in his later books," he observed.

He was quick to add that he regarded Soumitra Chattopadhyay as the real Feluda while he himself was a mere "duplicate" since the veteran actor resembled the character far more because of his erudition and creativity. One could trace a bit of bitterness when he recalled that one of the reasons why producers did not come forward to produce Feluda films was because they were uncertain about Chakraborty's "dependability" when it came to recovering their investment. "It was the reason for Sandip Ray making telefilms as he hoped that eventually a producer would come by to make a movie," he said.

There was a bit of inside news as well. Sandip Ray is planning his next film on the adaptation of *Chinnamastar Abhishap* and Chakraborty's wife Mithu was quick to add that there will be a real tiger this time instead of a digital one. "So whoever is playing Lalmohan *babu* would have to be really strong (in terms of nerves)," said Chakraborty, adding that the director was on the lookout for the perfect Lalmohan *babu* and there are scores of photographs of bald men with moustaches, lying on his table, waiting to be sorted. "So if you know somebody in Hyderabad who is bald and has a moustache — or even without a moustache as that can be taken care of — just send his photograph to Sandip Ray," said Chakraborty as he signed off.

## Unmask the biggest conspiracy



*Partition: 1947* is an upcoming Hindi film directed by Gurinder Chadha starring Huma Qureshi, Om Puri, Manish Dayal, Hugh Bonneville, Gillian Anderson and Michael Gambon. Recently, Qureshi was in Kolkata at Golden Tulip Hotel to promote the upcoming film. Director Chadha is best known for the hit films like *Bhaji on the Beach*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Bride and Prejudice*, *Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging* and the comedy film *Its a Wonderful Afterlife*.

*Partition: 1947* shows how the final Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten, had to oversee the transition of British India to independence but meets with conflict as the sides clash in the face of monumental change. It is a story that is deeply personal to director Chadha, whose own family was caught up in the tragic events that unfolded as the British Raj came to an end. The film narrates story of the trauma that people went through due to the division, and how it changed their life.

This movie marks the international debut of Qureshi. She says that she has put her heart and soul in the "moving" tale of the India-Pakistan partition. She essays the role of Aalia, a Muslim woman, falling for a Hindu boy, Jeet (Manish) who works at the Viceroy's House but they are ripped apart as borderlines are redrawn. Bonneville plays the role of Lord Mountbatten, the man charged with handing over India back to Indians.

The movie is all set to release in India on 18 August.

## Changing the way



The comedy genre has exploded over the last few years in India with new clubs sprouting and stand-up comedians achieving celebrity status. However, the limelight seems to be squarely focused on the men with very few women making a mark in this burgeoning space. Given the scenario, *TLC* is launching "Queens of Comedy" — India's first-ever female comedy show. This will provide a unique platform to the talented female comedians to compete with the best and prove that when it comes to being funny, they can give the men a run for their money!

The show will be judged by three acclaimed artists like actor Richa Chadha, Rohan Joshi and Kaneez Surka. All the entries will be uploaded on the QoC microsite [www.queensofcomedy.in](http://www.queensofcomedy.in). The 50 shortlisted entries will be opened for voting where audience can rate them. The top eight shortlisted contestants will battle against each other and feature in the reality show to be India's next female comedy sensation. The show will premiere on 24 September and will air on weekends at 10 pm, only on TLC.

## A first-of-its-kind



Hyderabad born artist Alluri, who is currently based in London will be performing First Telugu Rock Album at the prestigious Cambridge Folk Festival in UK, today.

"I'm excited to bring this new set of songs exclusively in Telugu to the UK. This is all new material from my forthcoming album that I have recorded with Tommaso Colliva, the producer of Muse. I think this is a first to have rock act playing

songs written in Telugu", said Alluri.

He released his first song sung in Telugu *Evari Kosam* to popular acclaim in the UK with several plays on BBC Radio and a hit video on *YouTube*. Though he released his first album in English earlier, Alluri had great passion for his mother tongue, which led him to create this new Telugu album for western audience, a first of its kind rock album in Telugu.

His effort is described as taking Italian of the East to the West since Telugu is considered as Italian of the East. All the songs are recorded in studios in Milano with the Italian session musicians and finally mixed in studios in London.

## Unreleased devotional compositions



Asha Audio launched the album of legendary music composer, late Sri Nachiketa Ghosh's, *Guru Kripahi Kealam* at the Press Club, Kolkata, recently. Present in the event were renowned singers like Srikanta Acharya, Swagatalakshmi Dasgupta, Jayati Chakraborty along with music composer and director Sukanta Kanti Ghosh and Kalyan Sen Barat. This is an initiative by Supanna Kanti Ghosh, son of late Sri Nachiketa Ghosh and the adherents of Sri Sri Madhananda Giri Ashram along with Asha Audio, who thought of releasing the beautiful works of the composer.

Sabarna Banerjee

## New discoveries with fresh perspectives

Himalayan and Chinese art will take centre stage in Saffronart's first Asian Art Online Auction



Chinese porcelain from the 17th - 20th centuries, Tibetan thangkas and Nepalese paubhas, and exquisite bronze sculptures are part of Saffronart's first Asian Art Online Auction, to be held on 9 - 10 August at [saffronart.com](http://saffronart.com).

Among the Chinese porcelain pieces on auction is the collection of Dr Harish Dhillon who was an educator, head-

master and writer.

He had developed an interest in Chinese art through extensive reading and interactions with fellow collectors and institutions worldwide. Over a lifetime of travel and research, he built up a fine collection of porcelain and artefacts, which are part of this auction.

Among the pieces with a fascinating narrative is one from the Hatcher Cargo, one of the largest cargos of Chinese porcelain recovered from a 17th century shipwreck, around the port of Jakarta in 1983. Another piece from the Dhillon collection is from the famous Nanking Cargo, the cache of Chinese porcelain and gold ingots recovered from the *Geldermalsen*, a cargo ship of the Dutch East India Company that sank off the coast of Jakarta in 1751.

Other key highlights include 18th - 20th century Tibetan thangkas and Nepalese paubha paintings based on Buddhist and Hindu iconography. Also on offer are Buddhist sculptures, a bronze sculpture of Shiva-Parvati, and ritual implements. Himalayan art forms an important part of India's cultural her-



Gold lacquered bronze

itage with leading museums in the country, such as the CSMVS Museum in Mumbai, housing significant collections.

"We're excited to establish a category of Asian Art with this first sale. This auction includes works which are not only rare, with a unique story of collecting behind them, but are also significant as they illustrate Indian influence and the historic exchange of ideas and trade within Asia. It offers new discoveries that open up fresh perspectives. We plan to estab-

lish Asian Art as an annual category, highlighting and celebrating important works from across Asia," said Hugo Weihe, chief executive officer, Saffronart.

At the forefront of selling Indian art, they hold online and live auctions, exhibitions, and prime property sales throughout the year. Their focus is to bring transparency to the auction process, and providing easy access to bidders around the world. Saffronart's services go beyond auctions to include private sales, art storage, appraisals and valuations for our clients, and supporting the efforts of the Indian art world by holding fundraiser auctions.



Parcel gilt silver and copper

