

Tapan Sinha was a director who was ahead of his times: Swapan Mullick

“Tapan Sinha was a director who was ahead of his times,” said renowned Bengali film critic Swapan Mullick during the 23rd Pune International Film Festival. The films he made in his times still seem futuristic, he commented. The workshop paid tribute to legendary Bengali filmmaker Tapan Sinha, recognizing his extraordinary contributions to Indian cinema. Renowned filmmakers Goutam Ghosh and Mullick led discussions on Sinha’s unique storytelling, technical brilliance, and ability to seamlessly merge art and commercial cinema.

Sinha’s films, deeply rooted in social narratives, captured themes of unemployment, class struggles, and human resilience. Unlike his contemporaries Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen, he remained independent of film societies but left an undeniable impact on both mainstream and parallel cinema. His works like Apanjan and Ekhone explored Bengal’s socio-political landscape, while Sagina Mahato, featuring Dilip Kumar, gained nationwide recognition for its powerful portrayal of factory workers’ struggles under British rule.

Sinha’s versatility shone through diverse genres, from the satirical humor of Bancharamer Bagan to the poignant storytelling of Kaalamati. His mastery of magic realism, bringing ordinary characters into transformative narratives, set him apart. His films also introduced theater greats Robi Ghosh and Manoj Mitra, who later became icons in Bengali cinema.

Critics at the festival emphasized the need for young filmmakers to rediscover Sinha’s works. Ghosh compared his visual storytelling to global icons like Jean-Luc Godard, highlighting the importance of originality in today’s digital era. Discussions also raised concerns over the stagnation of Bengali cinema, urging filmmakers to embrace innovation while staying rooted in cultural storytelling.

With restoration efforts underway, Sinha’s films are being preserved for future generations. The festival reinforced his lasting influence, proving that his human-centric narratives remain as relevant today as they were decades ago.