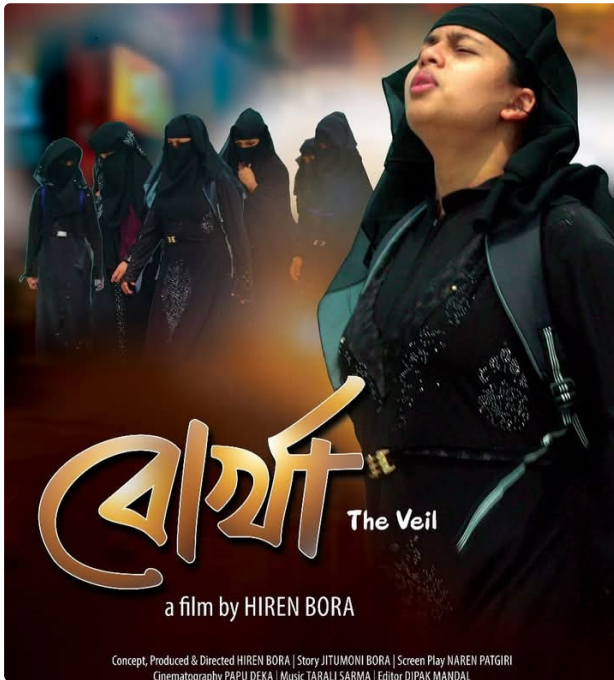


'Burkha – The Veil' creates waves at Kolkata International Film Festival



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Prantik Deka 7 December 2024 14814 views

The Assamese film 'Burkha – The Veil' provided an unique cinematic experience for both audiences and critics at the ongoing Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF), which runs from December 4 to 11, 2024. The film has been selected for the National Competition on Indian Languages Section at the 30th edition of the festival. 'Burkha – The Veil's director, Hiren Bora, is thrilled by the audiences' response to his film.

The Kolkata International Film Festival has been a major cultural event for Kolkata's residents, shaping generations of moviegoing audiences' experience of cinema. It's a festival for those who appreciate films, filmmaking, and artistic expression. The Assamese film 'Burkha - The Veil' was screened in the 'Competition on Indian Language Films' category at the Kolkata International Film Festival on Thursday, December 5. Director Hiren Bora also attended the press conference, which took place at Nandan's press corner the next day.

The filmmaker has previously made films that convey thought-provoking stories, covering topics that everyone in the audience can relate to and sympathise with.

One thing is apparent about Hiren Bora's films: he remembers social responsibility and depicts society on film. Bora's debut film, the critically acclaimed 'Basundhara - The Earth' bagged the Rajat Kamal award for Best Feature Film in Assamese in 2009. It was screened as an official entry at the festival circuits in London, Nottingham, Canada and in Mumbai, Pune, New Delhi and Goa. His next film 'Khobh - The Anguish', made in 2014, became only the second Assamese film after Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia's 'Sandhyaraag' in 1977 to be selected to participate at the prestigious Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2015. His 2019's 'Seema - the untold story' was selected to various prestigious film festivals.

His most recent offering - 'Burkha - The Veil' is another socially conscious film. "I wanted to bring a true story to life on screen," he said.

"The shooting experience was fantastic. We worked in Muslim-majority areas without encountering any difficulties at all. I am grateful to everyone."

Hiren Bora was highly encouraged by the local residents of the region, who were predominantly Muslims. His sole motive behind its making was to question the poor medical and educational facilities of the interior villages of the northeastern part of India. He hopes to change and improve the existing system through this film.

For Bora, 'Burkha - The Veil' is "a journey from darkness to light." The film revolves around Reshma, an eighth-grade student, who hails from a small village located on the banks of the river Brahmaputra. Her father Aminul is adamant that she marry young and have children rather than pursue her education. Additionally, a lecherous village elder wants to make Reshma his fourth wife. Reshma's wishes get fulfilled when Hafeez, an honest teacher, admits her to his school. However, Hafeez becomes the target of the unscrupulous old man's conspiracy. Reshma finally emerges from the shadows of darkness to the light of knowledge after receiving encouragement from a few young people in the village.

The film portrays various hurdles encountered by Reshma in her journey and how she navigates pre-established societal stereotypes and pressures. Hiren Bora's films address socio-economic development issues, and this film is consistent with his vision. He emphasises the social element of the story more than the religious markings. Bora reckons Burkha to be a symbol of discrimination and oppression.

The various roles in the film are played by Rodali Bora, Jatin Khanikar, Durgashri Borah, Adrita Parasha Mahanta, Dipankar Bora, etc. Based on a story by Jitumoni Bora, the film is produced and directed by Hiren Bora under the banner of 'Suravi Enterprise'. The screenplay is written by Naren Patgiri, music is scored by Tarali Sarma, cinematography is handled by Papu Deka, editing is executed by Dipak Mandal, while the film's chief assistant director is Malay Roy, VFX works are by Abhijit Handique, costumes are provided by Rosy Bora, makeup by Nyumme Kamse and art direction is by Pankaj Bezbaruah.

A noted writer, director, stage actor, and screenwriter, Hiren Bora has written a number of short stories. Bora began his independent career by producing and directing television dramas in Hindi, English, and Assamese. He has also produced radio plays for All India Radio and documentaries for Doordarshan and other television channels.

Hiren Bora's other films waiting for theatrical release includes the Rabha language feature 'Nasimay' (Darling), which was officially selected for screening at the 28th Kolkata International Film Festival in the 'Unheard India: Rare Language Indian Film' category, as well as the film 'Baahi - the flute', based on popular writer Monikuntala Bhattacharya's much appreciated novel.

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