

Staff Reporter

For a generation brought up on the antics of Mr Bachchan and his latter-day avtaar Akshay Kumar, the question of good cinema would be a mere theoretical premise, something to discuss during an idle hour but of little tangible importance. The fact that a medium which literally holds its audience mesmerised has a function doesn't even arise. Here one doesn't refer to the so-called masses or 'time-pass' crowd but to their more affluent counterparts, for the former are far more adept at raising questions of artistic relevance than the latter can ever aspire to be. Reactions to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* or Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zamin* would therefore evoke a more genuine response from them. Especially in the case of Roy's classic film, since it speaks in the language of the people, in an artistic medium they have grown to love but whose idiom has been sadly impoverished by the inexorable march of capitalism.

Even so, there are plenty of people around capable of recognising a good thing when they see it. Last week's function in memory of Bimal Roy was indeed an eye-opener for those who think otherwise. When, for instance, Manna Dey announced that he was going

Return to pristine cinematic values

Sudharak Olwe



Manna Dey and Kavita Krishnamurthy at the Bimal Roy memorial function held at St Andrew's Auditorium recently.

to perform *Ai mere pyare watan* (music: Salil Chowdhury, lyrics: Prem Dhavan) from *Kabuliwala*, there were tears in everyone's eyes, even before the first chord was played. Recognising that patriotism is an essential part of the Indian psyche, Bimal Roy had asked Manna Dey to perform the song in a somewhat subdued voice. The result is, of course, a classic in the truest sense. And why was Bimal Roy so involved with every aspect of his craft? Obviously because he felt he had a message to convey and thoughts to share with his countrymen. Stands to reason really, or he wouldn't have produced films like *Kabuliwala* (directed for Bimal Roy productions by Heman Gupta), or screen adaptations of Sarat Chandra's novels, *Parineeta*, *Biraj Bahu* and *Devdas*. His involvement with the proletariat can be seen from the fact that *Do Bigha Zamin* was partly produced by the workers from the Mohan Studio Union.

Bimal Roy received 11 Filmfare awards during his lifetime — two for *Do Bigha Zamin*, a clean sweep for *Madhumati*, and the last one for *Bandini*. What is, perhaps, of importance now for the Bimal Roy Memorial Committee is to follow up on this excellent revival by arranging a retrospective of his films.