

Chapter 1

Rituparno Ghosh :

An Artist in the Making.

“Ad and feature film maker, actor and director Rituparno Ghosh pushed the boundaries of Indian film-making, exploring personal relationships and issues of identity in a series of award winning films in Bengali, Hindi and English. From *Unishe April* in 1995 to the semi-biographical *Chitrangada* in 2013, he leaves behind a connoisseur’s collection”

- The Hindu.

An artist is a person who can think beyond his time and limits. In this context Rituparno Ghosh can be termed as an artist, a filmmaker, who with his microscopic observation on society and people living in it, has created a new dimension of reality through his cinematic creations, that has proved to be the result of illuminating thoughts capable of negating the contemporary limits of acceptance. Equipped with such capacity to observe, he has always seen life beyond the horizon of time. It is definite that he is among those artists who could never negotiate with circumstances. His journey towards becoming a well known and recognized name in the world of cinema began with his concentration on the uncultivated areas of human relationship. Apart from this, Rituparno Ghosh is the name of that creative genius who with his mature narrative strategies dared to bring regional cinemas to the global platform. In his short span of life, he has created a horde of remarkable films which will leave strong and deep mark on the

psyche of the audiences of every generation to come. It will not be wrong to say that holding his hand Bengal has witnessed the beginning of the second phase of renaissance of its film Industry. Suragama Guha Roy explains in the article *Remembering Rituparno Ghosh: The Lifeline of Bengali Cinema* ,

“ At a time when Bengali cinema was gasping for breath, having been pulled down over nearly two decades to the very depths of mediocrity, Rituparno Ghosh appeared on the scene as no less than a savior.... When Ghosh broke into the film scene, Bengali cinema was all but dead. Gone were the days of the evergreen Uttam-Suchitra, the plots were cheap remakes of Southern films, the music was abysmal, and the educated Bengali had withdrawn itself completely from the Bengali movie theatres. This is when Ghosh launched his career with films like *Heerer Angti* and *Unishe April*. The *bangali bhadralok* was enthralled. They flooded back to the theatres. Bengali cinema had found a new lifeline.”¹

Rituparno Ghosh , the man who revived Bengali cinema, was born on 31 August 1963 in Kolkata, West Bengal, India . Usually called as Ritu , Rituparno Ghosh was born in a Bengali Hindu family . From the very beginning of his life, in this family, Rituparno was involved in creative prospects of life. His journey in the creative realm of life began with his father. His father Sunil Ghosh was a painter as well as a documentary film maker. So film making and the creative process attached to it was surely transmitted to him from his father. It may be said that his father’s inclination towards art, infected him from within. This is the reason why his step into the advertising industry at the initial stage of his career was a decision which can be easily understood. This decision gave him a scope to shape out his artistic talents which were latent somewhere in his hidden desires. After stepping into the advertising world he shocked entire Bengal creative advertisement experts with his talent of intoxicating viewers. After diving deep into his

life and in his upbringing no one will be shocked to know that this quality of playing with viewers and viewing experience was transmuted in him from his father. His capacity to play with the emotion of the viewers must be an art which has reached the level of perfection with his capacity to learn it but to a large extent Rituparno has inherited it from his family. Therefore aesthetic understanding was in his blood as it descended from his father. This is the reason why his father's influence can be recognized as an inseparable part of Rituparno's life and his career. The sense and understanding of colour imbibed within Rituparno is a heritage inherited from that man who had an acute observation on colours , that is his father.

Apart from the influence of his father his mother had an everlasting influence on him. In Rituparno's life, the death of his mother brought dissatisfaction and loneliness. In his writing he has often mentioned about his mother and her influence on him. Placing her mother as a character of his imagination he has restored his longing for his mother's love and affection. In his columns for *Sangbad Protidin*² (which later published in a book form with the title *First Person*) he has written on his observations of the relationship his mother had with his father . He proudly describes how his mother waited for his father on the morning of Mahalaya (a religious ceremony observed seven days before Durga puja) – along with the confirmation of the ticket for their tour to any hill station. The love and the everlasting romance of his parents are captured in Rituparno's words when he writes, “ *chobi aka, diabetes, Dover Lane ar porbot prem – ei koti anupom sodrishyer raj jotoke, boro anonde , boro preme kete giyeche amar baba mar jibon.*”³, which can be translated as “painting, diabetes, Dover Lane and love for mountains- with the heavenly pleasure of all these , my parents lead their life in happiness, in peace.” This unconditional love of his parents definitely added new flavours and colours in his life and his career. This adorable atmosphere of his home shaped his philosophy of life and in the long run motivated him to explore the arena of human relations through his films. A well cultured home, lovable parents, and the affection generated from that nest of human feelings motivated him to think big and to

think beyond all possibilities. It is for sure that Rituparno's family is definitely his greatest strength without which it was impossible for him to evolve as an artist. In this context Kaustav Bakshi has rightly said in his article *Rituparno Ghosh: The Kingly Queen* published in Cinema Chronicles "Born to parents who were seriously dedicated to the arts (both his parents were painters), Ghosh was nurtured in an aesthetic environment which implanted in him a profound sense of beauty and the faculty to appreciate it." ⁴ he adds on to say that this is the reason why "It was not really surprising that he could recite Meghdootam without batting an eyelid, for his mother often read out to him Kalidasa's epic poem before he went to bed."⁵ So, it is an unavoidable truth that Rituparno's parents influenced him to a great extent.

After his family the next influential chapter in his life was his schooling. Drenched in the rain of knowledge, friendship, and power of imagination Rituparno jumped to a new realm of life during those days he spent in schools. With two bosom friends, Rahul and Hironjit, he enjoyed his days in South Point High School where they indulged in numerous activities including usual visit to Kalighat and cinema halls but there occurs a leap of separation from these friends as Rituparno had to complete his eleven and twelve from Moulana Azad College. His passage of education ends in success where he completes his schooling from South Point High School and earns a degree from Jadavpur University in Economics. For such a lively boy simply getting a degree in Economics from Jadavpur University with Marx as a special paper was not enough as he was having films in his nerves. His educational qualifications, though appears to be not at all essential for his carrier in films, it has essentially shaped his persona as a well read cultured individual. His interest in reading helped him to breakout the stagnant boundaries which are often created by different elements of his surroundings. With a cultured and educated outlook, he dared to accept challenges in every step of his creative quest and this is the reason why no one could restrict him from opening up new vistas of truth displayed through his films, which are stuffed with every layer of human emotion. On this point Subhash K. Jha claims "Rituparno Ghosh, one of the country's best and

versatile filmmakers in the post-satyajit Ray generation , mastered depiction of human relationships which he often dissected with a surgical knife against contemporary or periodical social content.”⁶ His understanding of human psyche, its association with pathos and suffering was shaped with his inquisitive mental setup. This mental setup can be regarded as the utmost requirement of an artist. So equipped with such required abilities Rituparno Ghosh became an ambassador of aesthetic and artistic creations. The journey of an artist like Rituparno Ghosh became easy when it got assembled with different segments of experiences gathered from life and its innumerable colours . In this context, Ghosh’s educational background and his interest in reading can be considered as a single phase of his development as an artist.

Rituparno Ghosh came closer to the colourful universe of images with his decision to step into the creative field of advertisement. Before his venture into films he was working in Response India Advertising Agency. The webpage of *Time toast* affirms, “Rituparno Ghosh worked at the response India Advertising agency before starting his career in films. He became known as an effective copywriter in Kolkata and was noted for composing succinct , appealing one liners and slogans for ad campaigns in Bengali.”⁷ In truest sense of the term his journey towards becoming an artist began with this attempt to pursue a career in an advertising industry as a creative artist. As a beginner in advertising agency he could gather enough response as a copywriter. His creative talent and his ability came to the fore when he started the trend of making add campaigns in Bengali. Going against the set norms he initiated the trend of translating advertisements in Bengali. This kind of initiative from his side is quite visible on every sphere of his career .This is the reason why setting new norms and going against the set pattern became a behavioral characteristics of this creative genius. With a vision of making prominent change in the accepted truths of our surrounding he somehow managed to drag the attention of this world on him and specifically on his works. The whole phenomenon of dragging attention on his thought and his works started with his acceptance in the advertisement world. His success in the advertisement world can be regarded as a

stepping stone to enter into the world of cinema. His venture into the advertisement world is like preparing the ground for his acceptance as a filmmaker in near future. His spark could be identified in the advertising campaigns in Bangla with punch lines like “*Bongo jiboner ango*” for Borolin⁸. Among his other notable works a campaign for Frooti⁹ and “*Sarad Samman*”¹⁰ bagged enough attention. Apart from his career in advertising sector, his appearances in television with much talked about shows like “*Ebong Rituporno*” in ETV Bangla, and “*Ghosh & co.*” in Star Jalsa conceded much attention. Through these Talk Shows he raised many issues and generated much controversy.

Television and specifically those Talk Shows Rituparno hosted, gave him a chance to uncover different layers of his understanding about films, society, relations, gender, acting and many more. But his real talent and his real understanding on all the above mentioned areas came out clearly through his films. He started his career in films with *HirerAngti*¹¹. Though Rituparno Ghosh dreamt of gathering feedback from his mentor Satyajit Ray¹² after releasing this film, his fate couldn't support him to that extent as the ailing director passed away during its post production. For Rituparno *Hirer Angti* was just the beginning as he had to travel tons of miles ahead creating challenges to the directors of future generation with his cinematic perception and with exceptionally good story telling techniques. There is a lot to talk about Rituparno's films but it will be useless to talk on his films without knowing him as a filmmaker. Rituparno was revolutionary as a man and as a film maker. His creative experimentations are the result of varied experience and hard work. Rituparno Ghosh and his existence is meaningless without films. For Rituparno film is that medium which can reach to a larger audience with the alluring quality of moving images. Even though he faced many challenges in releasing his first film *Hirer Angti*, with *Unishe April*¹³ a journey towards perfection and excellence began with its never ending speed. His claim on multiple national awards on different categories itself is a proof of his seriousness on his job as a filmmaker. Being an actor or a director, he always positioned himself in that height which was beyond the reach of many of his contemporaries. His performance in *Arekti Premer Golpo*¹⁴,

*Memories in Marh*¹⁵, and *Chitrangada*¹⁶ proved him as a brave and natural actor who can emote easily without any hesitation. His performances are polished like a professional actor and can indulge audiences to think and feel like the character he is playing on screen. Whether it is his acting skill or his skill of directing scenes for a film, brilliance is the benchmark. Therefore understanding his films will be difficult without understanding his life and his passions. Most importantly no one can reach up to the limits of understanding Rituporno's films without understanding the narrative of his thought and illustrations of life. Literature and poetry constitute a larger and vital part of his works and getting deeper into this vital aspect is essential for the understanding of his films and their association with literature. In this context it can be emphasized here that in order to understand the artist better it is important to understand the man. So to understand Rituparno as an artist there is a need to understand Rituparno as a human being. A venture into his life can provide us a vital ground to analyse Ghosh's philosophy in adapting literature into films. In an age when digital codes have replaced letters, Ghosh's effort to reflect emotions stored in written words through a sophisticated, digitized media like film can be understood as a move to flow with the need of time. Here it must be said that this tendency to adapt literary texts into film is not new. Time and again this area of adaptation is explored by filmmakers for various reasons. Among many such creative talents of this world he has made his mark. Rituparno's films are influential in the sense that he is successful in presenting regional cinema to a global platform by telling stories of common human emotions that can easily connect to a global audience. It can be broadly claimed that he has popularized regional literature in a global platform with the help of a medium like cinema. Through this medium he has successfully dealt with the possibilities of knitting imagination with truth and truth with imagination. This play with truth and imagination inserted in his film is somehow taken up from his indulgence in literature. Thus it is not only his interest in films but also his interest in literature which has made his admirers from all over the globe to remember him as a person with aesthetic perfection. Through his films, he serve his viewers a beautiful world of poetry, emotion and human sentiment wrapped with elements of literature.

Rituparno's interest in literature and even in writing gets reflected and highlighted in his association with film magazines like *Anondolok*. He was the editor of *Anondolok*, a Bengali film magazine from 1997 to 2004. Apart from this, he also edited *The Robbar* section of *Sangbad Pratidin* until his death. His interest in writing and his capability to express emotions and sentiments in words finds a place in this much applauded section of *Sangbad Pratidin*. After being edited by Neela Bondopahdaya, most of his writings in *Robbar* is anthologized in a book titled as *First Person* and thereafter published posthumously. In the foreword of *First person* entitled 'Ses kotha ke bolbe' Anindya Chattopadhyaya writes, "Rituparno Ghosh sotyi hoyto lekhok chilena, borong tini jiboner ek anorgor kothon"¹⁷ which may be translated as "Rituparno Ghosh was not a writer but a teller of the story of a lifetime." From here on it can be understood that his interest in writing, in poetry and in films are somehow interrelated with the thread of life. All these diverse areas of his interest can be traced to his interest in literature in Rabindranath Tagore and his writings. Tagore's life, his literature, his poetry –every bit of this Nobel laureate influenced Rituparno. In most of his films, elements from Tagore can be seen. It can be said that Rituparno Ghosh has made an attempt to bring back the glamour of *Rabindra Sangeet*¹⁸ in Bengali cinema. His films usually incorporate lines from Tagore's poems and music from Tagore's compositions. He used songs written by Tagore in most of his films. He is also known for appropriating Tagore's literary texts through his adaptations. It is true that his interest in Tagore is specifically evident in his adaptations. It is often witnessed that if any of his project is going to be based on literature his search for a suitable subject ends in the literary creations of Tagore. His best known adaptations are on Tagore's *Chokher Bali*, *Noukadubi* and *Chitrangada*. His phenomenal work on all these three adaptations are appreciated both by the critics and by the audiences in general. Different characters from Tagore's creation came much closer to general public when they are presented by Rituparno through the popular medium of films. Adaptation of Tagore's literary creations enabled him to project his art of playing with the emotion and sentiment of people on a greater level.

In this case, the greatest achievement of Rituparno is the ability to draw out the true essence of Tagore's genius in his works which compelled his audience, even those who are not at all familiar with Tagore remain captivated. His research and study on Tagore could be utilized to its fullest when he was given the responsibility to prepare a documentary on Tagore. Accordingly in the year 2012 he made a documentary for Govt of India, Ministry of Culture, on the life of Rabindranath Tagore called *Jiban Smriti*. In an interview Rituparno Ghosh explained, "I am calling my documentary *Selective Memories*. It's because Rabindranath too never felt he had the responsibility to transcribe his whole life, chronologically with every detail. It's not photography but impressions."¹⁹. The above words reveal his serious intention on his project on Rabindranath Tagore. This serious motive and enthusiasm to work more on Tagore drove him forward, towards more soulful creations till the end of his life. Time and again he has revisited Tagore through his works. And thus in numerous possible ways in which Rituparno is influenced by Tagore. It is also true that apart from Tagore, Rituparno was also influenced by the art and style of Satyajit Ray. He even drew his inspiration from directors like Pasolini²⁰, and Kurosawa²¹. In an interview by Tithi Sarkar, Rituparno commented on the use of sexuality in his film by saying, "Pasolini has taught us long ago how people can be disturbed by sexuality. But Bengali cinema has a moral sanctity, or at least a veil. That moral panic applies only to dealing with sexuality which is beyond normative."²² His response to the interviewer on the question of androgyny brought reference of Tagore as well, as he said "pronouns and verbs in the Bengali language are not gender-sensitive. The mysterious and mystical ambiguity of androgyny in Tagore's writings is a treasure that has been utilized enough."²³In the same interview he has relentlessly talked about Kurosawa and his use of the acting talent of Toshiro Mifune, "Kurosawa's films about Japanese martial arts that combine dance and action show Toshiro Mifune's stylized acting, but he isn't acclaimed for that; it is the intensity and passion for which we admire him. Look at Heath Ledger in *The Dark Knight*: how realistically he plays an unreal character."²⁴ His enthusiasm to extract knowledge on every aspect of film as an art can be felt in his content of conversation with directors like

Aparna Sen. Aparna Sen remembers how they used to had a conversation on many aspects. In an interview with Sangeeta Dutta She recalls, “ we never did collaborate after all . Every time we would end up chatting. For hours on end . About everything under the sun. Films , poetry, Tagore, Satyajit Ray, Bergman, Kurosawa, the Tollygunge film industry, Uttam Kumar , Soumira Chatterjee ,my experience as an actress....”²⁵ Through such thoughtful insight on the essentially genuine aspect of art of the great artists like Tagore, Pasolini and Kurosawa , Rituparno’s capacity as an artist can be realized. This is the reason why he has evolved as an artist through his films. Film is a medium in which viewers are presented with his vision as an artist. Through this medium he has explored new possibilities of looking at life. Film is a vehicle in his hand for relating life with its crude reality to art.As Kaustav Bakshi says another achievement of Rituparno is in his success in “ merging two traditions in his films, thereby blurring the dividing line between art and commercial cinema: the art- house cinema represented by Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak, and the mainstream commercial cinema represented by Ajay Kar, Tarun Majumdar, Arabinda Mukhopadhyay and Tapan Sinha.”²⁶

In Ghosh’s films where characters come to life, literature gets a whole new shape. His filmography is rich with elements and extracts from literature. Literature is blended with films in such a manner that it forms a unifying whole. Ghosh handles literature with delicate hands mixing every possible essential detail while maintaining the magic of cinema. Cinematic expression reaches to a greater height when it comes closer to great literary writings and Ghosh excels in this art. His experimental works force audiences to rethink about the never ending process of life and stories of it. Rituparno’s life itself is a story and he has deliberately made it a part of his films. His life as a transgender has influenced him to understand human emotion and human society from its deepest source. His imagination and his philosophy of life is well projected in his films. Scripts of his films reveal the vision of a director who is well equipped with knowledge and study of literature and poetry. Audiences are served with a plate of visual delight which is coloured with human emotions and scented with the poetry of life. Rituparno handles his

screen and its narrative in such a manner that film resembles life and vice versa . The line between life and film is blurred and only a thin line remains.

Rituparno Ghosh's life and his body itself is an art. His consciousness about the viability of his own body and in greater sense his life is the seed of communication between his works and his life. His philosophy and his life entrusted him for making cinemas that are not simply the medium of entertainment but a larger medium of communicating with the audiences . His films make audiences to think on different issues of this society and beyond . This is the reason why his kind of film shifts its track from that of popular cinemas. Even though cinema itself is a part of popular culture , but its variety made Ghosh none the less critically acclaimed though he had less commercial success. A tradition which began with Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak²⁷ finds its place in the works of Rituparno. Holding the hand of Parallel Cinema Ghosh's films have shown a different trajectory where he can deal with the darker sides of human existence and human society. Unlike popular cinemas of Bollywood²⁸ and Tollywood²⁹ Parallel Cinema, with its serious content, carry different shades of meaning wiping out the fantasy and dreamlike elements of Bollywood and for Rituparno Ghosh's films, this is the truth.

Rituparno adopted a transgender lifestyle during the later part of his life. At this stage, as his films attracted much attention so did his life. He is always a revolutionary whether it is the question of selecting subject for his film or his outcry about his gender . Along with the path breaking concepts of his films, his effort to breakdown the taboos of the society on sexual identity invited much criticism. It is his chosen path of showcasing his gender that has made Rituparno an icon in himself. Thus, Subhash K. Jha opines, "Among his many achievements , Rituparno must be credited with being the first film maker to come out of the closet." ³⁰ His understanding about his 'body' and his 'self ', entrapped within , provided him the opportunity to reconstruct his ideas on every layer of life. His dilemmas, his helplessness, his anxiety and even his sentiments - somehow or the other - are associated with his identity as a queer and its non acceptance by the society in general. In his creative pursuit, his persona as a man paranoid about his own

sexuality is visibly reflected. Even in his personal life “Rituparno was paranoid about his own sexuality. Through experience he had learnt to be cautious about sending out the wrong signals to actors. He was often afraid of reaching out to actors , specially in Bollywood who felt would read a wrong signal.”³¹ His appearance with his bald head, and feminine attire was enough to shock his contemporaries. His preferences in cross dressing was a statement on his ability to reconstruct his own identity. It also shows to the rare ability of this talented man of asking question on the never ending process of what he calls ‘hetero- patriarchy’. So Kaustav Bakshi writes in his article *Rituparno Ghosh, performance arts and a queer legacy: an abiding stardom*, “Ghosh’s queer iconism was exemplary in the sense that there was no public figure before him in Bengal, who so openly and unapologetically talked and wrote about non-normative sexualities,”³²

His works met with considerable critical acclaims even after his open acceptance of his sexuality. In many of his films where he has projected his dilemma and his sensitive understanding of the life of a transgender , he has often highlighted the impasse of parents encountering problem in realizing the queer identity of their child against the accepted heterosexual norm of the society. Through his films Rituparno Ghosh urges for understanding the need of the acceptance of transgenders both in society and in family. Emotional content of homosexual relationship is most of the time overlooked by the heterosexual society. Rituparno Ghosh is one of those filmmakers, who is known for emphasizing on this emotional content of homosexual relation through his films. He has always used the medium of film to spread out an awareness not only on the presence of a third gender but also on their need of emotional support , just like any other normal human being. Thus content of his films asked many questions on the taboos and prejudices generated from disbelief.

Whether it is in those films he has directed or in those where viewers are served with the delightful presence of Rituparno as an actor – meaning of life in a different shade is jotted down with complexities imprinted in it. His talent to understand scenes before the camera starts rolling makes him a good director. On the other hand his own

understanding of acting and his ability to capture emotion in scene through his actors, makes him a good actor. His worldwide acceptance as a gifted individual is polished with his directorial and acting abilities. With his presence in films like *Arekti Premer Golpo* and *Memories in March* he has efficiently displayed his concern for such untold aspects of life. When asked about his role in Kausik Ganguly's *Arekti Premer Golpo*, Rituporno Ghosh said "The film makes us realize that taboos about sexuality haven't changed that much. This film leads to a very important cultural conversation. One can't sit complacently and wait for a change in society."³³ He also added "I want my role to reflect my beliefs and ideologies."³⁴ In a way it can be said that his observation and his ideologies were vividly expressed in his words, films and specifically in his body.

Rituparno Ghosh could never accept the traditionally sanctioned space given to heterosexuality keeping homosexuals under the strict vigil of society. After stepping into the vicious circle of societal norms it becomes very difficult to think beyond its limits, but in Ghosh's case limits are shuffled with new hopes - leaving behind the baggage of beliefs and norms. In his soulful attempts he targeted to mark his works with an insightful portrayal of emotions which are normal in every human relation whether it is heterosexual or homosexual. Thus it is observed that the loneliness of human existence brought many struggling thought in his mind which are often communicated through his films. This universal existence of loneliness expands its depth when it comes to term with those who are marginalized and are bound to live alone just on the line of their limit. The knowledge of this depth of loneliness was not away from Rituparno's reach. This is the reason why, in an interview with Kaustav Bakshi Rituparno Ghosh Explained "the everyday struggle of the queer character must be pitted 'vis-a-vis' the comfort zone inhabited by the hetero- normative family. Another important aspect is that a queer person tends to become lonely as he/she grows old he/ she is compelled to live a single life...in our country, at least, two men cannot adopt a child...so elderly queer people usually have no one to look after them His/ her acceptance in the family is therefore crucial, at least for me."³⁵ This sort of revelation of the creative genius can

make the understanding of everyone easier with the realization of his journey from simply a film maker to a visionary.

There are many thoughts on Rituparno Ghosh's participation in LGBT³⁶ movements in Kolkata . Many considered him as a beacon for LGBT community. LGBT which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender – is a platform for these marginalized section of the society. LGBT can echo the snubbing voice of this marginalized group. With the help of pride parade, publications , film festivals, and many such other events organized by LGBT , an initiative is taken to handle different issues of the 'Third Gender.' LGBT presents a rescue zone for this third gender , an area of security , as it provides a larger space to think positive on hidden shades of gender issues. Such a platform gets strength of survival from the participation of such personalities like that of Rituparno Ghosh . With the initiative to expose nuances of gender identity through his films, Rituparno Ghosh heightened the possibility of getting a strong following towards his understanding of the clichéd existence of the third gender of this society and this is the reason why Rituparno Ghosh's name got easily associated with it for his confession of his gender identity . Rituparno's identity is somehow re-shaped and re- understood in his attempt of voicing out his hidden self, trapped inside his body, and this motivating declaration gave strength to many who lurk in the socially unwanted corner of their self, and in the broader aspect it is this alluring side of Rituparno which lead people attach his name with organizations like LGBT.

Rituparno's attitude in challenging the traditionally attributed space of heterosexuality or in other term 'hetero -normality' paved his way towards planting the seed of encouragement through organizations like LGBT for creating a safer and a better world to live and regenerating a better, atmosphere to breath the air of change for the those who are categorized as third sex in today's society. Though in the earlier part of his life he was never an active participant in LGBT but in the later part of his life and his career ,his name got attached to LGBT. When asked about his participation in LGBT by Kaustav Bakshi he commented “ no, an artist need not be an activist and art does not

really need to be political all the time. You can say my decision to enact queer character on screen is an expression of my activism.”³⁷ Ghosh added “My perception about a separate festival on queer films has changed. I have arrived at a realization that such a festival is a part of a political activism which celebrates and reclaims non –normative sexual identities; it is not a projection of victimhood, but a poignant protest against hetero-patriarchy. Therefore it is necessary.”³⁸With such remarks Ghosh is very much clear about his own position as a film maker and specially as a sensitive and a creative activist. But he is one of those pioneer film makers who has made a serious attempt to unveil many layers of conflict of the life of a transgender and this is the reason why he is considered as the source of voice of the much talked about group LGBT . Ghosh’s life and his film have concretized the long latent dream of this marginalized group- the third gender of this society. In this context it can be mentioned that when concentration will be on Rituporno Ghosh’s life and his films, a larger part will cover those aspects where film overpowers his life and his life becomes a part of his films. Here it must be specified that even if his films are the mirror of his minute observation and sensitive formulation of human emotions , he has never over emphasized his own position in that projection. It can be simply explained that watching his films viewers learn to reconsider the stereotypes which are often considered as normal. In a way it should be stated that his attitude is very much assertive towards his own sexual identity. This assertive attitude brings a holistic approach towards his films and his philosophy of life and for this reason may be, his films are not only a subject of interest for film lovers but also for scholars. In an attempt to track his journey in becoming a name of success- film lovers , scholars and critics are drawn to the single path of rethinking his life as a person who could bring his thought to life through his films. He has appropriated his aesthetic understanding and craving for art with a telling effect in his vacant canvas of screen. The lens of his camera captures those moving pictures which may justify with life and its truth. So, Kaustav Bakshi says, “time and again , Ghosh attacked patriarchal assumptions and misogynistic representations of women in films, endeavoring to reverse the gaze of the camera, which was so far , predominantly heterosexual male.”³⁹

Death of this celebrated film maker was an event of grief and loss. It is like the end of a long narrative of success within a very short episode of time. Before celebrating his 50th birthday his journey of life was stopped . Rituparno died on 30 May , 2013 at his residence in Kolkata. Here his meticulous performances as a director , as an actor and basically as a human being concludes with his last breath. Death came in steady steps towards this man who was known for his lively expressions. The intelligence reflected in his eyes were closed for ever. The reason of his death can be traced to his long ailment of pancreatitis and diabetes mellitus type2 with a culminating result in a massive heart attack. His active glut in receiving hormone treatment was another reason for his complex physical conditions. Film fraternity of both Bollywood and Tollywood was moved with the news of his death. With his death a whole genre of filmmaking comes to face its downfall. This loss , this downfall cannot be measured in words. While jotting down this sense of loss- in an article titled “Rituparno Ghosh- the ‘Enfant Terrible’ of contemporary Indian Cinema” published in *Silhouette* , Amitav Nag elaborates “ May has a very special connotation in the Bengali psyche. It is in this very month when two of Bengal’s brightest stars of the cultural sky were born- Rabindranath Tagore and Satyajit Ray. It is on a rainy day in the end of the same month two years back when Bengal lost its most versatile film- maker of contemporary cinema”⁴⁰. Amitav Nag confirms here that Rituparno’s death and its effect was not less than that of Tagore’s and Satyajit Ray’s. On this ground it is not simply Amitav Nag but many others like him could not easily accept the news of the sudden demise of this talented film maker. Host of his contemporaries came to his home to pay tribute and many came to Nandan⁴¹ to see this brave artist for the last time. Nandan Complex was filled with thousands of his fans and followers who could give their homage to Rituparno. When his body was taken to Tollygunge Technical Studio , Mamata Banerjee, West Bengal’s Chief minister gave a speech on him and specifically on his contribution to Bangali film Industry . He was remembered both as a man with great artistic talent and as a polite ,well behaved , cultured human being. His dynamic and decisive personality came visible through his archaic works .It is this dynamic and ever challenging personality of Rituparno, which made it hard to believe his sudden

disappearance . His annoying creations marked with acute observation of life never expected his death at this early and creative stage of his life. Therefore the demise of this brightest star of Bengal brought an unwanted dissatisfaction on every layer of society. The unexpected demise of this star of Bengal jerked his admirers. Reactions came in different words and speeches. Television news channels broadcasted this news with utmost dissatisfaction. Print media also highlighted this great loss of Bangali film industry in particular and the magnitude of loss for Indian film industry in general. The extent of this loss is abundantly clear to anyone who has ever watched any one of his movies. To a great extent social media was used to pay the last tribute to this film maker.

The end of Rituparno's life does not mean the end of his art and his creations. He will definitely live through his creations. Even after his death he inspires a lot to think different, and to think beyond limits. Till today his creations are attracting scholars from different part of the world to investigate and to inquire on unrevealed dimensions of his life and his art. In his case death has simply brought a change in the process of getting the meaning of a life that has ceased to continue. Here with Rituparno's death, a sense of continuity can be realized . This sense of continuity has resulted from a much nourished segments of desire developed from an expectation to watch more of him and more of his experimentations with art and basically films.

The words of Peter Brooks ,“the sense of beginning , then is determined by the sense of an ending”⁴² justifies the happenings in Rituparno's life. In his case people get a holistic idea of a sense of beginning that begins at his death. Beyond the limits of time and space the narrative of Rituparno's life reached its vantage point from where it seems that death is the beginning of a new era of possibilities . In this new era he is and he will be the source of inspiration to many. Many will get hold of his ideals and philosophy to dig out the possible layers of film making. His works as a film maker will continue to embrace genuine artistic desire.

Rituparno Ghosh and his journey as a filmmaker is knitted with memorable segments of creativity. From development of his keen observation of sight , sound , colour , till his concentration on larger prospects of life – he has evolved to roar with his clear, distinctive and mild voice that can be heard in each of his creative projects. His attitude towards life is the strong catalytic agent that helped him to develop as an artist. To make it precise, in cinematic terms his career as an artist had to travel through all the processes involved in making a film , from preproduction preparation to post production accuracy. In the making of this artist, ‘light , camera and action’ - is pronounced to produce a ‘ mis- en- scene’⁴³. In this context it may be said that, Rituparno’s love , his passion and life came together to instigate a nexus of strategic sense of artistic excellence.

After this effort to know the artist, the next step will be to know his art. This is the reason why the next chapter of this study will focus on select films of Rituparno Ghosh . In doing so, it is intended to have a brief overview of these select films. Through this reading of Rituparno Ghosh’s select films , it is expected to have a look on his attributes as an auteur. Therefore in the next half of this chapter through a brief overview of Rituparno Ghosh’s select films a road will be mapped to move ahead with the artist and his art.
