



A scene from Ugly

The opening night film at the New York Indian Film Festival, *Ugly*, has dark and violent tones. It deals with the kidnapping of a little girl in Mumbai.

The film follows a similar track of Anurag Kashyap's earlier works like *Satya* - he wrote the script - *Black Friday* and *Gangs of Wasseypur*. The filmmaker spoke about his style of cinema after the screening.

I remember a few years ago at the Toronto film festival I was going to see a romantic film and you stopped me and suggested we should see a horror film...

Was it *I Saw the Devil*?

No that we watched one afternoon. It was a Spanish film...

Julia's Eyes.

Yes it was *Julia's Eyes*. It was an intriguing film, but my question is why are you drawn to those kinds of films?

I don't know, because when there is actual violence in front of me I can't see it.

Alfred Hitchcock spoke about his fears. When he was young, his father left him in a jail for one night. So as an adult he enjoyed scaring other people.

It's not that I enjoy it. I have a fascination for violence of all sorts, not just physical violence. If you look at it carefully, barring a few scenes in *Gangs of Wasseypur*, in all of my other films, the violence is always off screen.

You are tempted to violate the audience watching the film. That's the reason why I show off-screen violence, because I feel people need to wake up. Sometimes they need to be drawn in. They are very happy and content with the way things happen in the expected way.

A lot of people think violence is strong in my movies, but they aren't actually seeing it. They think they saw it. Even the beheading scene in *Wasseypur* is not there.

'I feel PEOPLE need to WAKE UP'

Anurag Kashyap, in conversation with Aseem Chhabra, on why onscreen violence fascinates him



Anurag Kashyap with New York Indian Film Festival director Aseem Chhabra.

The camera is behind the person and all you saw was his hands moving. But the

imagination makes the audience think they actually saw the beheading and they are

completely shaken by it. So they are watching it in their head.

But when you are writing your scripts and shooting is it actually fun, because you know you are playing with the audience's imagination?

I actually choreograph all my violence scenes and try to linger on and do longer takes. I try not to use it as a gimmick, where you cheat. Otherwise the cuts and the edits make it look exciting. And you see little kids imitating it. They all want to be heroes, wear a cape and throw things.

Martin Scorsese who is the messiah of violent films made a film like *Kundan* about the Dalai Lama.

He's actually like a child and his dream project, which he is making now - *Silence* is about a missionary who is persecuted in Taiwan. Scorsese was that kid on the block who would run away from violence.

Would you consider making a calm and quiet film?

The next film that I am writing is a very emotional one, a simple story about a father and a daughter.

Do you think we live in a violent society?

There hasn't been a single time when our society or the world hasn't been violent.

It was always like that. Centuries ago it was far worse. But we live in denial and I think sometimes it is important to address it in a serious way.

When the mob collects they always beat up the weakest. Each individual's rage in the mob comes from somewhere else. It is the same rage that brought people to the streets against the anti-corruption movement (*in India*).

But yet the fact is that no one in India will stand in a line.

India is the only country where people ask me how did you get into the movies? Did you know someone? Where does that question come from? No one wants to take the hard way.

And then we become so moralistic and self-righteous about the world is so corrupt. The morality and self-righteousness is killing us. We are the second most populated country in the world and we have such a problem with sex. We are a strange bunch of people.

The reason I ask these questions is because Bollywood always had a villain - Pran and Prem Chopra. But you wrote *Satya* and that was very real. It actually made us feel uneasy.

When it is black and white everyone says I am watching a film where the good will win over evil and I am good. But the moment there are situations in grey they are bothered by it. So whether it is Bhiku Mhatre or Bhau (*characters in Ram Gopal Varma's Satya*), each of them is vulnerable and has a darker side. Every character is good and is bad as well. As an audience member you can't take sides and you get very uncomfortable with that.

Your films *Shaitan*, *Peddlers* and *Monsoon Shootout* have crime and violence as the focus. There is an expression I use that there are children of Quentin Tarantino in India. His works became the inspiration for so many indie films in India. Am I right about that?