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Film actress Kitu Gidwani with child artist Roshan Bano after the screening of their film 'Swara Mandal' at Siri Fort in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Film maker assails official apathy

By Nikhat Kazmi
The Times of India News Service



NEW DELHI: Why was Rajan Khosa's film *Swara Mandal* screened in the Cinema of the World section at IFFI '98? The film, which is a sensitive documentation of the

in-built pressures of the Gurusishya parampara in the world of classical Indian music should logically have been a highlight in the Indian Panorama section. Yet it isn't. And herein lies the irony of official apathy.

According to the film maker, five years ago he was walking down the corridors of the various official agencies "with the script of *Swara Mandal* in one hand and a begging bowl in the other, looking for adequate finances." Naturally, nobody listened to him. "I was making my first film, with first time actors and on a subject which was perceived as too poetic," states Khosa. Undeterred, he went overseas, again with "the begging bowl" and his script. This time, he managed to find thirteen different sources in six different countries. The NFDC was the last to pitch in, according to the director.

Today, *Swara Mandal* returns to

India after having won a series of awards at London, Nantes, including the Best Actress award for Kitu Gidwani. At the forthcoming Rotterdam International Film Festival, it has been nominated for the Tiger Awards.

Forcefully condemning the official film policy, Khosa states: "Now they are putting me on a pedestal, when I am still talking about the same things: about Indian values and tradition." Moreover, the film which will be released in five countries next month has not been able to find a single distributor in India, despite the awards. "Will our bureaucrats ensure that at least one auditorium in the multiplexes - most of which are showing crap - is reserved for meaningful cinema," thunders Khosa. "It is time that people who want to do something meaningful in life push their way through the mediocrity or else we'll only be left with Macdonalds."

For Kitu Gidwani, who essays the role of the young singer who loses her voice after her guru's (her mother's) death, the film was a monumental experience. "I was actually trying to find my own voice as an actress," states Gidwani. For the intense role of Pallavi, the singer who almost loses everything in her life, the actress spent six months learning classical music.