

Entertainment

Filmmakers see potential in Canada

By MIKE BEGGS
Special

With films like her current hit *Water*, Toronto's Deepa Mehta has helped put Indo-Canadian filmmakers into the international limelight.

Meanwhile, in Mississauga, the tandem of Sam Mukherjee and Samita Nandy are striving to follow in her footsteps.

Mukherjee was a successful journalist in his native Calcutta, before moving here three years ago.



**Sam
Mukherjee**

In 2004, he became the first Asian to win the prestigious Full-Time Writing Award for Film and TV Scholarship at the famed Vancouver Film School.

Nandy is director of the local Premiere Cinematic Productions, a film and TV production company which works on feature films, documentaries and music videos.

This 28-year-old holds an MA in Communications and Culture/Broadcast Journalism from York University, and is also an instructor at the University of Toronto.

They first teamed together on the 2005 documentary *Frame By Frame: Tushar Unadkat*, which has received some international screening and recognition.

"We met through her artistic director (Tushar Unadkat). I'm (now) the script consultant here," Mukherjee said. "I look at Samita's approach as academic, to a great extent. My approach is I'm more of a street type. I think it's a good balance."

They're now working on the documentaries *East And West Enigma*, about China, and *Music Underground*, about TTC-licensed subway buskers.

"We know how popular music is identified with fashion and celebrity status, but these street art performers are part of our everyday life as well," Samita said, of the latter project. "They offer listening pleasure. It does play a significant role in everyday culture."

Mukherjee has already built a reputation as a screenwriter for film, and TV, and now he's also at work on two different novels. In fact, acclaimed Australian screenwriter, playwright and novelist Ray Mooney deems him to be, "one of the best I've ever worked with in screenwriting."

He and Nandy's longer-term goal is to produce a successful full-length feature film — despite the odds against independent Canadian movie-makers.

"It just takes one right break for you to get there," Mukherjee said.

And, while not dwelling on his Indo-Canadian roots, he observed that, "Ethnicity could be more than just a cottage industry (in Canada)."

Of East Indian descent, Nandy feels the Canadian film industry has, "a lot of potential."

"I think Canada has a knowledge-based economy, and if we can apply this knowledge, that could bring a pedagogical shift (in our culture, breaking away from the U.S.)," she added.