

'Only copy of Devdas rotting in Bangladesh'

A copy of Promothesh Barua's 'Devdas', made in 1934 and said to be the only copy existing, is in a bad shape in the Bangladesh Film Archives, its sound track erased and footage damaged, a newspaper reported Friday.

A prominent actor and director of his era, Barua directed and played the lead role in the 1934 version of 'Devdas', based on Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's novel.

'The print was in deplorable condition and even while giving full attention from only a few yards, the dialogues between Parbati and her husband were very difficult to follow,' the reporter wrote after viewing the classic.

'The sound has become inaudible and the film has become obscure. The projectionists struggled to raise the volume to almost no effect, still the dialogues could not be clearly heard,' said The Daily Star.

'The only print of the 1934 film is preserved in a room of a rented house of BFA at Mohammadpur in the capital at 26 degrees Celsius when the international standard is 12 degrees Celsius or less,' it said.

The film is among the 2,500-plus preserved in a rented house, where the Bangladesh Film Archives, founded in 1978, moved in after changing three locations.

The department is using outdated techniques and chemicals to preserve the films where employees 'check the films with bare hands', the report said.

The films are stored in tin cans that have got rusted, the only protection being the the scotch-taping on the cans.

'Mismanagement, preservers' apathy to carrying out duties, the absence of training, shortage of manpower, inadequate budget, and the absence of a permanent building have contributed over the years to bring the (Archives) to this sorry state,' said the report.

'Devdas' has had many versions in different languages since it was first made by Barua in 1934.

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