

SAMIR JANA



Harbinger of hope: Rohit Nahata (above) sends out a message of hope with his film *My True Self* (below), which was screened at Saturday Club on Friday

Call to follow one's heart

US filmmaker's venture asks people to believe in one's self, says Sudipto Shome

To define US filmmaker Rohit Nahata's debut feature film *My True Self*, screened at Saturday Club on January 4, as disturbing is an understatement. For a large part of its two-hours-and-ten-minutes, it seems too dark to withstand: Cancer is detected in a young man who finally dies.

However, the film also sends out a message of hope, which to some extent counters the negative feeling and also provokes one to ask oneself: Do we believe in what we are doing? As the filmmaker puts it, it tells the youth that it's never too late to follow one's heart. The movie asks people to believe in one's self.

"I think a lot of people



live life and have careers only as a means to an end. There are more gratifying ways to live," says Nahata. Almost instantly he adds, "Nothing that I have said is original. History and religion have said the same things over and again." *My*

True Self, in that sense, is a film with a strong philosophical content.

The film also takes veiled potshots at the materialistic pursuits of the youth. Set in Nahata's hometown of Louisville, in the US, it revolves around a 25-year-

old cancer patient, Ben Fields (Jerod Edington), who wants to make a difference to the world in the time he has left to live.

Fields tries to convince three of his friends to believe in their true selves and follow their instincts. Whether or not they accept Field's advice in the market-driven society is what the film is about. The emotional turmoil of the protagonist's parents is portrayed brilliantly by Ron McCoy and Erin Gray.

Nahata, who has done a course in television and film studies at California State University, thought of making this movie in 1998. He penned the script and over the years modified it, finally making the film,

which was funded by his brothers based in Kolkata, in 2006. "I wanted to show that one can be what one is even while pursuing one's passion," says Nahata, who has played Ben's friend Kipuri Jain in the film.

The 30-year-old knows that it's tough for an independent filmmaker in the US to go for a theatrical release of his film. However, he wants to show it to as many people as possible. He is also heavily counting on film festivals and screenings such as the one at Saturday Club. "It was the Indian premiere," he says. The audience at Friday's screening wasn't large but Nahata says that even a little feedback will help him.

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