

Published Date:	1 Oct 2026	Publication:	The Telegraph [Kolkata]
Journalist:	Sudeshna Banerjee	Page No:	7
MAV/CCM:	746,640/103.70	Circulation:	177,388

FILM

Universe on view

A centenary show brings together photographs, memorabilia, statistics and stories to explore Uttam Kumar and his cinematic journey

Uttam Kumar's centenary birthday may be over, but there is more to savour on the Mahanayak. A month-long show, titled *Guru: A Centenary Exhibition*, is underway at the Kolkata Centre for Creativity. "It takes time to put things together. We took that liberty, being the last mover, as it was important for us to get it right. The important thing is that we keep celebrating him through the year instead of just a week. This continuing conversation endorses the fact that we, as a city, want to continue to celebrate what he has given us for he has given us a lot," Richa Agarwal, chairperson of KCC, told t2.

A walk-through of the gallery provides a glimpse into the world of Uttam Kumar through photographs of candid moments, graphical representations of his co-actors, playback voices and composers, a year-by-year account of his output, statistical comparison with his contemporary leading men in Indian cinema, his filmography as actor, director and



Guru, the exhibition to mark Uttam Kumar's birth centenary, being inaugurated at Kolkata Centre for Creativity

producer, composer and playback singer – yes, he did record six songs for Nachiketa Ghosh in the film *Nabojonmo* – as well as a list of the variety of professions his characters pursued. There are objects on view too, from the collections of eight collectors belonging to the collective Kolkata Kathokatha. These include posters of films,

autographs of the legend as well as of his co-actors. There is also a cup and saucer, a suit and a chair used by him which have been shared by the family. "I have looked at Uttam Kumar decade by decade, placing him in context," said Trinankur Banerjee, the curator of the show. "The 1950s were a time for nation-building and the moral compass was high. He



Uttam Kumar's suit, a cup and saucer, and a telephone set loaned by the family



Trinankur Banerjee shows around the Uttam Kumar centenary exhibition curated by him at Kolkata Centre for Creativity. (Sudeshna Banerjee)

was playing roles like factory-floor manager, architect or artist. The 1960s were a period of introspection when people realised that there was not much progress, though the British had left. Uttam too was experiencing heights of success, like winning the newly instituted Best Actor National Award for *Anthony Firingee* and *Chhatrikhana*, and also plumbing the depths of despair on suffering the box-office failure of his production *Chhoti Mulaqat*." Trinankur also points out that among his seniors, Pramathesh Barua came from royal stock while Chhabi Biswas belonged to landed gentry. But unlike either of them, Uttam was trying to break into the



PC Sorcar Jr recalled how Uttam Kumar learnt several tricks from his father, PC Sorcar, a close friend. "We have a picture at home of Uttam Kumar showing magic to my father," he said. Poulami Chatterjee, seated next to him, also reminisced about her father Soumitra Chatterjee's relation with Uttam Kumar.

industry with no money or lineage. Uttam, in Trinankur's view, was a workhorse. He has created a bar chart comparing Uttam Kumar with his contemporaries – Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand. "In the seven years from 1954 to 1960, the others had only a fraction of the releases that the Bengali matinee idol had. There is a reason why he was called the Industry." It is this extraordinary body of work – and the many facets of the man behind it – that the exhibition seeks to revisit. The Uttam show continues till October 11 and is open from 11am to 7pm. Several events are planned for the last four days of the exhibition.

Sudeshna Banerjee
Pictures: B. Halder