



Vikramaditya Malla Dev and Dhruvo Banerjee at the main entrance of Jhargram Palace

‘Durgeshgor is an imaginary place, which is actually Jhargram’

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Last year, their treasure hunt took them to Manikantapur. And this time, the trio will be seen unearthing one of the greatest treasures of Bengal in Durgeshgor. We're talking about the latest sleuth of Bengali cinema — Sona Da (Abir Chatterjee). Accompanying him like last time will be his nephew, Abir (Arjun Chakrabarty), and his friend, Jhinuk (Ishaa Saha). Keeping with the series' theme of exploring the lesser-known chapters of Bengal's history, director Dhruvo Banerjee has chosen the historic Jhargram Palace to shoot Durgeshgorer Guptodhon.

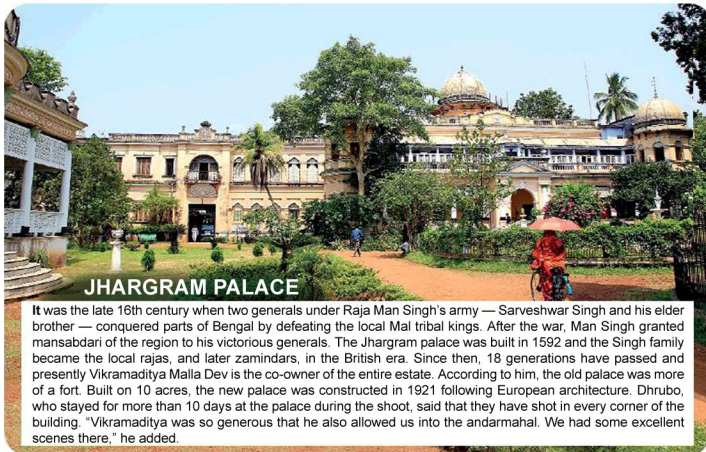
"I fell in love with Jhargram Palace on my very first visit — that was in July last year when I had come here for a recce of my film. So, what we've referred to as Durgeshgor in the film is an imaginary place, which is actually Jhargram. The second time I came here was in January for the shoot," said the director. However, he missed the opportunity to explore the beauty of the place on both the occasions due to his hectic schedule.



Abir, Ishaa and Arjun in Durgeshgorer Guptodhon. This shot was taken in the andarmahal

Besides his love for cooking and ad making, it is our state's rich history that Dhruvo is most fond of. That is what prompted him to create the character of Sona Da, a history professor from Oxford who returns to India. He is on a hunt for treasures only within the borders of Bengal. "There are so many untapped and virgin places in this state that it would take a lifetime for a person to see them all. Through my films, I want to show those places to the world," Dhruvo added. Considering this, Vikramaditya Malla Dev — the co-owner of Jhargram Palace — recently invited Dhruvo to spend a quiet day at his estate, a part of which has been turned into a heritage hotel. Despite the post-production pressure days before the release of his film, Dhruvo couldn't resist this offer. So, he happily accepted his friend's request and took CT along for an in-depth experience of Jhargram's historic wonders. Here are a few glimpses:

Jhargram is the real star of Durgeshgorer Guptodhon



JHARGRAM PALACE

It was the late 16th century when two generals under Raja Man Singh's army — Sarveshwar Singh and his elder brother — conquered parts of Bengal by defeating the local Mal tribal kings. After the war, Man Singh granted mansabdari of the region to his victorious generals. The Jhargram palace was built in 1592 and the Singh family became the local rajahs, and later zamindars, in the British era. Since then, 18 generations have passed and presently Vikramaditya Malla Dev is the co-owner of the entire estate. According to him, the old palace was more of a fort. Built on 10 acres, the new palace was constructed in 1921 following European architecture. Dhruvo, who stayed for more than 10 days at the palace during the shoot, said that they have shot in every corner of the building. "Vikramaditya was so generous that he also allowed us into the andarmahal. We had some excellent scenes there," he added.



ANDARMAHAL

In the past, important visitors used to wait here before entering the main chamber. "Besides, the first rice ceremony of every child in the family takes place here. After feeding him, the child is given a pen and then a sword. This has been a family tradition for more than 300 years," Vikramaditya said. Dhruvo was interested in the place to shoot a couple of scenes because this would be the first time the andarmahal will be seen in a film. "After a couple of bad experiences, the Singh family stopped renting the place for shooting. However, they made an exception for us and I'm glad they did," Dhruvo said.

THE SETS



In the film, Jhargram has been shown as Durgeshgor — an imaginary place. To make it look convincing, Dhruvo and his team made numerous sets in the area. After the shoot, those sets are now being used by the locals. For instance, this shade was used as a prop of the film and now it is used as a prominent adda joint by the locals.



An old transistor radio

ROYAL FOOD

Guests are served a meal called the rajokiyothali. Along with postor bora, the main attraction is the desi chicken. "We have another thali called the shahi thali, which includes biryani and several kebabs," said Vikramaditya, adding that these thalis are served to guests on special orders. A foodie as well as a good cook, Dhruvo was more than happy to get a platter like this. "Food plays an important part in Durgeshgorer Guptodhon because Abir (Arjun Chakrabarty) has been shown as a foodie. During the shoot, we literally survived on desi chicken. The situation was such that the local chickens would run away on seeing our unit members!" Dhruvo said.



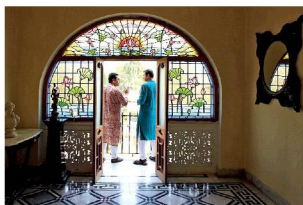
STATE GUEST HOUSE

After the new palace was constructed, Raja Narasingha Malla Dev felt the need of a guest house, where he could house and entertain his British guests. "So, in 1922, this outhouse was made in Indo-Saracenic style. "The walls have handmade murals and there is also a very old gramophone set," Vikram said. In the film, when Sona Da (Abir Chatterjee) comes to Durgeshgor with Abir (Arjun Chakrabarty) and Jhinuk (Ishaa Saha), they stay here. "This guest house is extensively shown in the film and has some brilliant sequences," Dhruvo added.



KALACHAND TEMPLE

This temple and the palace belonged to the Dhal rajahs of the past. "This temple and palace have been shown in the film. This is the temple of Lord Krishna, who is worshipped as 'Kalachand' among the tribals. In the film, we have shown this as the temple of Kalachand himself," said Dhruvo.



THE BALCONY

This balcony was mostly used by the raja of the time to see his people. During a festival, when a large crowd would gather, the raja would go to the balcony and wave to the crowd. "Besides, when an important announcement was to be made, the raja would do it from here," said Vikramaditya, adding that all the stained glass was brought from Belgium. In the film, a couple of shots were taken from here. "A prominent one is when the villain stands here and secretly looks at something very important. We used different camera angles to capture the mood," Dhruvo said.