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Indian Express

Patwardhan files writ plea against Doordarshan

By Our Law Reporter

Mr. Justice S.P. Kurdukar at the Bombay High Court admitted a writ petition filed by Anand Patwardhan, a producer of documentary films, against Gopi Saksena, Controller of Programmes, Directorate General, Doordarshan and the Union of India, challenging an order dated April 3, 1987 stating that it had not been found possible for Doordarshan to make use of the petitioner's Gold Medal award winner documentary entitled "Bombay: Our City" (Hamara Shaher).

The documentary had won three awards, namely, the best non-feature film, 1986, Filmfare Award, 1986 and Cinema Du Real Award of 1986. The film had been given a "U" Certificate. The decision of the Doordarshan authorities did not give reasons why they had decided not to telecast the film.

The citation for national award of President's Gold Medal for the best documentary said that it was for the film's deep concern for the problems of the urban slums and the courageous presentation of the theme in an objective manner. The film was sent abroad for film festivals, but the Government of India thought that it could not be screened to its own citizens.

The petitioner submitted that the respondents had rejected his documentary with no real criteria and reasonable guidelines, and he had not been treated on par with others whose documentaries and/or films were screened by the respondents. The petitioner urged that he had been denied freedom of expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, and he had been denied an opportunity to screen his film on Doordarshan inasmuch as his views on socio-economic issues differed from the views of the respondents.

Mr. Justice Kurdukar admitted the petition and ordered the hearing to be expedited.

Mr. P.A. Sebastian appeared for the petitioner.

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