

Offensive, but not worth a protest

Deepak Prahladka
Kolkata, January 2

THEY WENT to the theatres, they saw the film but never expected it to conquer their hearts. It did not, but Parsis have still decided not to move court against *Alexander* — not because they liked the film, but because they disliked it so much that they feel it doesn't even deserve a protest.

A city-based Parsi, Shreyar Katrak, had sent legal notices to the chief minister, Union ministry of information & broadcasting and the Central Board of Film Certification and Warner Brothers, threatening legal action if the Colin Farrell-starrer was not banned.

The censor bosses, however, ignored the demands and the film was released on schedule. The Parsis then decided to be their own critics and watch the film. They then agreed that the misuse of a Parsi emblem, farohar, in the film had indeed hurt the sentiments of the community but protests would only give the film more publicity.

"I personally did not like the film and we (the lawyers) decided that any further legal action against it would work in favour of a film that is just not worth it,



A still from Oliver Stone's *Alexander*. Parsis agree with critics that it is a dud.

especially when it has received a disastrous C rating from most critics. Taking any legal action would merely enhance the saleability of the movie," said

advocate Phiroze Edulji, himself a Parsi.

Entrepreneur Homyar Kutar, who was among the group of Parsis that watched the film, said:

"The Romans considered owls unlucky, creatures that predict death or disaster with their hooting. In Farsi, owl is called *joghde-kocheh* and it is believed that

these birds bring bad luck. The film shows an owl emerging from the farohar when Alexander is dying. This is condescending to our faith." Ex-serviceman Hormuz Bulsara too criticised the use of the farohar in the opening scene.

Nauzer Batlivala, also an entrepreneur, said that to Zoroastrians, Alexander is *guzastag* or the accursed. "I have personally been to Persopolis and seen the destruction caused by Alexander. It brought tears to my eyes."

"Alexander's soldiers plundered temples and sanctuaries, destroyed religious texts and massacred the priests. At the end of his four-month-stay in the magnificent royal city of Persopolis, built by Darius the Great, he burnt the city in a drunken orgy. He threw the first torch himself," said Anahita Bilimoria.

It's not the Parsis alone who have rated the film poorly. Farrel and Angelina Jolie have failed to score with the critics too. James Berardinelli of Reel Views describes Alexander as "a three-hour miscalculation" that lacks mass appeal. Peter Travers finds it too grandiose while *New York Times* finds the writing "puerile" and the plot "confused".