



ISSUE: 10, October - December 2015

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CINEMATOGRAPHY ART

a quarterly Magazine

Rajesh Bedi

Photo Feature

**Harshvardhan
Kulkarni**

**Sriram
Raghavan**

Film Director

Sachin Krishn

Exclusive Interview with
Veteran Cinematographer

Supratik Sen

Script Writer,
Kai Po Che!

Sivdas

Sound Designer
PAR EXCELLENCE

**Om Prakash
Mittal**

Film Distributor

ANUSHKA RANJAN

"Wedding Pullav"

Directed by: Binod Pradhan

DOP: Gopal Shah

NSD

Theatre Productions

Interviews with Raj Bisaria,
Rukmini Sircar, Jin Baishya, Annu Soni

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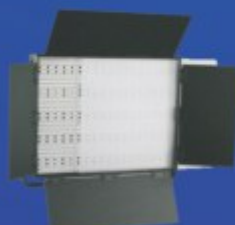
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Editor's Desk



Dear Readers,

The current issue carries a variety of articles and photo features. Firstly, wild life photographer Rajesh Bedi's exhibition at India Habitat Centre was truly a visual delight. This issue features selected images from that exhibition which will enable us to have the glimpses of Rajesh's work on elephants.

Secondly, it was quite an interesting experience to watch Sriram Raghavan's latest film again before conducting a detailed interview with him. One can easily notice interesting ways in which he plays with the dialogues. Young directors have always found space in this magazine. By continuing that tradition, we have interviews with the new breed of directors namely Harshwardhan Kulkarni whose maiden work 'Huntern' blends erotic sensibilities without being vulgar. There is also filmfare award winning screenwriter Supratik Sen reflecting upon 'Kai Po che!'.

Technical aspect of the cinema is represented through an interview with "Location sound recording" Expert Sivdas K who has worked on location sound recording for 3 decades. Sachin discuss in detail the art of writing with light.

Newcomers are ensured their share of space on a priority basis. This current issue gives its readers a chance to get insights about newcomer Anushka Ranjan who is making her feature film debut with "Wedding Pullav".

The work of NSD students has always fascinated me. The current issue carries interviews with young talented actors who have mesmerized the audiences with their performances in 'Bitter Fruit' and 'Shakuntala' directed by two theater stalwarts Neelam Mansingh and Rita Ganguly.

There is always a thought of reducing space for NSD productions in my mind but enchanting images captured by talented photographer Thyagarajan could never let that happen. His photos deserve to be blown up. Each production deserves photo features worth 5-6 pages. Lastly, I wish that one day I would be able to start an exclusive magazine devoted solely to theater.

Cheers!!

Naresh Sharma

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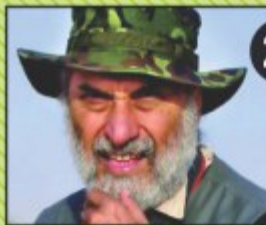
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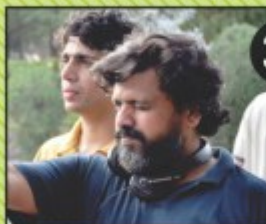
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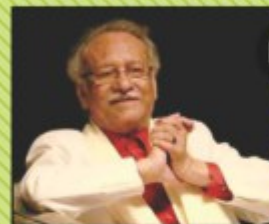
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Interview with Anushka Ranjan

Anushka Ranjan, who will be debuting in Ace cinematographer Binod Pradhan's directorial debut *Wedding Pullav*, was initially supposed to be launched by Sajid Nadiadwala. He had made the announcement in the *Bombay Times* but then before the film could start Sajid got the dates of Salman Khan for kick and rest as they say is history.

Not wanting to let any more time pass by, her father the famous TV entrepreneur Shahshi Ranjan decided to launch her in his home production *Wedding Pullav*.

The almost 5.10 inches tall and sharp featured debutant, started her career from Modeling and has walked ramp for all the top lining agencies. Friends with all the star kids and part of industry, Anushka's entry into film industry has been but just a matter of time.

What was your reaction when you first heard about your character in the forthcoming film "Wedding Pullav" ?

When I first heard about my character I didn't know if I was doing this film or if this was a character I was supposed to play. This was exciting because it was something I could really relate to. It is something which I knew. If given a chance to play I would have done a real good job of it. I began by giving a lot of feedback to my dad when he was just talking about this character with me. I asked him how she should do it, how she should react and how her attitude should be. I was kind of really enthusiastic about it. Finally, the day on which I got to know about it that it is me I tried my level best to add whatever extra I could add to that character. When people watch the film, they

will see that it doesn't look like as if I pretended to be someone. It is actually somebody I feel I am.

Tell us more about your character in the film and what is the story line ?

The character that I am playing is called Anushka. She is an exaggerated version of me. She is a very happy girl, a very friendly and funny person. She likes to crack jokes, pull her friends' legs and everything. She is always messing around with her friends. She is a very emotional and very enthusiastic about life as a whole. She is in love with her fiancée and everything she does, she does it from her heart. She does it to maximum capacity. She is a very independent girl who takes her own decisions. At the same time she is very family oriented person. She is in love with her

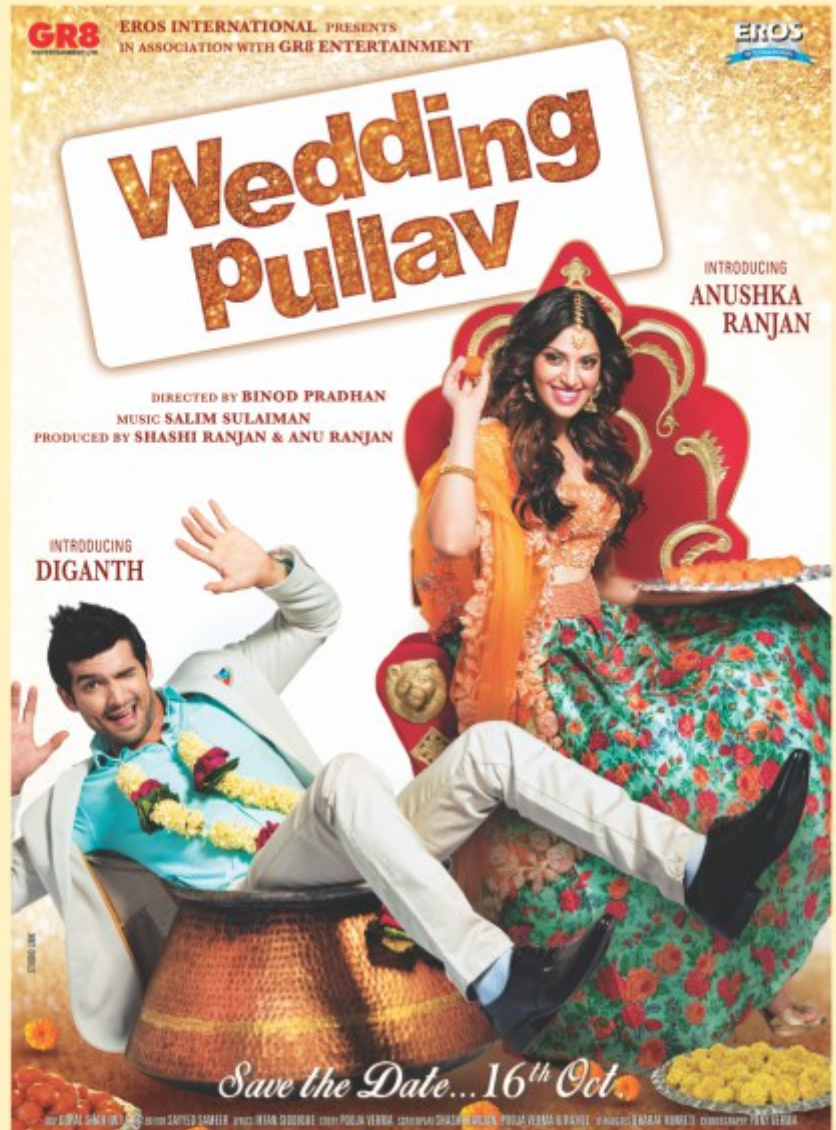
grandparents, grand-mother. This is something which is very relatable and a very 'contemporary Indian girl' kind of character. Anybody who watches the film will say : "Yes. This is how I am or my daughter is or my sister is or my girl friend is."

To which genre does the film "Wedding Pullav" belong ? Comedy/romance/family drama. Do you think that this genre would appeal in today's times?

I think that a romantic comedy is always welcome in a country like India. We Indians love happy films as we always like to walk out of a film happy. We enjoy the songs a lot. Obviously, I have always done so. I know people who talk about the fact that in the recent past there hasn't been any out and out romantic comedies which your Dharma and Yash Raj used to make. One of those romantic comedies that you have always loved watching. You love the songs, you love the colors. This is what this film is trying to give to audiences. It is giving a little bit of everything which hasn't been around for a while. I think that everyone is really going to enjoy.

Did you receive any 'training in acting' from some professional acting trainer or acting school in India or abroad?

Yes. I have received training in acting. I have done my training from Anupam Kher Actor Prepares academy. I have done my diction with Roshan Taneja. My father has an acting school called ITA school of performing Arts. I have done a course over there. Moreover, I have always been inclined towards dancing. This is the reason why I







have done Kathak. I have done Bollywood dance. I think that Kathak was a really good help in the performance because in Kathak one expresses a lot from the face while you're dancing.

How did you prepare yourself for the role in the movie?

I had to prepare as I am not so emotional. I don't cry so easily, I don't get upset so easily. I worked on those things. It was a fun experience. I had a good time doing the film.

In Indian movies, most heroines are there only as "Glamour Dolls". How different then is your character in this movie?

Once you see the film you will realize that I am not at all glamorous in the film. There are places obviously where I have put makeup and hair as at the end of the day it is a wedding (Shaadi) film. But for most part in the film, I have kept it very casual, very chilled out look like jeans and loose t-

shirts, boots and stuff. This is done as we didn't want to make it appear so unrealistic. We wanted to keep it little more real. In a day when I am chilling out with my friends, I am not going to be wearing a shimmery top or tight short-skirts and heels. I have stuck to that concept that okay, I am chilling out with my friends, I am out, I will wear a loose t-shirt and jeans. I have kept it casual but cool. I am hoping that everyone will enjoy this look and relate to it. A lot of times, the clothes of a character become famous to end up becoming the trend. Hopefully, this will be the case.

What was your chemistry with your co-star Dignath, who is comparatively more experienced in facing the camera?

Dignath is much more experienced than me. He has done something like 15 films in south Indian film industry and may be more. He is a very good and natural actor. To be very honest, he is a very sweet person. When I was working with him I felt really nice because we

had a good chemistry. We gelled well to become really good friends at the same time. He was really helpful if there was any part in which I was getting stuck or if I didn't know how to perform a certain scene or a dialog. He would always sit with me. He would work on the scene with me. We would run through lines. At no point of time did he give me the feeling that I am the more experienced actor. He is always very down to earth. This is my first time on screen, for first time I was facing the camera. I needed some people around me who would make me comfortable and not make it uncomfortable for me because then even my performance gets hampered over there. For this reason, I think it was really great that I got a chance to work with Dignath and I am really happy about it.

In the film "Wedding Pullav", there are veteran actors like Rishi Kapoor and Satish Kaushik. Working with them is as much a learning experience as a challenge. How was your experience working with them?



It was definitely a learning experience. Satish Ji is very sweet, very nice. He has always been very fond of me and very supportive to. It really means a lot to me that I got to work with him in my first film itself as it gave a very family feeling. Rishi Ji was very professional. He was very nice as a guide. Whenever I had a scene with him and in any scene where I got stuck here and there, he would sit with me and calm me down. He told me not to get nervous because obviously I was working with someone much senior to me and I don't want to waste his time. I didn't want to stretch the time due to my mistake but still he would tell me "take your time, do it correctly". It was really nice to work with these people. For some people it takes a life time to work with such great experienced veteran actors. To my luck, I am grateful to god that I got a chance to work with all of them in my first film.

Binod Pradhan being a veteran

DOP has worked with best directors in the country. How did he support you to get the best out of you?

Binod sir is a very accommodating person as he will never ever make you feel that he is such an experienced technician. We were new actors and he never had that attitude with us. He was so sweet and was more of a friend to us. He used to hang out with us on the set, joke around. It felt really nice and he gave us the liberty to act in the manner we felt like acting. He never said that my camera is here, lighting is here and I want you to walk from this point to that

point. He will make you do what you want and wherever he could accommodate us he would do that. It was a great experience working with him. I have always liked him from day one. He is really sweet and supportive and loving towards me. This is the best thing I could have ever asked from the director.

Do you remember any particular scene in the film which was challenging for you as an actress?

To be honest with you, there wasn't really any scene which was a challenge



for me as an actress. There was a line or a word where I used to get stuck. I used to run out of expressions which were given to me but I don't think that there was any such scene where I was finding it very difficult to perform. Hopefully what I believe is that it is all looking good and it is actually looking good. I hope people like it.

How helpful was your father's (Shashi Ranjan) experience as an actor-director to shape you as an actress?

He has always been my biggest critic. He has never been a normal dad who says that whatever you do is always correct and fine. He always points out my mistakes and sometimes can be over critical but I guess it has worked in my favor for this project and may be in future as well. He would push me harder

and harder than anyone else so that I would get the best that I could. He is a very experienced person. It was nice to learn things from him. He has been very kind to me and generous. What he has done is something which many parents cannot do for their children and I am very grateful to him for that.

Four to five films are getting released on 16th October but no big star cast film is scheduled for that date. How will it affect the fortunes of your film ?

Honestly, I don't feel that it is going to affect our film because there is only one other film releasing with us which is an adult comedy. Our film is the only one which is out and out family comedy. It is something that everyone could enjoy. Just because we are newcomers

doesn't mean anything as we have other big actors in our film who have been in films since many years. People love them and enjoy their work. Our film has been shot beautifully and music is our biggest USP. We have great music by Salim- Sulaiman. This is something which other film don't have in their favor. I feel that there is nothing as competition. The only thing is that public will decide. I have no fear of other film releasing before or after or with us as we know that we have worked hard. The product is good is found when people will watch the film. They will walk out happy and there won't be any comparison as such.

Do you think that the film will work only for multiplex cinemas or also for single screens ?

I think it will work both ways as it is

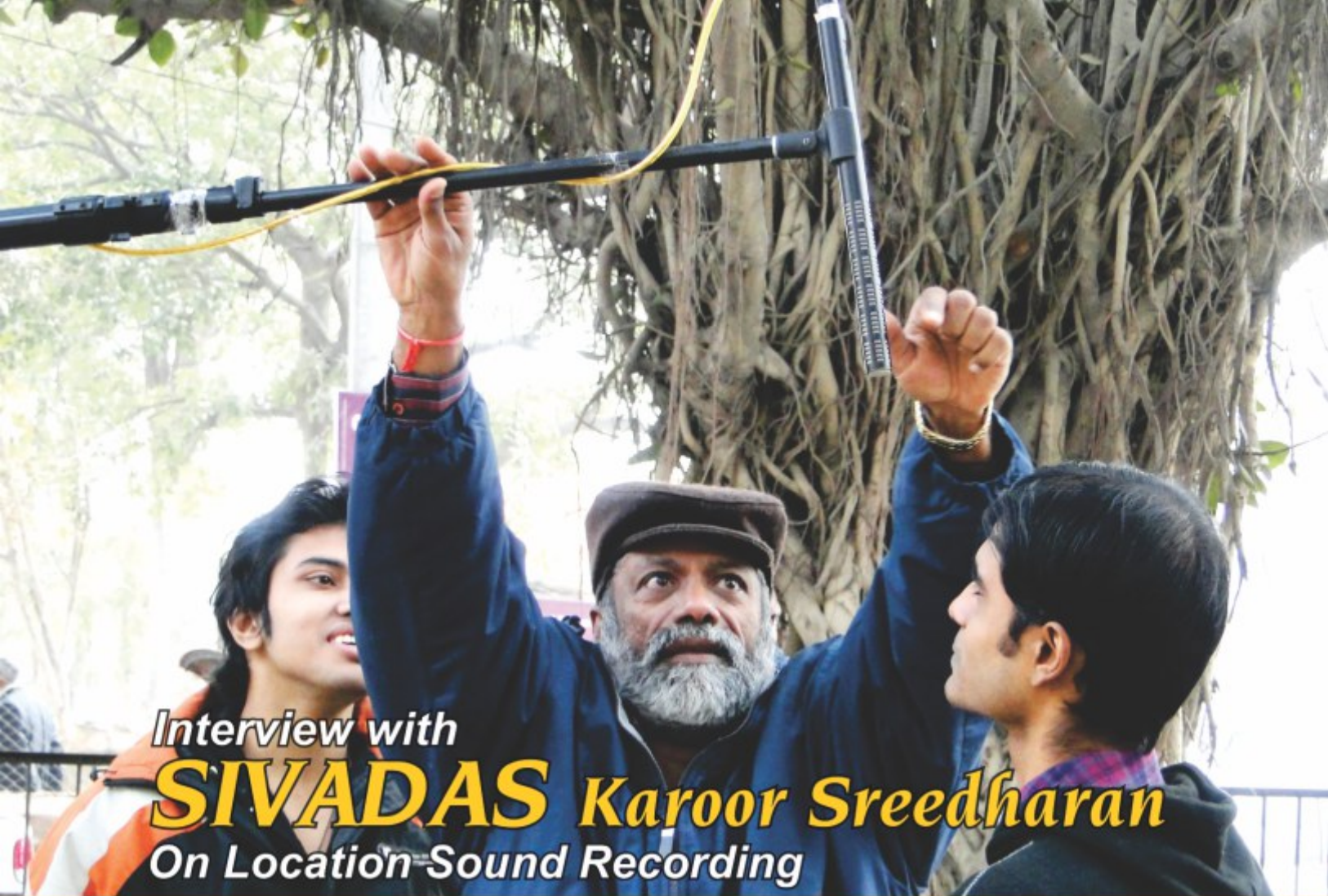


a family film and all families cannot afford to go to multiplexes. There are a lot of families which will relate to the story. It doesn't attract one kind of audience. It goes for every kind of audience in this country because it is about wedding (Shaadi) and it is a big deal in India. One doesn't have to be rich or poor as it doesn't really matter. Even on single screens there are a lot of people who go with their family, people who have worked for the whole week and only get weekend to spend with their family. Even the public which goes to multiplexes will enjoy our film because it is a wedding film. You one knows that one cannot go wrong with a wedding film. I am hoping that we will get good response from both single screens as well as multiplexes.

Which two historical "women characters" would you like to portray in a movie and "two Indian directors" with whom you aspire to work ?

I would like to portray Bandit queen and Umrao Jaan. I would like to work with many directors but to name a few it will be Karan Johar and Sanjay Leela Bhansali. I am hoping to work with them pretty soon. □□□





Interview with **SIVADAS** Karoor Sreedharan On Location Sound Recording

A versatile Sound Recordist/Engineer/also independent Producer, equally at home on Location or in a Post production Studio, with 3 decades of Experience in both Broadcast Television and Independent Film and Video production.

Graduated from the Film & Television Institute of India,Pune and having Varied Experience that covers almost all fields of Sound Recording [Both Location & Studio, Features & Documentaries, Post production, Audio visual Equipment Installations, Multi camera set ups, Music, performing Arts of all kinds, Live shows, Consultancy with Live Music Bands].Long Association with the Press Trust of India[P T I] Television ,The National Geographic channel, History Channel [famous Lost world series], The Discovery channel for many of their Projects. Some of his other noted projects are, Feature films " Dhanna"-1997 [2 National Awards], "Kayataran"-2004 [Indian Panorama,IFFI,Goa-2004] , "Dominos effect",a UK/Holland joint venture---2009, "Delhi in a day' [IFFI,Goa,2011] "Gattu"-2012 [official Indian entry to 62nd Berlin Film festival,2012] , "Scooter"-2013 and Documentaries "Bombay Hamara shahar" , "Shelter" , " Limit to freedom" , "Clown and the Dog" [National & International Award winners], " Update", "Taal Mel" [Best Sound Design--Onida pinnacle Awards-1995 & 96]. Film critic **Lalit Rao** (FIPRESCI) discusses his approach and vision in this interview.

Sound is an integral part of Film making as we all know, can be felt in it's absence. To achieve the right Sounds in a Film ,is the most difficult job of a Sound Recordist /Designer whichever way you may call one. Sound Recording, I would say is the toughest part of Film making in comparison to other fields like Cinematography, Direction or Production. To get the right balance between the dialogues and the ambient Sounds that accompany it, one has to put in real effort with a lot of patience. This is where the Location Recording becomes really challenging and satisfying.

Others may disagree with me, but I strongly feel the same because in a given



set up, of a field on a Location, one can always control the crowd from not getting into the Frame, even if you have a Laxman Rekha for them, to make them quiet is near impossible. So a Sound Recordist's job on Location is really challenging physically and mentally. The important thing to keep in mind before

planning for a Synch shoot on Location is \therefore the kind of Location--is it viable? ie.the Noise level at the Location.If it is beyond control, there is no point attempting Synch Sound.Better have a word with the Producer & the Director. If one is satisfied with say about 80% of the chosen Locations which are less Noisy,

then go ahead with the idea of doing Synch Sound.

It is generally very difficult to find suitable sound friendly Locations in India.It finally boils down to Mix & Match of the types of Microphones used---Usually one operates with a few Boom Mics[Sennheiser 816, 416] and cordless Lapel Mics.We also have to make sure to pick enough Room Tones at different times of the day from the Locations so as to cleanup the dialogue Tracks lateron in the Post production. The Location Ambient Sounds to support & establish the place should also be recorded separately. This is where Recording for Television, be it Fiction or Documentary is considered much simpler as here the range of the reproduced sounds are not as much as in the case of Film Recording. You have to keep in mind the signal to noise ratio.

I personally feel that working in Television gives you an opportunity to Record everything as the Camera starts Rolling. Sound is also recorded





simultaneously, be it good or bad at least you have something on Audio. In Films we record Sounds separately and discretely and since they are not in Synch, you have to maintain a proper cue sheet and that becomes cumbersome. You need to be selective otherwise it can drive you mad during Post production.

When you Record Sounds on Location for Documentaries, you have left with no option but to get best possible Sounds with minimum unwanted Ambient noise which is acceptable to the Listeners. It is not the case in Fiction as we need to achieve the best possible quality in the Dialogues with nil or minimum ambient noise. When using the Cordless Lapels in concealed Miking, you need to be extremely cautious to avoid the unwanted rustling sounds because of the fabric used in the dress material.

I had long back in 1997, before one really started talking about Synch Recording, did a Feature film " Dhanna", that was shot completely in Synch and on 16 mm.

Those days the cordless Mics were not really in use. The location was a village near Satna in Madhya Pradesh. I had the advantage of having a remote location which was less noisy. The whole shoot was done with one Sennheiser 816 with a long Boom rod. Since the Final sound had to be married to the 16 mm film, I had to do lots of work to compensate the High Frequency losses

at the optical Transfer. I did pick lots & lots of possible ambient sounds from the Location.

Then in 2003, I was offered to do Synch sound for a feature film " Kaya taran" for a Superior & colleague of mine from PTI. I jumped at the chance & finally to know that we will be shooting with an Arri 435 camera [no blimp] instead of an Arri 535 camera [blimped]. We had to do a sequence at the Press club of India

which could not have possibly dubbed. I was a bit worried about the camera noise but the Location itself took care of it as we all know the press club in the evening is generally noisy. We could pull through. Though the rest of the film was dubbed, I could really collect lots of Ambient Sounds & Specific SFX for the film.

Then came a Feature film offer in 2010 " Delhi in a day" that was entirely shot in Synch with a Canon 5 D camera and a ZOOM H4n handy digital Recorder. Again I had lots of problems getting used to the unfriendly Locations of Chattarpur farms, Delhi. It was partly shot during the monsoon and was so difficult to control the indoor shoots. Again for my other Films "Gattu" & Scooter, the locations were so noisy, the first was in Roorkee & the later in Aligarh near the noisy University area. Gattu was somehow manageable but Scooter was a nightmare. I do not know how I came out of it.

So take a stern stand. Synch or no Synch. Good location, go ahead, if not, no to Synch. No Compromise.



Interview with

Supratik Sen



Originally from Delhi, Supratik Sen is an alumnus of Hindu College with a Master's specialization in Mass Communication from MCRC, Jamia Milia Islamia.

He has had a prolific run in feature films as a writer and associate director. Starting from *Maqbool*, he assisted auteur director Vishal Bhardwaj over many years, through *Blue Umbrella* and *Omkara*.

Supratik wrote his first screenplay for Vishal in the year 2008 which culminated in the film, *Kaminey*, which he was also the Associate Director on. He also co wrote the screenplay for the Vishal Bhardwaj helmed short, *Blood Brothers*, a joint collaboration between Mira Nair's production house and the Bill Gates Foundation.

Additionally, Supratik has co written the screenplays of *Kai Po Che* and *Fitoor*, both projects helmed by National award winning director Abhishek Kapoor.

Both *Kai Po Che* and *Kaminey*, were feted by many award committees and widely heralded as critical successes amongst that year's releases.

Film critic **Lalit Rao** (FIPRESCI) discusses his approach and vision in this interview.

How much of the novel should one retain in the script? Can you discuss in context to "Kai Po Che!"

In screenplay adaptation of any book, the most important thing is to read the book and throw it out of the window. Unless you make some nuts and bolts changes to the material and kind of re-imagine it, there is not so much fun. So it is important to re-interpret the classic play around with the milieu and backdrop without losing any essence of the original work. Also, a book is exhaustive and has myriad characters and sub plots, it is important that you make a check list of the important events in the book, and then try and collapse that into a gripping two hour movie. A book you can read at night, then go to office, come back next night again and its still waiting for you. You can take breaks like that. When you are watching a movie, you have to watch in a continuous stream, so it has to be very densely plotted. Your attention can't slack. You have to take the important things, the big things and package them in an economical way, which is why I keep saying, focus on the big things, the big themes of the movie. For example friendship between the three friends is a theme or the simmering political backdrop of Gujarat is the theme or mentorship is a theme like Ishaan is a mentor to the little boy. But at the same time, don't compromise on character development. Character is everything.

Can you talk about the magical scene, where Shop opening and the business flourishing and so



many things are happening in a rapid montage.

Occasionally, in a song, you will see a whole relationship develop or a big story event transpire in seconds, because that is the idiom of popular Hindi cinema.

In Hindi cinema the format is such that you have to pack in so much in so little time so that's why the montages comes in handy. Sometimes those are the tricks the director or writer has to adopt so that the story telling doesn't slow down. Like in *Kai Po Che!*, I remember there was so much happening and you know it's a story about aspirational modern India, this "can do" attitude of the youth entrepreneurship so it tells lot about how India also sees itself now. In a sense there were so many themes – the opening up of the economy, the riots,

the earthquake, the cricket series- so actually it was bit of a challenge and I think a lot of credit also goes to the co-writer Pubali Chaudhuri, to be able to compress a lot of the themes into a 2 hour movie which people can enjoy as well as find credible. Not larger than life.

The flag used by the radical Hindu Group reminded me of Hitler's logo. Was it an inspiration or it was already there in the book? How much of the real time politics of the time influenced your script?

Right from the outset, the director, Abhishek Kapoor, never intended to make a very political film. His interest was always in the story of the three young boys. We didn't want to tiptoe around the real events but at the same time, we knew it is difficult to make realistic cinema in this country especially in the commercial format, and deal with

overtly political themes. I thought some of the controversial things or which could have become controversial were handled very craftily.

So in that way, *Kai Po Che!* was an achievement as it could blend artistic sensibilities with a mainstream language.

How did you go about selecting the actors for " Kai poche"?

I think filmmaking is such a collaborative process and everyone comes in with their own inputs, making it such a rich experience. Writing a good story is just a beginning of it. The most important thing when you go out and make films, always remember to choose a good "crew and cast". They'll make you look good. Like for this film, I remember we went to all the well known A listers but thankfully they were not inclined or



did not have the time to do the film . So we selected 3 hungry actors who went out of their way and gave it their best. There were so hungry that they were just dying to go and show off their acting chops.

How did you write or set up Scenes? What is the trick to writing a 'satisfying' scene?

Like if you take the first scene where Omi's character is introduced, the guys are watching cricket, so you convey that they are cricket bugs and Ishaan is the boss of the gang, Omi is his right hand, you can make out just from the way he is sitting and parroting whatever Ishaan's saying..how another friend, Govi who is the business head is getting a cheque signed. Ishaan's father is grumbling about how such a wastrel he is, Ishaan's sister is this coquettish young girl, on the cusp of new dreams. So in one scene, you setup 5 characters. That is the beauty of writing and when you can do that, you get a real high. I mean, u know that you are catching their lives from the middle and that is what is so effective.

Can you also talk about the element of surprise like the conversation in the car but they are actually in a trailer, carrying new cars?

That scene works because of the reveal in the end that they are just sitting in the truck which is carrying the cars from the factory. It shows that they cannot actually afford a car but want to own one desperately, putting in place the theme of the movie. When the film begins in the present, Govind is driving a similar swanky car. He's finally 'made' it. He wanted to get out of his neighborhood and move up in life the



the past between the three friends when they fool around in the stationary car. So in this scene there are two things that are happening- one which you can



see and one which you cannot see but hear and feel. In their thoughts. In their eyes. If you can manage that in that every scene, then you are well on your way towards a gripping, tight story.

Are you ever worried that something you wrote was so subtle, that people won't understand?

Subtle is not my problem. I am always worried about excess. Personally I NEVER want to spoon-feed the audience. I know directors and producers worry sometimes because it's their money and reputation on the stake. Like sometimes we are told that keep the beginning of the movie and the post interval bits light and breezy, because the audience comes in late and needs time to settle down. But that is not the way to make movies. Its your work- it has to be great from scene 1 to 100. It cannot start getting into gear from scene 3 or scene 5 just because it takes time for the audience to settle.

The dialogues in the movie were written by a dialogue writer or were you a part of the dialogue writing process as well?

I did most of the dialogues. There was a bit of indicative dialogue in English but the flavor and nuances had to be brought in to make all these three



characters sound distinct. Like Ishaan was the leader of the group, Omi looks up to Ishaan, Govind was the businessman or the sane head of the group. So you have to follow their arcs. Basically, Ishaan should not sound like Omi and Omi should not sound like Govi.

In the entire film the boy hasn't spoken except at a point where he says "bhaiya" so was that a deliberate attempt?

Not really. That's how the character of the diffident, quiet boy from the ghetto, Ali, was conceptualized. Ishaan would make his personality flower so he was supposed to be in his own shell. It worked to our advantage, honestly as I don't think people write children characters very well here. Because we were children a very long back, we've lost some of that purity, wonderment and innocence. Which is why child characters in Hindi movies come across as bratty and precocious. Ali's talent, his skill was as a cricketer. As long as his bat was talking, he did not need to.

How do you cover all the things in a book in a 100 page script?

Writing a script is often all about editing. Every round of edit is called a draft. Sometimes films take up to 10 to 15 drafts. You keep chiseling it till all extra information and repetition of ideas is done away with. For example, in the

kai po che

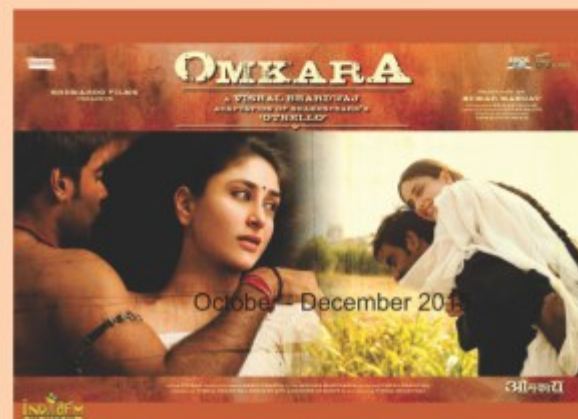
Brothers...For life.



beginning of the film, the fact that Govind is ambitious and want to get rich quick, was written out in three lengthy scenes- one with friends, one with his mother and one with another business guy, whereas now you know that about Govind, in the first scene that you meet him. Which is why we say writing and re-writing is so important. When you first write something you feel everything is important but when you rewrite the scenes only then will you understand what is important and what is not. And this is called smart writing, economical writing and crisp writing.

To what extent does a script writer have to explain the script to the director? At what point does he surrender to the director's vision?

Important Films of Supratik Sen





Nowadays every director wants to be the writer or at least co-write, so most often than not, they sit on the writing session. Which also helps because time is not wasted and if the director does not like something, we address it right there as he is on the same table. There are lots of things which a director won't like and then you have to fight for it, of course you won't always win but if you play smart and stick to your guns, he will understand. To be fair to the directors, writers tend to get very attached to their material and get rigid it but you should hear him out see what is point of view is and if your point of view is stronger than you convince him, or live long enough to see him convince you. But never leave the room. If you leave the room, you've already lost.

Was Chetan Bhagat comfortable with the changes or were there any blazing arguments on the script?

I don't think there was any trouble

at all. He was very open to suggestions. Also Chetan being the smart guy that he is, realizes that book writing is one thing and film-making is another thing. He always trusted the co writers and never tried to put his foot down. He had burnt his hands with some of the previous adaptations. So I think in this film he came with a different approach that helped us all because the atmosphere was very open and democratic.

What are the challenges between adapting a book a play or writing something from scratch?

I think the biggest challenge is when you have an empty page staring at you. I think it is easier if there is a book or a play you can adapt. I mean not less challenging but easier for sure. From a very practical point of view, it is always easier if someone has done the groundwork and you just have to build on the structure. I am personally more comfortable with that. Otherwise we'd

all be Shakespeare and writing books and best-selling plays but we are not.

What happens when you face a logical dilemma as in when logic needs to be compromised in order to move forward the story?

If you're writing a thriller, you have to crack the logic else if you're writing a drama or a romance, you suffuse it with emotion. If the emotion is true and heartfelt, then the logic can take a back seat so make sure that the emotion is coming from deep down somewhere.

What are the tips on writing an Action Sequence?

Action is nothing without narrative. It's not like a song that suddenly appears on the screen. Action without emotional depth is zero. You have to care for the characters on screen and what they are going through. For example, in the first scene in Kaminey, the character of



cannot just ponder and gaze out of a window, waiting for inspiration to strike. Television whips you into shape. But then the flip side is, quality also gets affected as you there is too much clamour for quantity.

When you write the dialogues, do you refer the book you are adapting or you make them your own?

There is a lot of indicative dialogue that you use from the original text but you try and make it your own. For example, in Kai Po Che, we had to incorporate the local slang or dialect in Gujarat. How they talk in Gujarat people won't be the same way they talk in Faridabad.

How do you create an interesting character? What are the do's and don't's?

Try and make him do the opposite thing of what he's supposed to do and see where the story goes. Do not be scared about the story because you are the creator, the story has to be scared of you. It's always fun to break rules. Do something which the audience is not expecting. Break free and see where it goes because if you already know where it's going- its not so much of an original idea then. Especially in your first few films, you can take a chance because everybody is looking to do something out of the box. Be seen, be heard and be above the rest.

□□□



Charlie is running from something or towards something. In terms of narrative, you know that you are saying something about the character. So action has to have some role in the narrative and of course you need to do it as realistically as possible.

What is the difference between writing for television and writing for films?

I haven't written much television work so I really don't know how to answer this question, but, I think the major difference is discipline and deadlines because in television you continuously need to churn out content. You have no breathing time and you





Photo Exhibition at India Habitate Centre by
Rajesh Bedi

Rajesh Bedi began his photographic career in the 1960s, a time when the Indian wilderness was in a poor state, having been ravaged by generations of shikaris, poachers, land developers and pot-hunters. This was the time when wildlife was extremely shy and reclusive, which needs to be discovered by man usually meant a blast of hot lead. Neither bird nor beast had the confidence of today's tourist-zone

animals, which have learnt to tolerate the jeeps and the people they carry, with their clicking cameras and excited chatter. There were few Motorable tracks and little of the tourist infrastructure that has made our most popular parks so accessible in today's wildlife enthusiasts.

It was during those days that Rajesh Bedi walked the wilderness in search of his award winning photographs. Images

that have introduced millions to the private lives of India's magnificent wildlife and have done much to further their conservation. His encounters with nature resulted in two visually stunning books, "Indian wildlife" and the much acclaimed "India's wild wonders".

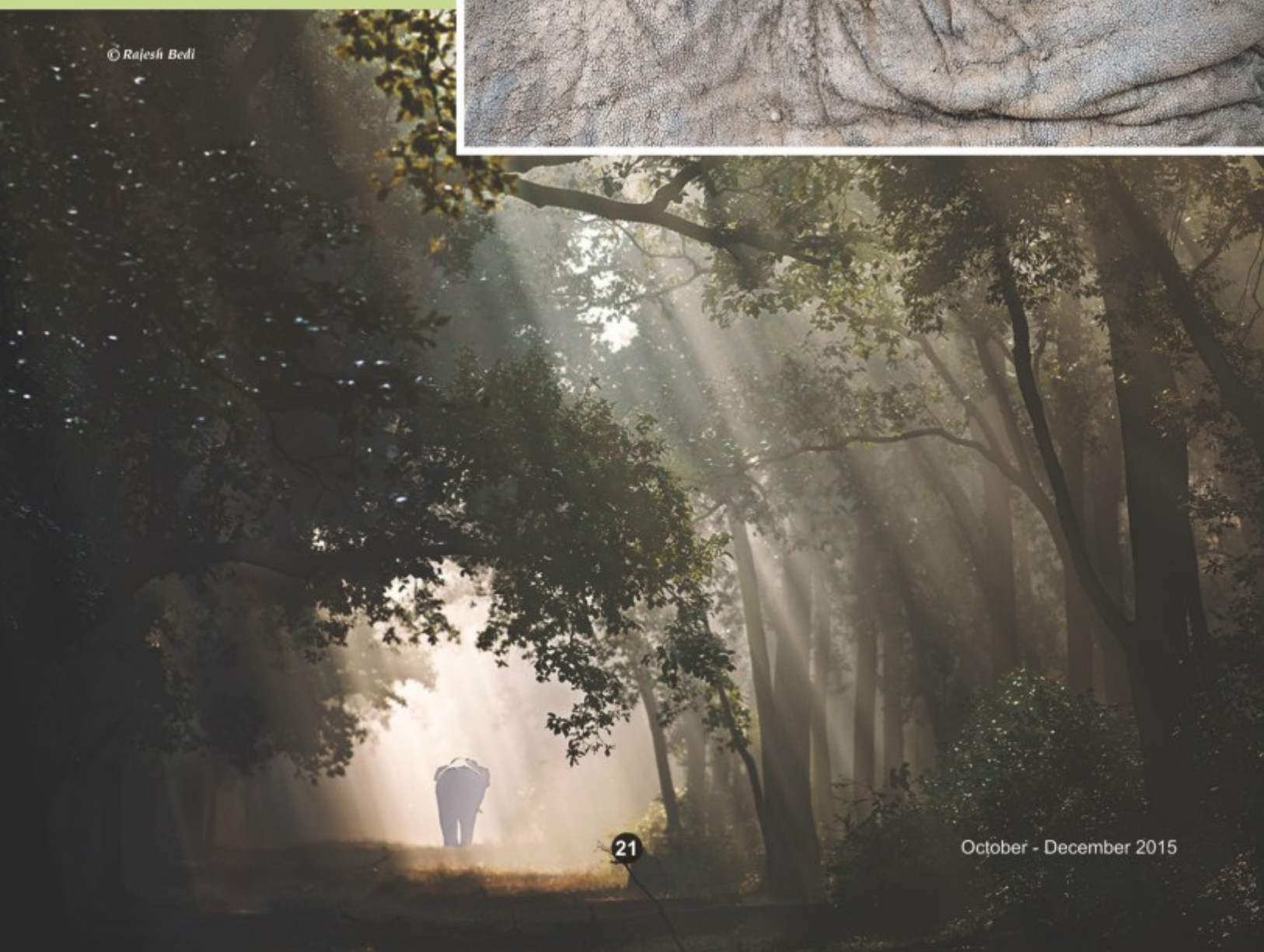
Acknowledged as one of the leading photographers of Indian wildlife, Rajesh has had many of his remarkable images published in prestigious magazines such

as National Geographic, life, Geo, Bunte and Stern. The winner of several National and international awards for nature photography, he was the first Asian to win wildlife photographer of the year, in an International competition held in Britain in 1986. He was awarded "the lifetime photography award" by the ministry of information & Broadcasting, Government of India, in 2014.

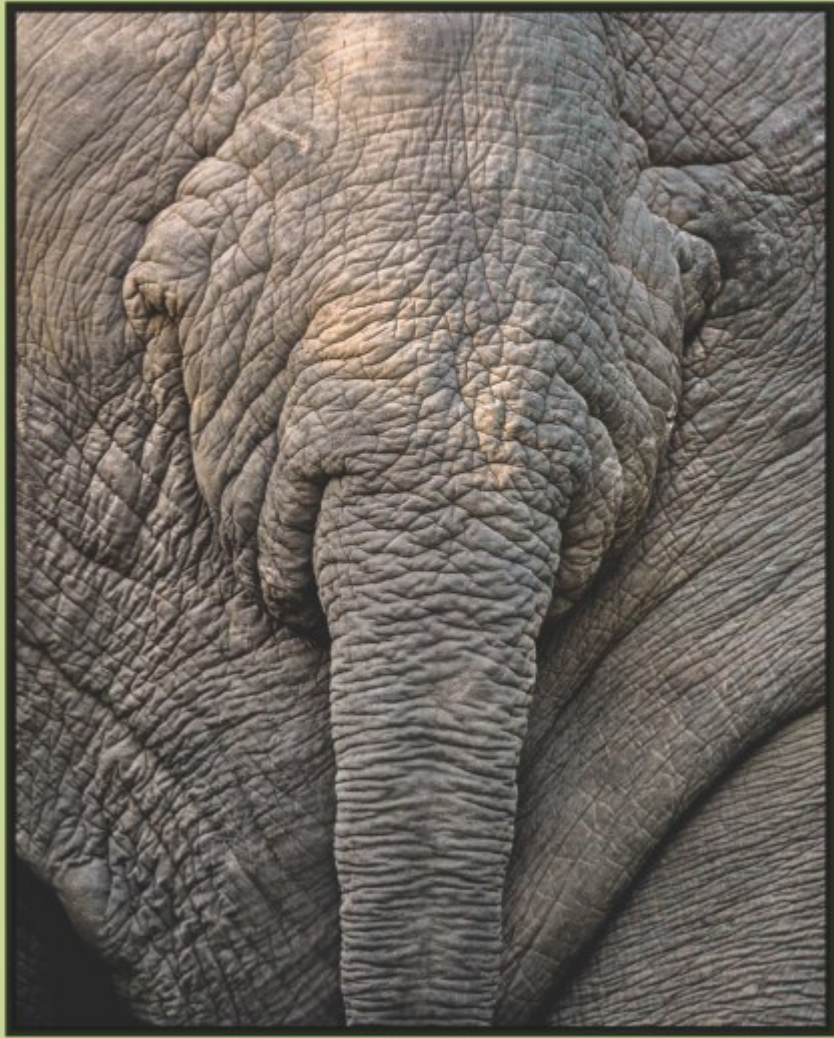
Rajesh has also published a number of books reflecting his interests in human cultures, such as "Banaras : city of Shiva" and portraits of the remote Himalayan regions of Ladakh and Sikkim. The recently published "Sadhus-The seekers of salvation" and "Rajasthan -under the desert sky" have been much applauded. He has also held solo exhibitions of his work on the mysterious world of the Sadhus and on Rajasthan, both of which were widely acclaimed.



© Rajesh Bedi







Manisha Saxena

Actress & Model


Manisha Saxena is an anchor, model and an upcoming actor. She is professionally trained classical singer Her journey began with flipkart online shoots and then her career took a turn for the better and she was on the cover of India Today magazine. Since then She has been featured in Grahshobha magazine and various video albums. She has hit the ramp with designer Amit Talwar's collection and also got crowned for the title "Intex miss popular" in this beauty pageant miss north India princess 2015. Most recently she has done FDCI done a promo for UTV Bindas .

Manisha Saxena

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Interview with film distributor

Om Prakash Mittal

Tell us about the film Distribution system that prevailed in 70's and 80's ?

I joined the distribution business in 1964. At that time there were three things which were very common. Firstly, cinema halls ran on hire basis, secondly there was a percentage basis which basically ran for small centers like class B, class C and lastly there was a fixed percentage system. For example if Jaswant cinema of Agra is very good comparatively and somebody from Bharat cinema comes to me to ask for the film. In that case, I would think that I can generate revenue from Jaswant cinema such as Rs/- 50,000. If on the contrary, I doubt the credentials of Bharat cinema then I will ask the owner to give me a minimum guarantee such as Rs/- 50,000 at least. If the profit exceeds more than Rs/- 50,000 then the share will

be distributed equally. This business model continued until year 2000. With the advent of the digital era, problems started. In the past, there were large capacity cinema halls but there was one good thing. For instance I release a certain film today and it flops badly. However, at that time a flop film didn't mean that it would be a complete financial disaster. It gave us at least marginal profit such as 30%...40%...50%... profit. These days if the film is a hit then it is a hit. One can earn as much profit as one wants to earn. If the film flops then it is completely eliminated. One doesn't stand anywhere in terms of profit. Today a film is released in 200, 300 cinema halls at the same time. In olden days, nothing like this existed. Previously, Delhi and Bombay were considered a big territory. After them it was Bengal , CP circuit.

Formerly, our films used to run on B-class and C-class cinemas after one year of the release. Now it is released simultaneously in B-class and C-class cinema halls. If any film is successful on the box office then we had six months prior booking with the c-class centers because we needed to mark the prints for that purpose. Any big movie release never had more than 20-25 prints in Delhi, UP. Similarly, 25-30 prints used to be made for Maharashtra. If the film got response from the public then the number of prints were increased. Hit films used to run for minimum 15 weeks in one circuit.

Print and publicity are the main costs involved in distributing films. Who used to invest in them ?

In those times, both producer and

Hailing from a humble business family which dealt in products as diverse as Sugandhi, Supari and Itra, remaining in family business was not the cup of tea for young Mr. Om Prakash Mittal. When he left his home to move out of old Agra town, he barely had money to buy the travel ticket. With the help of some friends Mr. Mittal found the capacity to earn his daily bread by doing odd jobs within film industry namely camera assistant, cinema projector/operator, cinema manager, prints carrier. He grew up the ladder and joined hands with few friends to join venture into the film distribution business in order to create a partnership firm for distribution of films. Later, young Mr. Mittal launched his own distribution company called Bhawani Films and took the big risk of distributing films like "Nagina" and "Mr. India" solely with his own efforts. As luck and hard work favored him, young man Om Prakash Mittal had a spate of hits thanks to his ingenious release plans in his territory of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. It all happened in an era when earning a crore (10 million rupees) was considered to be a seriously big business. In the year which followed, there was no looking back under his banner - "Bhawani Films", Mr. Om Prakash Mittal went on to distribute more than 100 films like Nagina - Harmesh Malhotra, Mr. India- Shekhar Kapoor, Amiri Garibi - Harmesh Malhotra, Mar Mitenge, Dav Pech, Jawab Hum Denge, Insaaf Kaun Karega, Ganga Tere Desh Mein, Sachai Ki Taqat, Nigaahein, Heer Ranjha, Rajkumar, Guru Dev, Mera pati Sirf mera hai, Jury - David Dhawan, Insaaf - Dayal Nihalani, Hifaazat to name a few. During his successful years as a film distributor, Mr. Om Prakash Mittal also made his way into film production. He produced his first film "Banjaran" directed by veteran Harmesh Malhotra. It was due to his full commitment as a film distributor that he could not continue film production. This changed with the arrival of his son Mr. Yogesh Mittal who had already completed his education as a film studies major from an Australian university. He started to work with Boney Kapoor in all his productions. It was during that time when Mr. Om Prakash Mittal started the production of his second film "Yeh Faasley" which is to be released in 2011. It has been both long hard working and successful journey as he feels relaxed now after having ventured into other businesses. While his son Yogesh Mittal is in the process of helming his second film which he wishes to make sometime next year, his daughter-in-law Ms. Shilpa Mittal, a prominent London based producer, has been producing films like "Storage 24". She is also in the process of producing many more films in coming years. In this interview, Film critic **Lalit Rao** (FIPRESCI) discusses his approach and vision about film Distribution in this interview.





The price, cost and the profit have been affected by internet downloading. Now a days, people generally download movies, songs directly from the internet but still they don't get the desired quality. Having said that, one loses a sizeable chunk of the audience today due to films being downloaded illegally from the internet. However, there is a set audience that will go to the cinema hall to see a film.

How has the corporate scenario affected the business of film distribution ? How are small budget films getting affected ?

There are both good and bad sides to the corporate scenario. The good side is that the kind of reach these corporate firms have inside the market and the kind of large level deals that they are able to obtain, it can really take a big film places. Previously, we had never seen businesses that we are earning today. There is the 100 crore club and all such absurd numbers about which one can only hear in the world of the large corporate earnings of corporate India. The bad side is that all business has got accumulated only in selected hands and it has become really difficult for small films to do any large business. It not because the films are bad but it is due to the fact that the personal touch has gone. In earlier times, if a film was small and good then the distributor would take interest in it and devise a strategy to ensure that a film gets a decent release and a fair chance. If I sustained any loss due to any particular film then those producers would compensate through pricing policy for subsequent films. Sadly, all this doesn't happen now a days in corporate scenario. Presently, it is solely a one-sided business and that too completely in corporate hands. Now these corporate firms are willing to spend as much as they can if there is release of any big star cast film. On the contrary if any small budget movie is getting released then they will not pay as much attention towards it. I guess that is how the world works today. Why would one invest time and money into something where one knows that large profits wouldn't emerge ? In a way it is just from one perspective but I am a man with a different belief system. I believe that every good film has the capacity to become great provided it gets a little push. In terms of business, it may not make great sense but by pushing

the distributor jointly invested money on publicity. The producer used to invest money for the making of film posters, kiosks etc. On an all India level even the distributors also pitched in by spending on radio publicity along with the main producer. For local publicity, distributors were solely responsible. We used to publicize new releases in local newspapers, weekly or monthly papers. At that time, we didn't have so much budget to be spent on publicity as compared to today's scenario. If one makes a film today with a budget of 5-6 crores then the same person would also need the same budget for publicity too. Previously, if any movie was released in Delhi-UP and it had a budget of 10 lakhs (1 million rupees) then maximum amount of 1 lakh or 1.5 lakh was the

budget for publicity. There used to be photo-set displayed inside the cinema hall in a window which public could look. The viewers who had gone to watch a film used to get an idea about the major highlight of the film. Through those photo-sets only could the audiences find out in their imagination that yeah that film would be worth watching. Music was also a major element of publicity. Imagine a person was going to office from Bhagirath Place to Lajpat Rai market, in the middle of the route this person was passing through some audio shops. If he found that the same filmy music was playing in different shops, it was an indicator that the film whose music was being played would be a hit.

How has internet affected the film distribution market ?

the small films one also takes the onus and responsibility of creating great film makers of tomorrow. In the present scenario if any big budget movie is released then on the same day a small budget movie is never released. The corporate firms book all prime festival dates in advance for their releases such as Holi, Diwali, Dusshera etc. This is the only reason why exhibitor don't pay any attention to the small budget movies. These small budget films get attention only from the cinemas with odd timings when they don't have any big budget movies lined up in a calendar. For any individual producer wishing to do any business on a small film, it is a really tough deal. We are all aware that Bollywood now a days is mostly in the hands of the film stars who have their own production houses. Thus, the game has really changed. A single person has limitations as he can do only a limited number of films. There are a lot of people who have great ideas and want to try something new all the time but their hands are chopped because they don't have support from the world at large. A small non-star cast film has hardly anyone supporting it.

In the showing of trailers and promos by cinema hall, a lot of politics has crept in. What are your comments ?

Previously these cinema hall owners also contributed to the publicity. They kept asking about the photo-sets, movie trailers etc but now they have become money minded in all aspects. People used to feel proud when any trailer would arrive in cinema hall and they used to show it happily on screens unless it was not worth watching.

Has the electronic media replaced the publicity of pole kiosks or hoardings?

These days, electronic media is on peak. Publicity is mainly created through television and other internet medium. Though kiosks and hoardings are still used for publicity but they have become more costly. Now a days, there is a system that the producer himself has to undertake the kiosk publicity. As I have said before if there is a producer who has a budget of 5-7 crores he cannot bear the same budget on publicity. On the contrary if a producer has a budget of 100 crores for a movie then he keeps aside a budget 10 cores for his movie

publicity. There are still certain areas where kiosks publicity, hoardings are being done.

Which are the best timings for releasing a film?

Months of July-August are considered to be very important months as August has a lots of festivals like Janamashtmi, 15th August, Raksha Bandhan etc. In the month of July the climate gets better after rainfall, schools and colleges are reopened. Hence, these two months are considered to be the boom period for the release of films. September month too is important in Bombay where there are huge celebrations for Ganesh chaturthi which is considered to be the very lucky phase. According to me I don't think that is a good time for business. After Ganpati celebrations there are "Shrads". We have recession period during "Shrads". Now there is a little change as the modern age or the youth age is not much concerned about and goes out to watch films. In north India, Ramlila and Dadiya will begin. After Ramlila, there will be Dusshera and Ramnavmi holidays. This is the best time for the release. During the period of cricket world Cup and board examination, I will personally suggest not to release films. During board examinations parents also gets involved with their children (besides knowing the fact that students have to prepare for exams). Their involvement is required because they have to pay attention towards their children whether they are studying or not. Likewise, Diwali is after 10 days of Dusshera but the tenure of 10 days also goes very slow in terms of film business. Labor class still watches the movies in single screen cinema where the ticket costs Rs.50, 60. If two classes of society come to cinema to watch movies i.e. labor class and the ladies then that film will be a super hit film. One must also never forget that India is one of the nations with the biggest youth population. For this purpose, if one wants to do business in this country in whatever one is doing, one has to keep in mind the youth of this nation. A lot of people understand young as naïve but they are not like that. They are far more sensible and sensitive than you and I can even imagine. By young, I don't mean frivolous films. I mean films full of life along with depth.

How much does the film star's fan following work for getting the box office collection ?

Film stars are and always have been a big part of the film business around the world. You need a face as an audience to identify yourself with. More often than not stars do provide that face. They have their own value addition to the film like a cameraman, director, sound designer etc. Mostly a good script would lead into a good film. There have also been a lot of instances where the scripts and direction have been really bad but it is purely the star due to star power and likability factor that have managed to change the film's fortunes. For example : Shah Rukh Khan in recent times. A lot of people don't like him. They say that he stammers and what not. Can one take away the fact that this man has been a big charmer for nearly two decades ? There is a magic he does that probably one may like or one may not like but surely a big chunk of our audience does like it. You see the taste of the pudding is in the eating. For this reason, film stars do have a big value. Film stars only won't work as it is only through sensible and emotionally capturing work which they do due to which they become stars. This happens through a good story, a good director and a good film. Yes, but a film star can take a good story and a good director really far. In such a case, it is a win-win situation for everyone.

How much transparency has been brought by "multiplex" culture in finding the true box office collection ?

Earlier when any movie was running in the cinema hall, the producer or distributor could go to the cinema to check the collections. In the past, main reason for not showing the true number of admissions in India was entertainment tax. Tax Department people used to take bribes so that cinema hall owner will not show the exact number of admissions. Entertainment tax in UP was about 150%, then it came down to 100% and now I think it is around 50 % of the ticket value. This was the major problem at that time. Currently due to online ticket booking, there is transparency in big cities' multiplexes.

**Interview by:
Film critic lalit Rao(FIPRESCI)**

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interview with director

Harshvardhan Kulkarni.

Harshvardhan Kulkarni's directorial début "Hunterr" was an output of 10 years of consistent mediation over the idea, script, characters and every minutest detail possible in a shot. It is indeed rare to find in Bollywood a film having such a meticulously worked out screenplay with various subtle dimensions of humor , sexuality, and domestic values.

With a very Gulzarian sense of humor, Mr. Kulkarni wrote dialogues which deserve a shot by shot analysis by film scholars. The film is not only deeply rooted in Indian Culture but also pays tribute to various masters of cinema like Giuseppe Tornatore, Hitchcock and his own "Gurukul"- THE FTII, where he got "Enlightened" cinematically. In this interview film critic **Lalit Rao** (FIPRESCI) finds out his approach and vision about cinema.

How did the idea of the film "Hunterr" evolve ? .

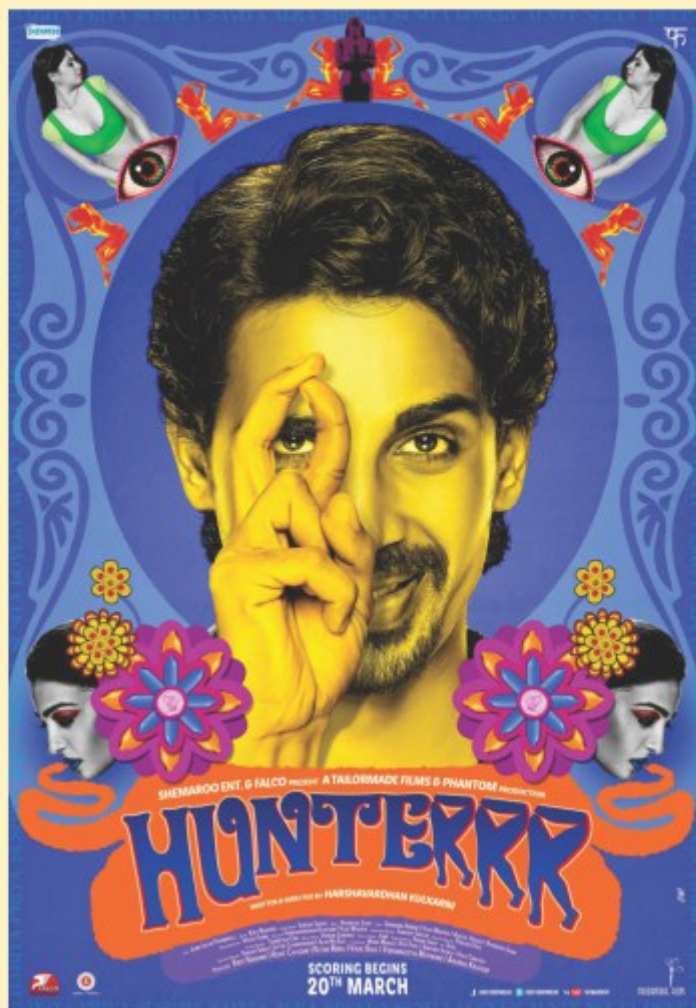
It was earlier called VAASU. It could have been ended looking like a very B-grade film. I was scared whether I could actually write something like this. I am talking about the year 2000 when films like this had not been made yet. Even now it is considered a path breaking thing. It took a long time for me to actually put pen to paper. VAASU was a concept which stayed with me for 4 years. I felt there was something not being told or explored in that particular sense. Hence if an idea takes germ and stays with you this long might as well write it. I just wrote and wrote a lot. I write in a very traditional way, pen and paper first and then transcribing it on to the computer. It came out as a voluminous account. This is how the journey began, from a 300-400 pages script it was narrowed down to 150 pages. Paring it down to 120 pages was again a long process.

How did you find the characters for your film? For example: three love stories,

HUNTEERRR had several characters. Each one of them had a back story - a

long and detailed one. One can make a film out of a particular character, if one actually follows the journey of that character. Mandar is not me but there are several 'Mandar's in my life. For this reason, he was born when I started writing. While I am writing it is just a flow. Once I start doing that all of a sudden his limbs start to grow and he becomes a full-fledged character. The way he talks, the way he walks. It is as if there are ten Mandars, I have met in my life. I took out the best out of them and then create somebody who is a "filmi Mandar". All these friends of mine know the things I have taken from them but that is where the fictional part comes in. Mostly everything is taken from facts but it's fictionalized fact. As a kid, he is going to be a little immature. Things happen as he grows up. The aunty story in the film is taken from a real life incident. It happened around the place where we lived. The old man standing in the balcony watching them is actually me metaphorically speaking ! After all is said and done, the aunty just stops calling and returns back to where she was which I thought was very important. After six months when he goes back to check, that woman is still with her husband. She is not divorced despite an extra marital affair which is huge, big and sensational in the middle class context. I mean the people who went through the episode are living together with two kids as beautifully as well as romantically as they can be in spite of the episode, which proves the affair was not the most important or life threatening thing to jeopardize their marriage. I thought that was very important to highlight because the middle class is the one which considers anything extra marital as a huge taboo and yet it happens in real life, without any sordid end.

In the chopped hair scene, one could see the backdrop





changes. How did this idea occur to you?

During my childhood there was a film called TRIDEV which had a song 'Oye-Oye'. It ended up becoming a catcall so boys would actually shout at girls using which. There was a rumor that if the police was to catch a youngster catcalling, his head would be shaved. Perhaps this whole thing had probably traumatized me and while writing that particular sequence I had the "Oye Oye" reference in mind. We incorporated the half shaved head and in the backdrop wanted the poster to be change to "Tridev" but by the time I finished making it, the timeline had passed. This had to happen in 1985 but it finally happened in 1990 because it took a long time to make the film. Hence, my time line kept shifting. Every year started with some new poster, firstly "Tarzan" then "Agneepath" as the years changed. In fact, it was a fascinating thing which doesn't happen these days. These posters would be on display for weeks. Later, after a month or two, there would be a new poster and

the coming of the new poster itself created such huge excitement. It is a change of time. I just thought it was a great thing for him to actually run across a poster. The time is going to transition. The whole idea was to show that he was now becoming a Man.

Why did you select a very peculiar kind of music and lyrics which are very uncommon in today's film ?

There are several montages in the film "HUNTEERRR" and those sequences are also progressing or taking the story ahead. Now what kind of music does one insert in such scenes ? It could be background music or it could be a song. I personally feel that songs gave me more liberty to actually showcase that time period. For this reason the first song was a reminiscent of a Bappi Lahiri tune as it featured in WARDAAT and the 'Gun Master G-9' era. One more factor that influenced the music were the era based events. The dance bar sequences happened in Bombay. That was a time when people visited those dance bars. Those were the places where people would actually fall in love. At that time

expressing love to a girl was very difficult. It has become a little more easy in today's times. At that point of time people who have never fallen in love would go to a dance bar just to stare and fall in love being inside that world. At that time there was a phase when Altaf Raja, was very popular. He was a rage in that times. This was the reason why we have an Altaf Raja song as a tribute to the era.

In your film one sees a FTII hostel room with a Hitchcock poster. Was it a kind of tribute ?

This is one of those location inspirations when we were there shooting. It was during the times of my batch that we had painted that poster. I think it was done by Vikram Verma and Navneet Misar, guys who are my batch mates. They had drawn iconic images of all films in the table tennis room. My DOP was there when this whole sequence was being planned. He just tripped when he saw the location. He is not from FTII but from London Film School. He wanted to incorporate something of the sort and the whole



planning was about lets go and beat up the father of this girl. It was a little eerie and dark yet we wanted it to be very much tongue in cheek. The window frame where I track out slowly incorporated a Hitchcock poster. I wanted to put the iconic music of the Hitchcock classic 'Psycho' but due to copyright issues I couldn't use that. Finally Kirti thought of an idea which involved the cawing of crows. With a crow caw and a ping-pong ball sound, we made a type of music transition. It was not written in the script but was actually inspired by the location it self.

How much struggle was there for you to write the dialogues by not making them vulgar but conveying the message?

When I wrote originally, the dialogues were less offensive and even less subtler. Vijay Maurya, my co-dialogue writer, who joined later, pushed me to make the dialogues more edgy. For example in the childhood midnight scene "Chaddar starch kar di" is his dialogue. I cracked up laughing because

it was such a visual depiction of that idea. In the porn parlor scene I'd written in a straight forward manner - "Yahaan par muth marna allowed nai hai aur agar kisi ko apna hath jagannath karte pakada to jagganath ke paas bhej dia jaega". Instead he suggested "Agar kisi ko eksath-baasath karte pakda toh tiger balm laga diya jayega". This was much funnier. There are some things which

were very colloquial. We use it in our daily speech but are not used to hearing in a film. Actually our daily language is far more offensive than what HUNTERRR has today. At times, we are really abusive and we don't think of its effects on society etc. In my film, we are talking about a guy who is interested in sex. It is the story of a guy who thinks women as objects of sexual desire. I





could have made him a creep as somebody that is going to keep coming onto you. He is a creepy guy but at the same time if you see the whole film I am

not looking at him as a creep. At times he seems like a creepy guy but at the same time one needs to empathize with him rather just saying objectively black or white.

In "Hunterr" the character goes backward. Why did you use that kind of technique ?

As we were going into the past and I wanted to show those 3 or 4 stages and whatever looks this character Mandar had. What I mean to say is that he is always running. Finally one doesn't understand is that we are running backwards. By watching the whole film, one realizes that he was always running and looking backwards. It was in the end that he ran but never looked back as he was running towards doing the right thing and not from anybody. Otherwise he was running from his past. Hence, it felt as a good technique.

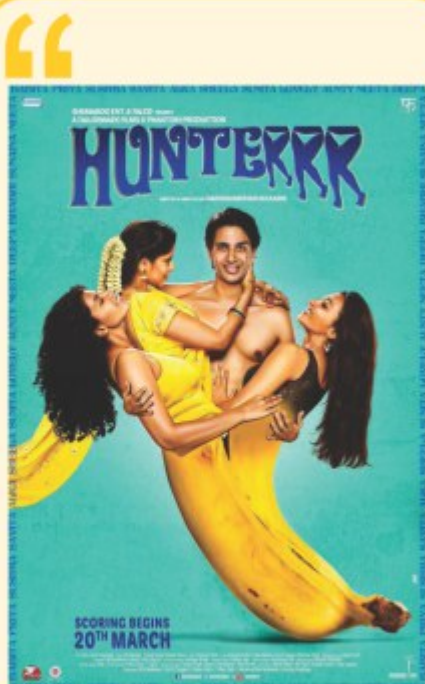
How much say did you have in the poster designing ?

As I am also one of the producers of the film, I had some say. I had put my

foot down to state that the poster is not correct as the film wasn't like that. Having a guy like this or a guy with three women in a banana, was giving the impression of just sex and a sleazy film. The marketing team convinced me otherwise. Finally we decided to keep the concept. It is a little bit explosive even though the film is not that, the hope was people will at least come out of curiosity. Once they come, they can find out its true content is and take away much more than what they came for. Thus I said let's do this and see.

How did you cast your actors especially child actors and how did you handle them ?

For the film "HUNTEERR", I cast people who looked real especially the children. I didn't want just any child actor. I wanted the actor to be as real as possible. Child actors are easily moldable, change readily and have the ability to come up with something more brilliant that I may not even have in my head. This is also the advantage of that age. This is why we held auditions to



seek what the actors are. Finally, I had a great set of actors which is essential. Different people react in differently. One shouldn't be scolding children but I used to scold, shout at them and they performed better. Some people can get into a shallow shell with a shout and not come out at all. One has to understand which kid needs what to come out and extract performances accordingly.

How was the call idea....meow meow and finally "Maia Aooo" incorporated ?

It was funny right? It was a cheesy way of depicting something that grownups indulged in childish things. It was meant to show a playful relationship. It was a mating call and on purpose we kept the sound of the dog barking to answer the meowing call. Films are made three times, first in the head and then when one writes it. Secondly when one genuinely goes to the shooting floor, edits and out comes the product.. Thirdly, just before the release when there are people who are putting in money. They have their opinions which need to be incorporated. □□□





Interview With *Sriram Raghavan*

What were your expectations when you directed a new genre film like 'Ek Hasina Thi'?

When I passed out of FTII in 1988, there weren't many options. There was no satellite TV. The only options were Doordarshan, Ad industry and Bombay film industry. I worked for some months at DECU, the film unit at ISRO Ahmedabad, making documentaries for specific audiences like rural children, etc.

Once I came back, I got a chance to make a video film on Raman Raghav, the serial killer who terrorized Mumbai in the late 60s. Raghubir Yadav played the character. It was for a video magazine but never got released.

Anurag showed Ram Gopal Varma my film and I met Ramu and that's what led to Ek Hasina Thi. Anurag Kashyap is now making a film on RR with Nawaz...

Ramu gave me a script written by a first timer Pooja Ladha Surti. It was more

like a novella and it had some flaws too. But there was a lot that excited me. It began like a love story, had a solid chunk in a woman's prison and the third act was a revenge thriller.

We worked on the script and so many elements and ideas came in during the process...

The Love story segment was tricky. . so in the first part we did not want to show the typical love where there are songs and they are eating panipuri etc... we wanted something different and more believable and in every scene something important to happen. As he is playing games with her, so it is very interesting. The guy is very unpredictable and this was a new way of handling romance and more than romance it had its own thrill and the audience is always on the edge of their seats.

So when Karan says that his friend is visiting Bombay and he will stay for a

day.... We wonder..... They strange guest turns out to be a hitman and is killed by the cops. And Karan tells her to dispose off the suitcase. She's caught....and he tells her not to take his name.....Well....she loves him and trusts him blindly....until she realizes he has framed her.

Did you make any special research for the jail escape scene?

We visited several jails in Mumbai and Pune. Arthur Road, Thana Jail, Yerawada jail...Pooja got to interact with some inmates.... I also read books about jail experiences. Serpentine, on Charles Sobhraj describes his many escapes from various jails around the world. I used that tidbit in Badlapur.

I asked the jailors about any escape attempts....because we had an escape in our script which we had not yet worked out. The jailor mentioned one recent successful escape. The prison buildings were being painted and during lunch

break, one inmate used the ladder and scaled the wall and got off.

I found it damn funny but in a movie nobody would buy it. We wanted a thrilling escape in our film so we worked out a fire in the jail kitchen and how Sarika escapes in the ensuing melee.

I used a variation of the funny escape in Badlapur.

There was one scene in the jail where Urmila cuts her hair and she is transformed. Now in that scene when she turns, was that the look which you desired?

I remember we were inspired by Rambo in which Stallone hacks his hair. It's a hero moment. If you see the way it's shot, we initially think she's going to slit her throat....And then she lops her beautiful locks. The look she gives when she turns is a poster look. It's the beginning of her transformation.

How was the idea of rat element included in the movie?

The first draft of the film had no rats anywhere in the film. It's quite crazy how brainstorming and rewriting start giving you ideas that finally become the key moments in the film.

We were discussing that the love story has to have a constant edge....and maybe after Sarika and Karan make love, we need a thrill moment. RGV remembered a scene in Godfather 3, where Andy Garcia is in bed with his lover and he hears a sound....And there are two armed gangsters....and a shootout begins.

So we said what if she goes to the kitchen and then we hear a scream. Only it's not a gangster, but a rat. We found it funny and yet it had the thrill element too. I love that shot. And it would have ended there....and then we had a shot of her setting up a mousetrap which suddenly shuts scaring her. And then....while writing the jail scenes we thought what if there's a big rat in her cell. And thus it built...over a dozen discussions and drafts till we reached the climax.

The initial idea was that she traps Karan in a closed down mine in a desert and leaves. But it was tough to find the right location and building a set was out of our budget. So how else can she take nasty revenge? And then....we remembered the RATS.... And got our climax. We used a combo of jungle rats and pet mice.

How did you decide to include special elements like pressure cooker in the movie?

It was just to build up the pressure on her..... So these are small elements used to increase the thrill in the movie A GREAT USE of an idea like this is in PULP FICTION....The toaster and John Travolta.

To talk about the dialogues in the movie, the whole flavor gets set in the first few minutes and then there is a continuity of dialogues. How was that done?

We keep writing and saying it aloud....does it sound fake or filmi.... We also rehearse with the actors and they add their own idiom..... Dharmendra, has his own unique way of expressing things. In Johnny Gaddaar.. while discussing a scene with him, he would say something superb and I would tell Pooja....pls note it, we can use it. Likewise, actors like Vinay Pathak, Nawazuddin, Pratima Kannan, Zakir, Ashwini Kalsekar and others have contributed so much to the lines in my films.

There was a scene in the jail where Dolly introduces herself. Though it was a bit funny, it also had a dark element. So how did you think of that?





We decided to give Urmila a cell mate just to add to the dynamics. What sort of a girl should it be and how do they interact. Yes, that as a well written scene and as usual came after a lot of brainstorming.

How could you convert very simple dialogues into something unique?

The answer for this question is very simple and it is 'rewriting'. Me and my team do a lot of rewriting scene by scene.. And sometimes when we are really stuck I call Jaideep Sahni. He has given me some fab lines. There were some dialogues given by him and we did use one in Ek Hasina Thi. My DOP Murli also has contributed some one liners.

We have seen Vinay Pathak as a comedian, but you have cast him in a serious role in Badlapur. Why so?

Vinay Pathak is an actor who is terrific in comedy but also fantastic in serious roles. He has recently done

Gour Hari Dastaan which you should see. His role in Badlapur was not huge. In fact, to some it may seem like a thankless role....but it's one of his finest performances. He is fab in the Interval scene.

There was a song of Gaddar and a poster of Lagan film. Whose idea was it? Whose contribution is it using the poster or song in the scene?

And Anil Mehta, my DOP had shot Lagaan. So we thought it'll be nice to have posters being pasted in the opening sequence. Much later, whilst doing the sound design, we had this heavy traffic ambience on black...at the very opening of the film so I thought it'd be fun to get a snatch of Mein Nikla Gadi leke on the audio as if a car is passing playing the cassette. Lagaan and Gadar were released on the same day...15 years back. I remember getting major cheap thrills when we got this thought.

Every department adds to the final scene. It's the writer's duty to write THE KEY DETAILS of a scene. The Editor can just pick a shot from somewhere and use it somewhere else. Creating another moment or thought that was not in the script. For example, the shot of the bloodied flowers on the seat was shot as the last shot of the scene. But it created a far more DISTURBING effect when we placed it immediately after Liak shoots Misha.

The dog that chased the car was not in the script or even in our heads on the day of shoot. We were shooting on a public road and as we threw out the kid's dummy, suddenly this dog appeared out of nowhere and started chasing....I knew we got our shot. It was a happy accident,

We see that the main characters in your films have evolved. They are full of revenge but as we see, they become more cold blooded. How?

Perhaps I was not fully able to convey to the audience that Varun's character is not waiting for revenge. He leaves his job, his city and cuts himself off from the world. Living a solitary life. He is unable to come to terms with his life. He has no agenda. It's only when Divya Dutta approaches him with the mercy petition for Nawaz, that the beast rears up again.

How did you think of casting Varun for this role?

While writing, my dream cast for Liak was Nawazuddin, so in the script he was called Nawaz. For Raghu, I had an older actor in mind. I met Varun by chance at my producer's house...We thought let's narrate to him, not as a pitch but just to check his reaction. I thought he would be shocked and politely mumble something but he got very excited. And then we just talked about it for a couple of days. It is an extremely bold decision he took by doing this film. He made the character both emotional and unhinged...

Was there any special thought while shooting the train passing in the 'Jeena Jeena song'?

Anil Mehta chose the particular location in IGATPURI, because of the constantly passing trains in the distance. Trains are cinematic....create a mood....

About the song Jeena Jeena, initially the scene was different. Raghu was to enter the SHRINE ROOM and plays his wife's favourite song. On an LP record. We wondered which song to choose ... Should it be a Hindi song? Or Western, or a waltz.... And then Sachin Jigar gave us this fabulous song....It fit in beautifully.

Any real life character whom you ever met which inspired Varun's character? I mean a character who couldn't come out of any such incident.

The film is based loosely on a real incident that happened in Europe many years back. Of course, I have not met the character. The incident happened in Europe but the grief and anger is universal.

As a writer you need to have all the characters inside you. But after that it's the actor....Both Varun and Nawaz lifted their characters off the page and made them real and connectable.

I gave Varun some films ...non mainstream like 21 grams, A short film about killing, and more...He worked on the character and was in a zone whilst doing this film. We don't realize it while it's happening...

It's to Varun's credit that we feel his pain and anguish even when he is doing the most horrible things.

How much time do you put in developing small characters like the inspector?

Big or small, every character in the film has to be developed to full potential. I enjoy the smaller characters, they give so much rootedness and life to the tale. Regarding Kumud Mishra who played the cop in Badlapur;

An actor had to opt out at the last moment due to some prior commitment so I had to cast someone today so that he can drive to Pune tomorrow for the shoot. Kumud was literally a last moment entry. I had not ever met him earlier, And here I am meeting him straight at the shoot. It's tricky. I wished I had time to discuss the character and sort of flesh him out together. All kinds of scary questions pop up in my head





especially since it was early days of shoot.

But then we found our rhythm and by the time we shot his melt down scene in the climax, I was super thrilled that the other actor had dropped out.

How did you use certain lines in your movies which are in different context, like 'aapki yatra sukhad rahi ho gi'?

We were at the shoot and the actors were getting ready....i was thinking aloud....we have just seen a wild action sequence so it'll be nice to have a good one liner from Agent Vinod. Under

the desert sun, we were all coming up with one-liners, each worse than the last. I thought forget it, let's stick to the script and not be ambitions. ... And then guess who came up with the winner. That's a contribution from CK Murali my DoP on Agent Vinod.

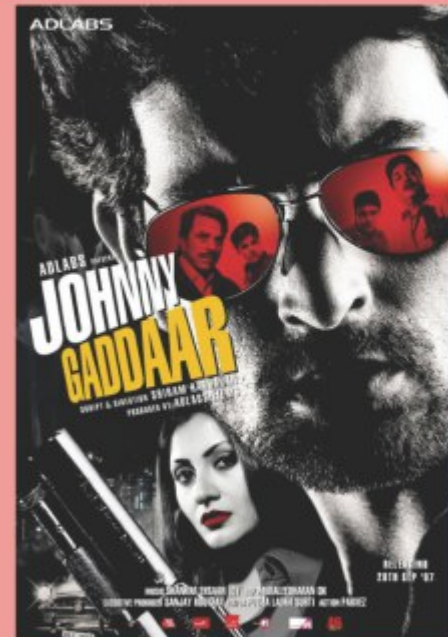
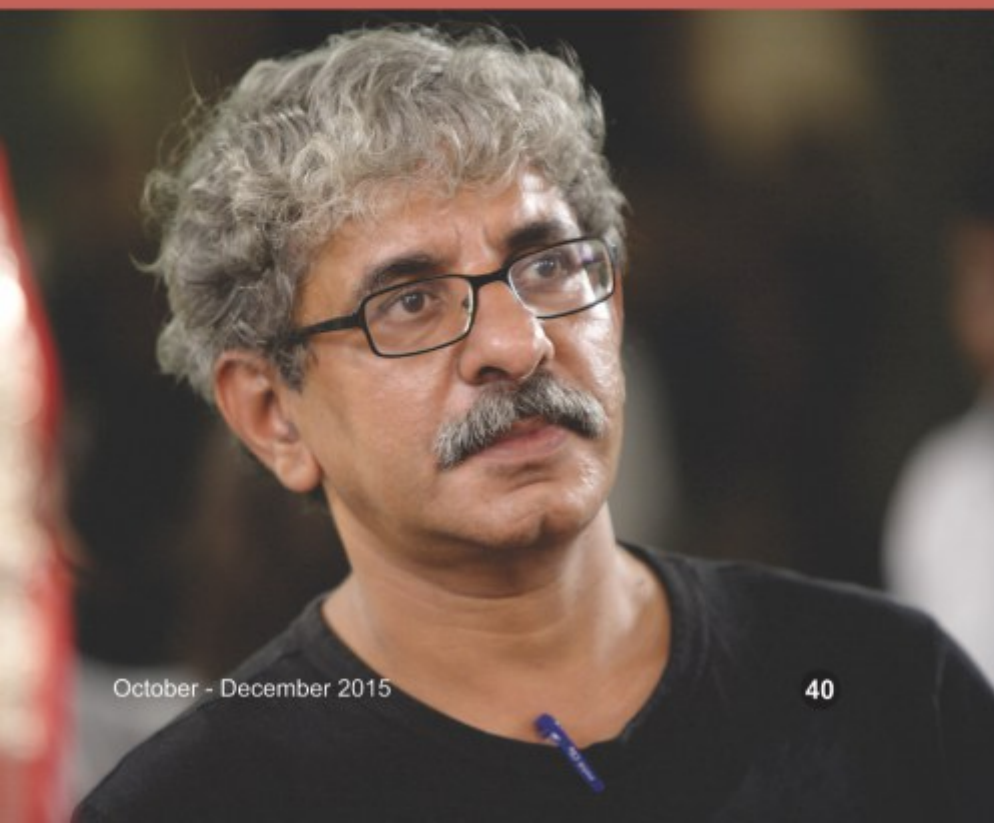
We heard that Nawazuddin was not given dialogues. True?

I had a chat with Nawaz a little before the shoot. I said, I will give you the scenes with dialogue but use them as pointers. We both felt that Liak, the character he plays would be a man of limited vocabulary. He's probably not even a tenth class pass....

The toughest scene to crack was when he confesses to Raghu about what really happened. Their last confrontation. I had several drafts and though the content was all there, I was not happy. Today it's a scene I am very happy about. And it's thanks to the actor's method.

In the hall, the audience was thoroughly enjoying the Nawaz scenes but none of his scenes, baring one, is played for laughs

Before the film begins, there was in the beginning the Line " Axe forgets





but the tree remembers: - African proverb. How did you get this idea?

We had a white board in the office and I asked my assistants to write a good relevant quote every day. My assistant Priyanka found this. And I said wow....we can use it in the beginning of the film.

How do you manage to keep the audience gripped?

There is no prescribed answer for this question. We made Agent Vinod with full enthusiasm but could not connect to people. As students of cinema, even if you don't like a film you need to analyze why so.... Whenever there is a bad movie, there is a possibility of a good movie there and vice versa.

In Badlapur you could have shown the robbery from inside. No?

Of course. And my early draft did have the robbery being shown like a typical hold up sequence. The shots all seemed been there done that. I could think of no way to make it fresh for myself. Exciting to shoot. So we thought, what if we don't show it....and show it later in a CC camera from one angle only.

And instead we show the street....where we see everyday life....like a documentary. And then suddenly the chaos begins.

In these two minutes we were sort of preparing the audience for the type of movie they would be watching.

interview by: Film critic lalit Rao (FIPRESCI)





Interview with DOP-

Sachin Krishn

After graduating from FTII pune in 1995, Sachin got his first major break with "Vaastu Shastra" directed by late talented Saurabh Narang. Since then there is no looking back for Sachin. His Oeuvre of cinematic gems include the best of Indian cinema directed by "Vishal Bhardwaj", Sudhir Mishra, Prakash Jha, Hansal Mehta, Onir, Meghna Gulzar to name a few. He has been consistently collaborating with India most talented director Prakash Jha in his projects since 2009 in Raajneeti, Aarakshan, Chakravyuh, Satyagraha, Jai Gangaajal (under production).

In this interview, Naresh sharma finds out his approach and vision about Cinematography

What is your basic approach to lighting when you hear a script? And how do you go about it, in terms of preparing for a film?

I would say that the process of lighting is very organic. The first thing that naturally hits you when you read a script is not what your lighting requirement is, in terms of 4K light or 6K light, but one should understand what the script is trying to convey. The first step is a sub conscious approach to the lighting. Slowly you filter the approach to the conscious. Now the right brain starts transferring these thoughts to the left brain and the left brain starts breaking it down in terms of specific lighting requirements like Kinoflow, diffusion material, color temperatures etc.

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We are living in digital times. To begin with cinematography is an art form you cannot afford to ignore the technical part of cinematography.

How do you choose the kinds of lights that you would be using?

The script reaches out to everybody visually, even to a layman. Like I said, when you transfer these thoughts from the right side to the left side of the brain then you start wondering about which lights to use, what kind of budget a film has, how many lights and light boys, and what kind of fixture a production can afford. When I am shooting indoors or in the night, I like using as many lights as I can. When I am shooting outdoor in the day, I just don't want anything. I don't use even thermocol. Maximum what I use is a kind of satin cloth over somebody's head if the sun is on top.

What are the challenges you encounter while shooting a feature film? Please recollect some of them.

Every film comes with its own set of challenges and I enjoy that. I have done

low budget films like Vishal Bhardwaj's "Blue Umbrella" to the biggest ones like "Satyagraha" and "Rajniti," so this question can't be answered in a generalized way. Every film comes with its own difficulties.

For example a film like "Blue Umbrella" was shot in two schedules, in summers and in snow, in Dalhousie. We had decided the second schedule will be shot totally without lights and in that we also had to shoot night scenes. That time not everybody was doing sync sound. We were using portable 5k generators and hand held lights and it was a crew of 4 light boys. Cut to a film like "Raajneeti" or "Satyagraha" where you have everything you want. So it varies from film to film and again it depends on the kind of production it is, the crew, the kind of visuals you are looking at, and the kind of restrictions that you are given.

While shooting on a location without sufficient available light, do you modify certain existing things, or cut all the existing lights and Lights up?

Cut everything and start is often not the best choice because it's easier to boost up existing light levels. For example if I am supposed to shoot a night exterior, obviously like to use a big balloon, Roustem, or the construction cranes to hang big lights. Recently I was shooting a film in Paharganj in Delhi and we were shooting during the peak hours at 7pm and that too around the Diwali night, so obviously you can't hijack that kind of a location and start putting your cranes etc. You better start shooting with whatever light is available and enhance the faces somehow with an interesting backlight or face light. So it's all a matter of improvising, adjusting and that is the way to be creative. If you are on the set, you can call for 20 generators, big lights etc as you are working in a controlled environment, but in places where you do not have any control, you improvise with whatever exists.

During pre-production meeting in which the DOP interacts with the other departments like the costumes and art



director, what are your primary briefs to these departments?

My primary brief is always to the art director because that constitutes 25% of our cinematography. Cinematography is not just lighting up alone. It is lighting up the various elements in a frame given to me by the art director. How the actor is looking is also partly given to me by the costume designer and the makeup man. All these things come together to constitute an art form called - "Film Making." I really appreciate it when I get to work with professionals.

What if you gave some brief to the art director and he does something else? How do you manage in these kinds of situations?

I am only there to give suggestions as the art director handles his own independent field. He is also the head of the department in his own way. So as far as suggestions are concerned, obviously as a cinematographer I do suggest things like put the beam here or put something there. I think all the professionals understand the problems of a cinematographer. If someone is new or don't have much experience, then you guide him.

What are your expectations from the director in terms of creative inputs

besides the script?

Freedom and trust, those two are big things. I mean the best working collaborations that I have had are with people who have fully trusted me with the script and not interfered after that. They trusted my vision to translate their script into visuals. The whole thing boils down to the fact that you do justice to the visuals which the director has in his mind and enhance them as well.

Every director has an individual style of working. How do you adjust your style with their style of working?

During my student days at FTII Pune, I use to believe that a cinematographer is great if his style is all over the place. Now I think, that is not a very good approach. I think a mature cinematographer will be more adapting to the director, to the script, to the mood of the location, also to the nuances of the script.

Like Prakash Jha is basically a documentary style film maker. If I start making things glossily, he will probably not like it. His films require a raw and gritty kind of treatment. Sudhir Mishra is another kind of film maker. His cinema has a different style. There I can go into Tarkovsky, Kieslowski, whatever zone I want to.

Another director like Onir, He is a very sophisticated, glossy, soft kind of a film maker. So there I have to kind of adapt to it. If I start stamping my personal taste like I prefer silhouette or back light etc, I won't be doing justice to the script.

I think a cinematographer should be like water, he should try and fill up any container that he is put into. As a director you can have your own voice, your own style, and your stamp but as a cinematographer you are serving somebody's business. Your entire attempt should be to enhance that person's vision and not stamp your vision on that person's film.

How much technical understanding of color corrections, in terms of DI is required on the part of the DOP, even though it is to be handled by another expert?

Buttons are capable of doing a lot, especially salvaging a lot of issues that happen in the shoot. But I don't think you can rely on the buttons to kind of take care of everything in the post.

There used to be an attitude that I will see it in the post. I don't think that normally works unless the film is basically well shot. DI is just to enhance what you have already shot. The raw



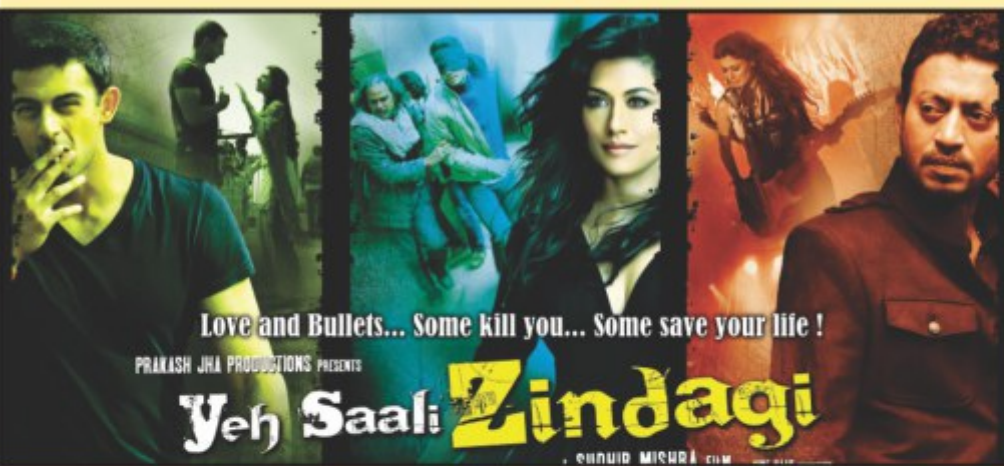
footage that you have already shot and what is transferred into the machine is always paramount because that is the basic that you are starting with. You cannot have a two stops under exposed shot looking normal after DI machine, though. There are too many plug-ins. It is also very important to be in sync with the DI artist. I don't call him a grader because he is an artist in his own right. It is not only pressing buttons and tracking etc. That guy behind that machine has also got to be an artist. The art behind that technique can't afford to be ignored. That's how it works.

Before I start grading, I call the DI artist to see the edited version of the film, although it's in a very raw stage. If it's a foreigner I explain the scenes of the film, so when he starts he already has the essence of what the film is all about.

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What are the advantages and disadvantages of shooting in a digital format?

There are obviously immense advantages in terms of cost cutting. The cost of equipment, the accessibility, handling the equipment etc.

Now have a RED EPIC, 5D, Canon. It will still give you 4K results. Secondly I think it has given accessibility to a lot of people who wanted to make a film but did not have enough funds or resources. In today's time if you have a story and the will power then nobody can stop you from making a film. All you need is an apple computer and a camera. I miss shooting on films not because it is organic but because you have learnt film making on celluloid, so it took me time. I was really against digital format for a long time. I shot even my last film "Satyagraha" on 35mm. It was one of the last few Indian films to be shot on 35mm. I have been consistently trying to avoid it but now that I have started doing it, I'm getting to know it and also started enjoying it.

Given a choice between Arri, RED, Canon, Sony, AJA, and Panasonic, which of these brands of 4k camera manufacturers would be your first priority?

I will choose Arri, because there is peace of mind associated with that Brand. We have grown up with Arri. I have tried most of them but I feel most comfortable with Arri because of its user friendliness and obviously most importantly for the result it gives.

If there is a huge set and there are many shots in that particular situation, do you prefer to light up the whole set first and then go for smaller areas or do you prefer to shoot areas into...?

When there is a huge set that I have to light up say kms of night in "Chakravayuh," "Satyagraha," and "Raajneeti," my whole approach was first to try and get up basic exposure of around f 1.0 plus so that it should get printed.

Then you start painting with light like, the small light here, highlight there,



shadow there etc. So that is my basic approach. Besides, once you have that peace of mind that the whole field is lit up then you start lighting the background, foreground, faces etc.

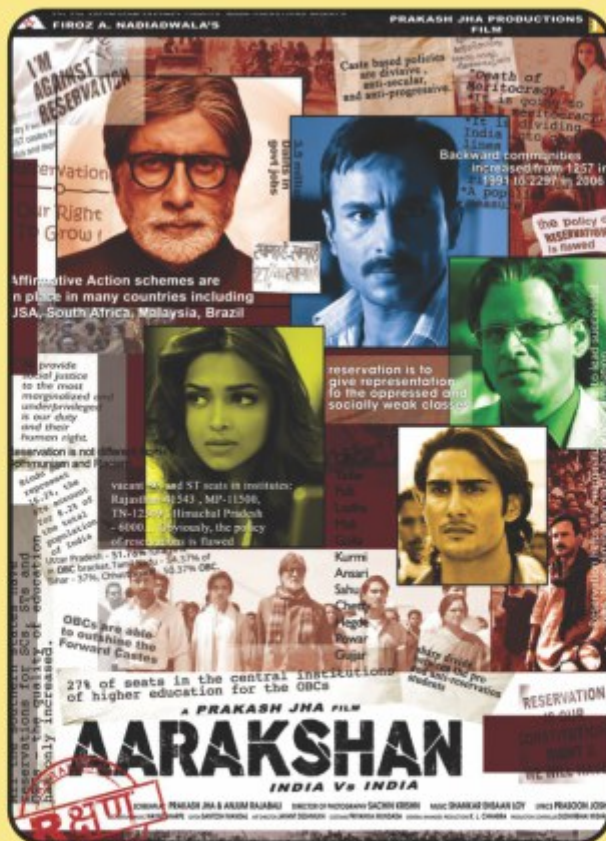
When Channel [V] and MTV came people started using a term called "stylization in lighting". What does stylized lighting mean to you and have you tried experimenting with that zone?

If you knew frame of a director, you can make out that it is that DOP and his kind of evolved style then I do not think he is doing a great job.

His lightning should be as stylized as the director or the script wants. Having said that the same guy Robert Richardson shot "JFK," and "The Doors", look at the style.

Both of them are highly stylized films but how well it has served the script. I think that is stylization, not your strong back light etc. Stylization is a very subjective thing and it should not be the focus of the cinematographer.

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During the past couple of months, Delhiites got the privilege of relishing the best of theater coming out from NSD. It was a combination of productions directed by 3rd year students and others directed by established theater directors namely Neelam Mansingh, Raj Bisaria, and Rita Ganguly etc.

Well known Shakespearean play "Julius Caesar" was staged by 2nd year students. It recreated grandeur of Rome through Corinthian columns and huge backdrops representing motifs of Roman culture and political power. After the play was over, I was contemplating who else could have played "Caesar" among the 2nd year students. Really, I couldn't think of any other name but that of Rana Santosh Kamal, who carried the persona of Caesar on the stage and delivered a convincing performance. Be it the walk, speech or body gestures, Rana blended them appropriately to recreate Caesar on the stage. The other two important characters of Brutus and Mark Antony were played by talented Kaviraj and Vivek Kumar. They lent desired credibility to the characters. Mark Antony's funeral speech is one of the finest, spectacular political speeches ever written by William Shakespeare. Actor Vivek Kumar displayed a remarkable talent for communication which demanded a combination of rational and emotional balance, diction and action to portray "Antony" who himself was a great actor. He appeared sad, violent or sarcastic. Vivek could convincingly deliver Antony's speech with a lot of rhythm and tonal changes that made it thrilling. The costumes by Anita Singh Khosla were loud when required and subtle when necessary thereby adding to the Shakespeare's world of grandeur. The background score by Kajal Ghosh which complimented the "Cinemascope" style stage of Abhimanch. one never knows when the backdrop music started and finished. It blended so perfectly that occasionally it created "the illusion" as if one is watching something like "Amadeus" by Milos Forman at Siri Fort auditorium during IFFI.

For the first time that I saw short stories adapted by Neelam Mansingh for 3rd year students' production called "Bitter Fruit". Besides students' performances which bring all the characters alive on the small stage, the

most impressive element was the stage design by "Deepan Sivaraman". One never knows which part of the stage will become what when required for a particular story. In a small space like "Bhamukh" it was wonderfully utilized to create backdrop required to create necessary feel to perform various stories. Be it the flat ground or vertical wall, it opened up at the required occasion to get converted into a set without disturbing the rest of the space.

Neelam has a very distinct way of leaving a signature on her productions. In "Bitter Fruit" she meticulously used the metaphoric language through elements like oil, plastic sheet, milk pouch, mud, toilet paper. Sometimes it looked like "home work" for the audiences! But that's the beauty of her production. On various occasion, she carefully evoked erotic feelings without making it vulgar. The spilling of milk pouch reminded me of the film "Bitter Moon" directed by Roman Polanski.

"Lorem Ipsum" directed by talented Prof "Abhilash Pillai" was another production which one rarely gets to see. Whenever one is going to see a play directed by Abhilash, one knows that it will always have something to carry home. Within five minutes of the opening musical sequence of "Lorem Ipsum" when the crew arrived in the auditorium, the tone of the play was set and one knew for sure that whatever will follow would be engaging. Unconventional plot with distinct set design and appropriate casting gave the play a long lasting impression. It was a play in which even small characters like the Sardarji couple, Blind man were given due space to perform. My favorite scene is one in which window frames with led lights were meticulously used on the faces by the actors in a dramatic sequence. "Lorem Ipsum" flies on a different plane, be it mood lighting, innovative use of clichés like smoke add value to the brilliant script by Rajesh Tailing.

Among the few productions directed by final year students, plays like "Land where life is good" directed by Temjenzungba and brilliantly scripted by Asif Ali deserve special mention. It gave enough space to many student actors to showcase their talent. Who can forget the role of police inspector brilliantly enacted by Bhumika Dube. It is a pity that there was only one show of such a wonderful production Unlike

last year's diploma production festival which showcased students' work in a much more professional manner, this year it was presented more as a formality rather than a genuine concern.

In today's time when most Indian theater directors look for "European plays" to find new voices, it is very rare that they are looking at their own ancient Indian traditions. Rita Ganguly directed "Abhijnana Shakuntalam" from a different perspective both in content and presentation. It can certainly be called a "unique form". The ambiance created in the "Abhimanch" assures audiences of a visual treat. Her unique device for actors was not to look into the eyes of co-actors and to present emotions through dialogue. Mudras was presented with conviction by most of the student performers. The various scenes of jungle where one gets the feel of filtered light falling on various characters mesmerizes the viewers. It was the magic Souti Chakraborty was able to create again and again on the stage through his lighting design. Who can forget the rainy season and storm feel created on the stage by moving white clothes? The intensity of the storm in jungle was such an amazing experience that it reminded me of the stormy night sequence in the ice in "Dersu Uzala" by Japanese director Akira Kurosawa. On both occasions audience had no options but to applaud. This is a real award for any stage performance. The idea of frame to give the feeling of close up in long shot worked very well for "Shakuntala". On the acting front Rukmini Sircar and Jina Baishya in double cast for "Shakuntala" stole the show. Equally impressive were performances of "Vidushak" by Pankaj Mathur and Gagan Srivastava performed in sync with live music. My favorite actors from the entire show were two animal characters - "Hiran" enacted by Pallavi Jadhao and "Hansani" by Monika Panwar. For some people they may be just like icing on the cake in the overall production but for me they actually touch hearts. On the weaker aspects of the production, projection of city image on the backdrop during the search by "Shakuntla" just didn't work. It was as if in a two hours long party while serving exquisite French wine, "Indian Tea" is served in between for few minutes!

By Naresh Sharma



NSD Productions

Lorem Ipsum

Directed By Abhilash Pillai

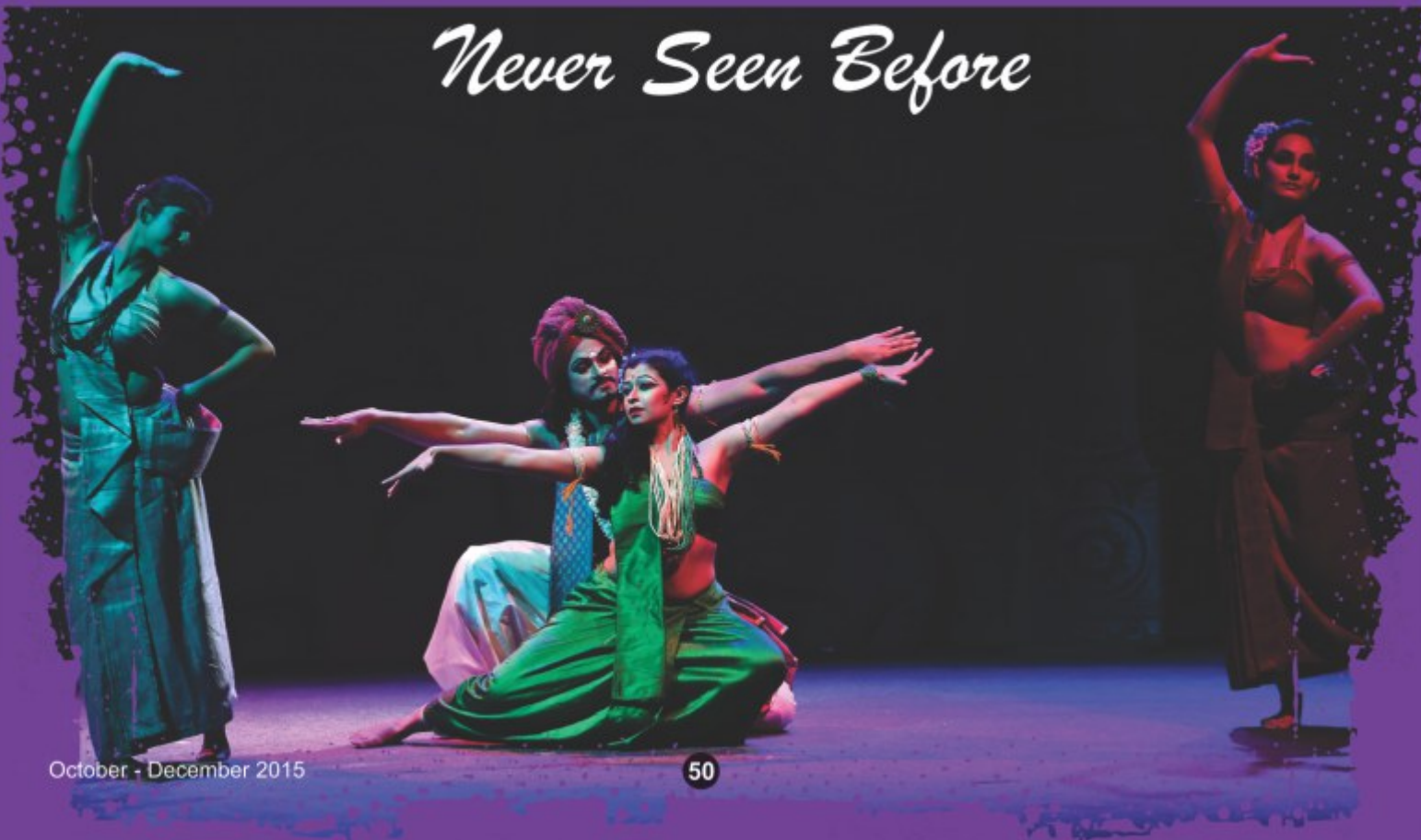
All Photographs by : **THYAGARAJAN (NSD)**



Design & Direction : **Rita Ganguly**

"Abhijnana Shakuntalam"

Never Seen Before





Interview with **Rukmini Sircar**

Tell us about the process of preparing yourself for the role of Shakuntala.

Our approach towards "Abhijnana Shakuntalam" began with a week long orientation towards the concept of "Rasawadan". Rita Ganguly had carefully arranged a dance and music appreciation course, in order to help students fully grasp the idea of what is "Classical". We were exposed to ancient traditions of acting developed in India. Experts in the fields of Bharatnatyam, Mohiniattam, Kathak and Dhrupad were invited to demonstrate their craft before us. The role of the actor in producing "rasa" in the audience was a central theme in all our discussions. A seminar was held on the concepts of the Natyashastra and its current relevance, and we were

encouraged to question and explore, and in the end we drew our own conclusions on whether the ancient Indian acting manual was at all significant in today's fast changing world.

Indeed what first appears as an inaccessible and rigid book of rules, upon closer observation is really a set of guidelines for the actor, and while being firmly rooted in reason and logic is also open to interpretation.

The director's approach towards the text was from a very contemporary point of view. The issue of abandonment that young women often face today, is echoed in Shakuntala's predicament. Cases of young girls of little or no means, left alone to fend for themselves, who often end up being

sexually exploited and finally abandoned, are only too common today, and Rita Ganguly wished to draw a direct link between those misfortunate souls and Shakuntala.

However, she deliberately departed from Kalidasa's text at significant junctures of the narrative, in order to make a point. By choosing not to keep the fisherman sequence of the play, she chose draw more attention to human agencies rather than supernatural ones. Dushyant's inability to recognize Shakuntala is to an extent his own deliberate choice rather than simply the effect of a curse. Even Shukuntala's final decision to not forgive Dushyant, is a departure from the original text, and here again, is an instance of human choices at work.

I approached Shakuntala, not merely as an ashramite who is close to Nature, but as young girl who is essentially alone. From birth she's been abandoned, even in the ashram, she finds herself different from the other ashram girls and the fear of being forever alone haunts her. She mistakes Dushyant's sexual advances as a promise of eternal companionship. When this illusion breaks she stands face to face with her greatest fear.

Rita ma'am talked to me at length about Shakuntala's spiritual journey. The experience of finding herself lost in a strange city, pregnant and completely alone, as well as giving birth to and bringing up her child all by herself, marks a turning point in her life. Having faced Isolation in its extreme form she's undergoes a spiritual realization. She learns not to fear but to embrace her isolation; what she thought was her greatest weakness becomes her greatest strength. The motif of the "Ekaki Hansini" (the Lone Swan) recurs throughout the performance, and though it is an image in one of Kalidasa's verses, it is not a part of the original "Abhijnana Shakuntala". It was a conscious decision on part of the director to add this motif in order to

establish the central theme of isolation.

While the production was part of the classical training in the second year syllabus of National School of Drama, Rita ma'am's interpretation of the text allowed a modern approach. She added several contemporary Hindi and Urdu poems to the script, and as an acting student, I got the opportunity to study and understand not only how the master playwright, Kalidasa approached universal themes of love and separation but also to study poets like Dharmveer Bharati, and their approaches.

The production was a rich learning experience. We were all taught body movements and mudras, which drew greatly from Kathakali, Manipuri, Bharatnatyam as well as Kathak. Speaking dialogues with mudras was a particularly challenging task, but once we understood that the mudras were an extension of the spoken word, it became easier. In this process the correlation between the action or gesture, the dialogue and the inner emotion became clearer.

Working with Rita Ganguly left me with the strong impression that classical is not something rigid and

unchanging, infact it is ever-growing and fluid, which is why it survives Time. Though she remained true to the spirit of Indian Classicism, she always added something new and something of her own. One instance was the stage design itself. While the auditorium was designed as a Vikrishta Madhyam, as per the guidelines laid out by Bharata in the Natyashastra, there was added to it a Hanamichi, which is a pathway that passes right through the audience to the main stage space. The Hanamichi is essentially a Japanese concept. It not only fit right in with the stage design, infact it further heightened the performance. Walking on the Hanamichi helped me create a far more direct and intense connect with the audience.

While European, American and Russian schools of acting, their methods are very popular among theatre workers today and they are much talked about, working with Rita Ganguly opened our eyes to the riches of the Indian tradition of theatre. A new world was made available to us, and what this production truly did for us, was open the doors to classicism.

- As told to Naresh Sharma







Interview with **Jina Baishya**

Tell us about the process of preparing yourself for the role of Shakuntala.

After the whole procedure of improvisation on "Avigyanam Shankuntalam" was completed, I was the last one to join. Before this there was a workshop on Rasaswadan wherein Rita Ganguly taught us a number of things. Before starting the rehearsals she made us realize what are the things which we have to keep in mind.

As a preparation for the play, we saw different aspects of dance forms like Kathakali, etc. Rita Ji told us that one can initiate the ideas from there and also told us that we don't have to perform in the same way as others have done. She suggested that we can only take idea from there and should innovate the existing things into our own way.

The workshop was an eye opener for us. While working on the script, I was a bit tense because I have Hindi language problems but

Rita Ji supported me by saying that I don't need to worry about the language. She told me to concentrate only on what she was making me learn. She told me to learn that with full dedication. I just followed her instructions. She made us understand various aspects like how to work with body postures, body movements and how can integrate it in classical form for the stage.

Before this production, I had performed in many realistic plays. Confronting with the partner was our common habit but moving on to this play's rehearsal, we were finding it difficult to speak in front of the stage to the spectators. I was in a bit in dilemma because if I see straight then I will not be able to make expressions. Hence, Rita Ji was made us learn and practice while looking straight onto the wall. We followed the Rita Ji's advice strictly. She is very short tempered but on the other hand very hard working and supportive too. She made us relaxed and asked us not to take any tension.

There was also Asif Ali sir, he also helped us a lot on scripting aspect.

My classical training in the dance forms like Bharatnatyam and Saktiya was an advantage while working for this play. Hence, I didn't face many problems related to body postures and gestures. Making different gestures with the dialogues was not an easy task. For almost two weeks, we thought it will not be possible for us to continue because if we are trapped in dialogues then we will lack playing with emotions at the same time. Rita Ji keep telling us that we will spoil NSD's name if we were to perform like this!

Actually I don't know how we did it, merely 20-25 days were left and it was going on itself. For improvisation in our body postures and body movements, Rita Ji advised us to watch Kangra paintings. How the emotions work with different body gestures because at that times when I was concentrating on speech my emotions were not accompanying it.





was looking fake. I was determined from inside that I have to dedicate myself completely to this so that I could give my best performance. It was quite a struggle to work with my inner dialogues. Rita Ji worked patiently. Now even I didn't know how that entire process came to an end. Finally when we were doing rehearsals with the costumes and lighting effects we realized that we were getting somewhere for which we were waiting for so long.

Normally as an actor we are used to seeing the co-actor in front of us and emoting. We will listen to his or her dialogues and from eyes, we will take inner expressions but now under the guidance of Rita Ji during this

play, we got an advantage of not seeing the co-actor's eye and could still emote. In this production Rita Ji used different poems so that was very unique. I just hope that the audience also enjoyed the poems which we used in between the play. It was the first production which innovatively used the poetry idea in Kalidas' "Shakuntala". Earlier, we were also finding it odd that we were speaking Urdu in a Kalidas' play but it worked. In this production, I have learnt how to synchronize and integrate the 4 different concept namely emotion with mudra, while watching straight also keeping co-actor aside. I wasn't even sure that I will be able to do these things but it all happened and ended well.

We knew that nothing will go wrong because the costumes, the designs and other things which Rita Ji had selected will work on the stage in totality, audience will also like it but we weren't finding ourselves happy during the first show. We were sharing the same feeling among the students. During the first show I myself was feeling that this show should end up soon because I wasn't getting that energy which I wanted to. I was doing it forcefully as I was playing with my own experiment. In the 2nd and 3rd show things were coming itself to me.

- As told to Naresh Sharma







Interview with **Annapurna Soni**

Tell us about your role in 3 stories of "Bitter fruit" and how did you prepare for it.

It is very difficult for an actor to voice the process and the achievements in retrospection, particularly after many, many months when the remnants of the role got dissolved in various other characters, on stage and off stage. I did three roles based on three different stories – Ek Ladki, Dus Rupaiya, and Thanda Gosht – all by an extremely complex and layered writer called Shahadat Hasan Manto.

The process of Ms. Mansingh was one of most evocative ones; she does not give a definite route to reach the character but detours all the stereotyped approaches that an actor formulates in her mind with sounds, images, questions, and her own histrionics. She is an extraordinary person with an extra ordinary mind, who refuses to accept any set pattern to approach a character; all the time I

decided to take a clichéd path she came up with this indomitable question – why the character can't do something completely oppositional to your thought.

The three roles were certainly belonging to three different bodies, experiences and mind set. Ek Ladki was one of the most challenging roles I have ever faced in which I had to create a pretended innocence and enjoy the presence being voyeur-ized by the offensive gaze of the patriarch to eventually take up on revenge. The whole sequence on the swing was difficult because I had to show that I know I am being seen but not to show to my seer that I have seen the seeing. That created the ambience of innocence which eventually would evolve into one of the most spectacular visualization of violence - the murder by spitting blood from my own mouth. The challenge as an actress was to find the moment of initiating the self into a murderous one flipping it from feigned

innocence. It has to be believable to the audience and at the same time the peripeteia of the narrative. The strategy was to put the moment of decision outside in the body so that the audience can visibly observe the transition from a simulated self into a 'being'.

Dus Rupaiya was even more difficult because it is a further twisted tale of innocence. It is the story of a girl for whom a little selling of the body is unimportant but the greater pleasure lies in the joyride in a car. This subverted notion of pleasure from sexual to ephemeral and also being able to value it by refusing the dus rupaiya had to be hunted within the 'emotion memory' of my own childhood. The adult Annapurna and the juvenile Annapurna both had to be presented in simultaneity by the actor Annapurna. My reading of gestus where a gesture has both the psychological and political value had helped me to find a body belonging to both child and adult.

Thanda Gosht was another nightmare for the young actress. The elaborate description by Manto of this heftier, voluptuous, and clear and present woman is far from images poured on to the construction of Annapurna the person and actor. Moreover, the role is not about what happens to her, but about what happens to other people which are being reported to her. This absence of presence and also the presence of the absence in the reported action is often the most challenging for an actor to portray. I had to be on stage but be absent from the action. I am the person to whom to whom one of the most spectacular tale of perversion is being reported to, in which I have hardly a role to play. Am I mere listener? Or my presence changes the reporting? Am I there, or am I not? Do I become an accomplice in the crime by being confessed to? Or can I plead my innocence of just being informed? Am I an active agent or a passive agent? Is my inaction a deeper acceptance of the riot rape in the garb of sympathy for the fallen man who is confessing? Do I still love him or not?

There are many more, other decisions and inquisitions that I had to undertake and face while performing the above roles but within the scope of a small reaction; I may term it as a small bolero on the edge of innocence.

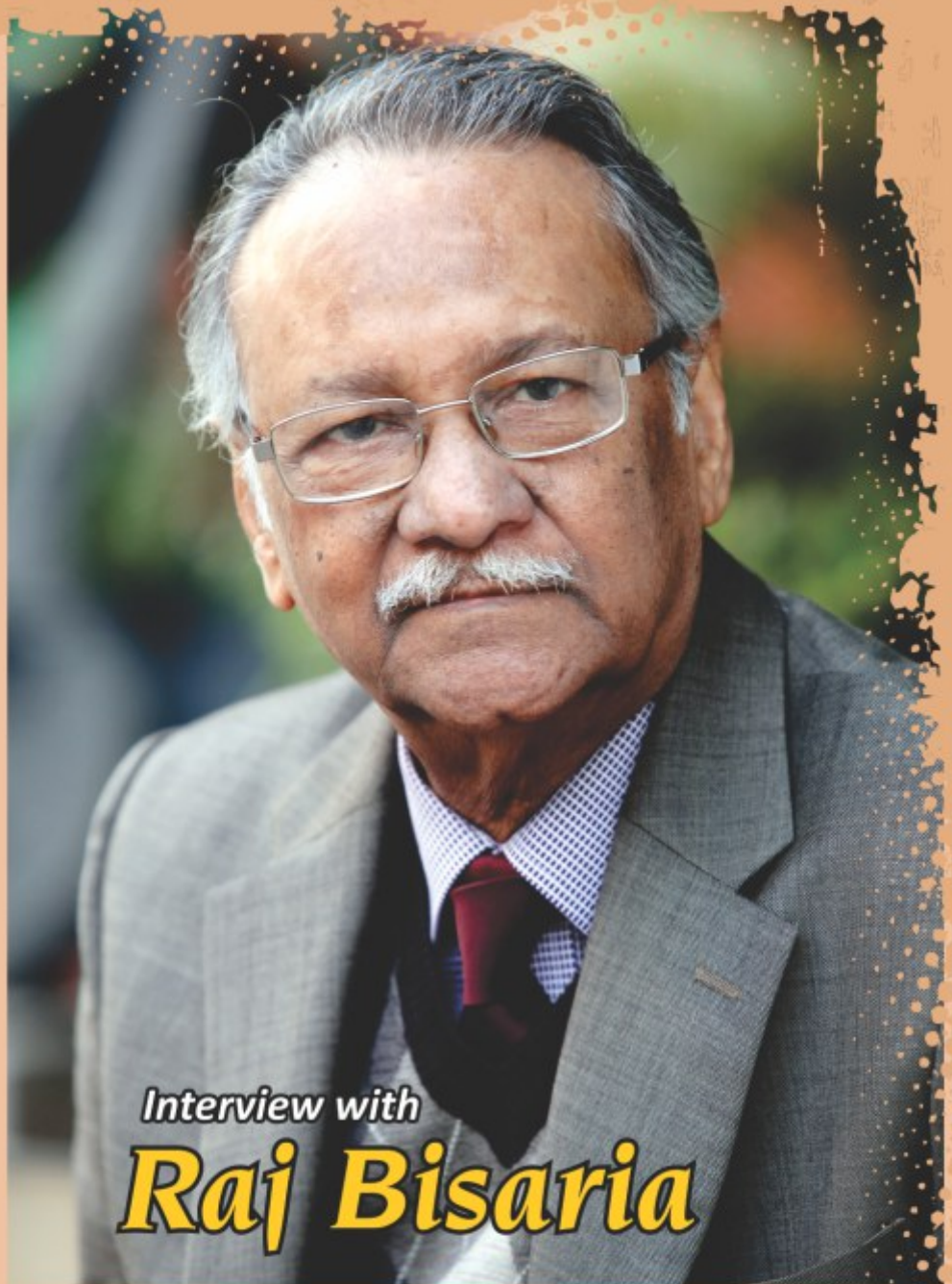
- As told to Naresh Sharma





What are the things you take care of while Directing Student's production so that it should not only be a professional production , but also a learning experience for students?

Everything. For instance, the actor's craft, his technique and his imagination, skills, and above all characterization because if you are doing Shakespeare, he is known for his psychological insight. It is not working in its external form but students need to understand the human problems. They are young people. They have to understand because all these things are beyond their everyday experience, be it a political problem or it is a man women problem, struggle problem, they have to be brought up emotionally, culturally , intellectually to face the text. So that is the first preposition, and then how did they go about it. This means that special kind of orientation which has to take place vis-à-vis acting, emoting and this cannot be loud. There are also lots of misconceptions about Shakespeare. For some people Shakespeare is very loud and yet he is to be very stagy. Now there is a world of difference between theatrical and stagy but also in the 19th and 20th century theatre scene Shakespeare was very loud because that was his style. Realistic and naturalistic acting came much later, in films as well as in theater. It was very little in Hindi theatre because there is no professional Hindi theater till date. People have been getting inspiration either from Stanislavski or for people from America or from England. Now sea changes have taken place in England so far as Shakespeare is concerned. It is not stagy or theatrical because the auditoria have changed. There is more closeness with the audience. We don't have to rave and rant. In any case what was very important is what Shakespeare says in his own play "Hamlet". He gives 10- 15 lines where Hamlet talks to the players in the play, the play within the play, and there he spells out exactly what quality of acting, what kind of acting he wants and if you read that then it is very modern , very realistic, naturalistic and psychologically very valid. So I had to bring up my students to understand all this because if they are working in form, as in "Yakshagana" or Kathakali, Nautanki or Jatra. Then there are



Interview with **Raj Bisaria**

different demands on them but once you come and do the historical play Macbeth, the characters are life like, they are real, the problem is real and psychological whether there is ambition in Macbeth or it is man-women relationship or it is the problem of love or jealousy. Now in Othello there are human things. We are no different from the times of Shakespeare. To disabuse the mind, I can make them understand how in a historical perspective we have to bring about truthfulness of human emotions. Apart from all the inputs that go into the production, it is lighting. Obviously, if one is going to do lighting, I am not going to do disco lighting and I am not going to use the word mood. I

am going to do lighting which is appropriate to the theatrical and dramatic demands of the scene.

One small spot in a very half-lit scene has to be decided upon through artistic choice. The costume has to be authentic because we are really creating Rome. I am not doing production in Jeans and T-shirts, it can be done in jeans and T-shirts but because the problem is very old and the same problem in politics continues today, such as a person's ambition, jealousy, etc. All these things are not new, they are always there. Only the context is historical today, our life is not historical. Two hundred years later even our life



will be historical in another perspective. So I don't have to choose, sometimes there is pseudo kind of obsession with making things modern by giving modern clothes. We don't make play modern by giving modern clothes. The sensibility has to be modern. In Shakespeare, the sensibility is modern, be it Romeo & Juliet, the problem is modern, whether it be King Lear, it's a family problem, but you have that problem in India, the feudal problem, the property problem, the family problem now this will not be there in England today, but it's very much there in India.

You have directed this play earlier and must have seen this play directed by others, So how do you bring the freshness when you directed this time?

When you fall in love, you experience the emotion for the first time. You may read all the poems on love by Shakespeare or by Pant, Muktibodh, Mirza Galib or by Rumi. Every time you experience something, you experience through your own psychical inputs. That's how you interpret. Love is a very old thing so is hate but when you hate for the first time you hate then you have your own electric charges but then it goes hopefully into some kind of a creative expression. I have done this production three times. Firstly, I don't repeat my productions. If I do, I repeat a play, not a production. For some specific reasons, I did this in 1984 with the students of my drama academy in Lucknow and later in the year 1990. Some of those elements are in this play but this is totally





new because it is being devised to give students an exposure to recreate an age with poetic and symbolic inputs so that they may understand and at the same time make it relevant to the today's audience. For instance, there is an eagle on the proscenium. What does the Eagle stand for? It was the symbol of the Roman People. Your bird is peacock, the motive that I have done on the stage outside is that. I have broken the proscenium because I don't work on the prosceniums. I want to bring act close to the audience as you have seen at the end of the play. The climax of the play takes in the audience, the death of Brutus and he goes to the audience. So there again, no play of Shakespeare is realistic. In the same manner, there is no realistic play in Sanskrit theatre, but it is within parameters of human realism and the problem is how to interpret it.

Why did you opt for 2 intervals in the play?

I have three climaxes in the play after the 3rd Act. In the 3rd scene the play actually crumbles if you have read Shakespeare. My production does not crumble after the death of Caesar but I have so much to do after that too. Now I wish I could have a set equal to my artistic concept, but this is not Moscow,

this is not England where I have machinery and I can fly things. Here it is a very old fashioned theatre where people sit straight. My first professional production was in 1966 and it was a proscenium stage. Now in this country there are no proscenium stages and when there is no proscenium stage, the culture is not thrust. In Sri Ram Centre the culture is not thrust, in Kamani auditorium the culture is not thrust. I have this massive set but there is no place to keep it in the wings. It has to be moved out and this is necessary to create historical and physical reality of the play for the students to understand. In Hindi play they understand Jaipur or Ujjain. What do they know about Rome? I have given Corinthian columns, I have given the backdrop. Today the fashion is to have installation. When one has installation, then one is bringing multimedia, film into it, slide into it. I don't want all that. I am bringing physical reality for you with depth, with perspective. So you see? What was the structure like? How were the people? Can I do Henrik Ibsen's 'A doll's house' on a bare stage. People must understand when they come to see the play what are the confines, artistic demands and artistic canvas of the production.

Why do people want to have it in

one go. Why don't they cut it into two intervals? When you see something on television, don't you get up and peddle and have a cup of coffee. Why doesn't one object to advertisements on TV? The movement is not only physical continuity. It is to have a dramatic link. One has to ask why should the interval have to come? Is it only because of the change of the scene? No, there is a change in the graph of the play and that's why my interval takes place. People don't make interval of 7 minutes. One just has time to go out to the wash room and to have a cold-drink on a hot day. There are a lot of things that go into as a producer. One cannot call this a Raj Bisaria Production because this has been produced by National School of Drama. Usually, I do my own things, but have you seen my columns that I have erected? There are 10 Corinthian columns. These Corinthian columns are all over in Europe today since 1500. If you go to America or to Washington you see the same thing. You will not find the same kind of architecture influencing your parliament house. It is the Latin thing. For this reason, I am also giving you a historical connect.

- As told to Naresh Sharma



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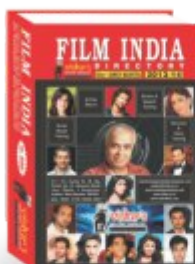
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