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CINEMATOGRAPHY ART

a quarterly Magazine

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Jehangir Choudhary

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 on Film Making

Digital Archiving
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Vision For FTII
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SHORTCUT SAFAARI

DIRECTOR
AMITABHA SINGH

Nature Ki Missed Call

A FILM BY AMITABHA SINGH PRODUCED BY XEBEC FILMS KASHYAP A. SHAH & AMIGOS FIN-O-TAINMENT

CASTING BY JIMMY SHEIRGILL, AASHI RAWAL, STUTI DWIVEDI, DEAH TANDON, SHARVIL PATEL, HARDIL KANABAR, MANN PATEL & UGAM KHETANI

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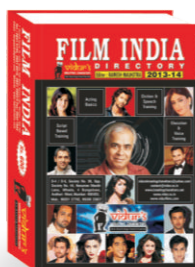
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Editor's Desk

Dear Readers,

Greetings of the New Year!

This is the 12th issue and the journey so far has been very exciting. In every issue we try to include sections on film making which have not been covered so far. This time there are two sections which are new - VOD and Film Archiving.

Many a times you hear about various art house films but don't know where to view them. The new VOD Platform – "Filmkarvan" is the answer to all those searches specializing in Indian cinema.

The other new section is on "Cinehive" - New age film archiving. If you are a film producer and after investing crores of rupees in your film, have been going through the nightmare of recovering your film data from the normal hard disk which has crashed, you can breathe a sigh of relief. Our indigenous techno boy has come out with a solution called Cinehive. You will find details about Cinehive and how an Indian producer can benefit from their services without spending much money.

The regular section carries interviews with DOP Jahangir Choudhury, Chirantan Das and Sajee Nair. Amongst the latest releases you get an insight on the location sound of "Bajirao Mastani".

The live performing art of theater has always fascinated me. Particularly if it happens to be the work of NSD students or a repertory production, you will always find something to contemplate. The current issue has the views of two artists who were the lead performers in "Vidyottama" directed by Mohan Maharishi and "Where I left my Pardha" directed by Shantanu Bose.

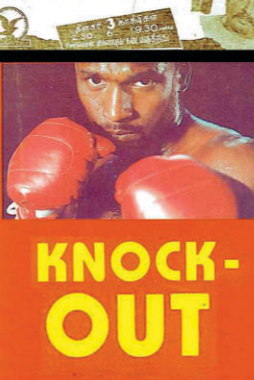
In future issues we are keen to include more detailed aspects related to the film business as many a times the new generation directors put their money and make good films without bothering much about the distribution possibilities. It is getting highly specialized as it involves many other experts who will take care of their respective departments.

While we continue to explore more aspects of the new age film making for you, hope you have a good time reading the current selection. So, until the next issue...Happy Reading!!!

Cheers!!

Naresh Sharma

naresh.sharma@log2craft.org





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Urban Sodium

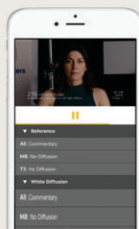


210
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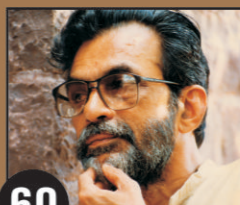
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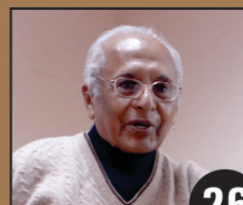
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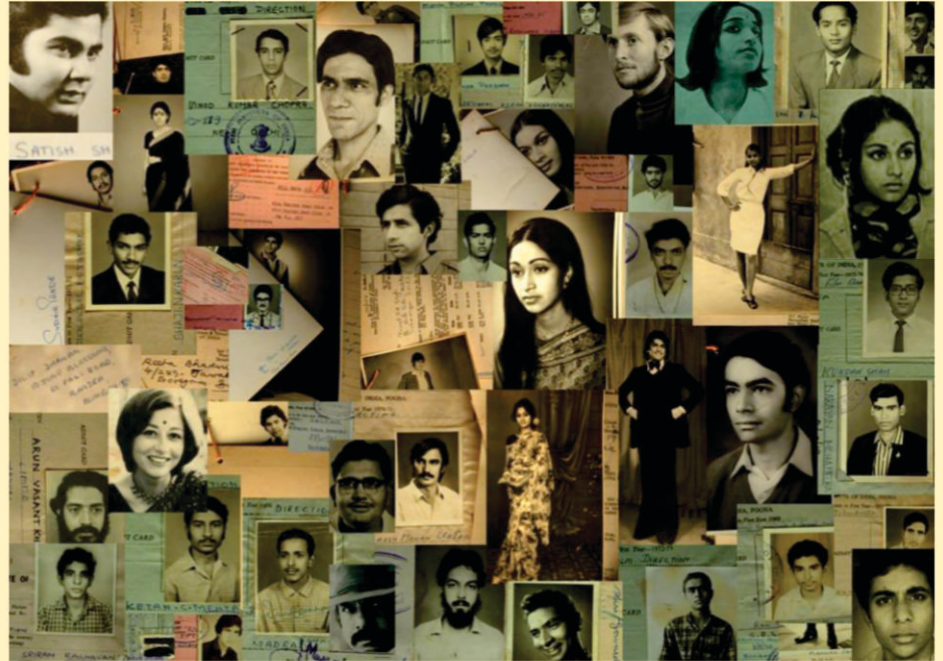
AN OPEN LETTER TO GAJENDRA CHAUHAN

Dear Mr. Chauhan,

Only a few fortunate people get the opportunity to be appointed as the chairman of a premier institution like FTII Pune. We all know that these appointments are highly influenced by the ruling political party, an influence you certainly have as a party member of BJP.

As you are aware that the FTII students protested mainly at your and 3 other governing body members appointment and went on to strike for 139 days. You as well as the government failed to anticipate at that time that there could be a strike and a strong protest at an appointment which is more of a 'favour' by the government rather than an appointment of a deserving candidate for the FTII Chairman's post. It was a question of 'credibility and vision' that was required as qualification. You knew it fully well that your credibility is not that strong and to me what is more important is 'vision', which you have not shown. I wish that instead of the press declaring your appointment, you should have immediately gone after your appointment with the 'Agenda' to address the students' GBM about how you intend to raise the standard of FTII academics and would be keen to seek their suggestions to add to your agenda. There was a possibility that students would have been impressed with your vision and would not have bothered much about your credibility and hence not thought about the strike as the fact remains that in the past many people who came as the FTII chairman with 'strong credibility' hardly did anything worth mentioning. But you missed the bus to strike a rapport with the students and what happened immediately after your announcement as the chairman to the press is history.

In a student driven organization like FTII, the students were already totally against you and you committed another mistake. The dust has not yet settled and you went to FTII with police force on 7th



Some of the Important FTII Alumni

Jan, 2016 as though you were going to a battle field rather than to attend the first governing body meeting. If you had this fear of confrontation with students then you could have called upon this first official meeting in Delhi/Bombay and continue to do so till the FTII is appointed with a proper director, who will have the wisdom to settle the issues with the students.

I personally believe that as the chairman of FTII one may not have seen world cinema but to head an organization like FTII one definitely needs to have 'administrative capability, vision and compassion for students'. In your case none of which has been displayed so far. You may be tempted to say that in the 1980's people like Dr. L. M. Singhvi, who had nothing to do with theater, were appointed as the chairman of National School of Drama (NSD) but to me he was undoubtedly a visionary and that's what qualified him for that post.

FTII is considered a premier institution for 4 major reasons.

- It offers highly specialized courses on various aspects of film making

against the general mass communication course run by various universities.

- Expensive equipment facilities, sound & editing studios and shooting floors with a spacious residential campus are provided at an economical price.
- Support from NFAI for screening and library.
- Most importantly: "Well placed FTII Alumni of 50 years".

I wish that any director who gets appointed through your influence should take care of the FTII and work in tandem with the students' requirements and at least pay attention to the following for the uplift of students and the FTII as an institution that has contributed to the growth of Indian Cinema.

1. Preservation and online availability of FTII films: There should be a preservation wing for FTII Diploma films. If one wants to see any diploma film, how can one see them? There is no mechanism in place from where one can download an .avi file in a legal way. If there is one then FTII can also generate a small revenue from this. It will showcase FTII's students' work which will serve as a benchmark for other upcoming and existing Indian film schools. I remember that at some point of time there was a wisdom tree festival in Bombay during which a 'Collection of FTII Diploma' - DVD was released and that's it. Today an MOU with any VOD company like 'Film Karvan' can be of great help.

2. Promotion of FTII students' films: Management should be more concerned about how the students can make the best out of their film project exercises like dialogue/song/diploma films. There should be sufficient budget for all the 10 student diploma films to be submitted by FTII to at least 50-100 film festivals where the selection committee of various festivals can choose what appeals to them. These films should be made available for buying via hard copy catalogue as well as DVDs and also with an option to download at VOD platforms at an economical price.

3. Promotion of FTII package:

There should be consistent follow up with various festivals all over the world so that retrospectives of FTII films can be showcased internationally.

4. Free DCP to graduating students: Since 35mm print is replaced by DCP, FTII should provide graduating students with their films in various formats like Blue Ray/DVD/ .mov/ DCP free of cost.

5. Equipment demonstration by companies: Every month some or the other new equipment is there in the market. There should be a staff responsible to follow up with various company representatives to ask them to come to FTII and give a demo to the students. It should be an initiative from FTII's side and not from the companies' who write to FTII occasionally but not regularly.

6. Latest equipment: Besides the 'planned budget', FTII should also make efforts like IIMC/NID to generate funds from various foundations like the FORD for buying latest equipment/organizing seminars and participate in various events organized by the European Council. Its academic council needs to propose a list of such equipment so that a budget can be planned for it.

7. Inviting guest faculty: FTII itself has well established alumni who are really busy in Bombay and other parts of the country. There should be a dedicated team to do follow up work via email, SMS and calls to invite them for lectures and workshops. These invitations should also be extended to non-FTII professionals. In this manner, students will build a rapport with working professionals. This will help them at the time of entering the industry. I am not saying that this is not happening but it is only 30% of what it should be. This initiative has to be taken up collectively by "FTII Admin & students representative" by developing a database of emails and mobile numbers of professionals in order to coordinate with them.

8. Extract the best from your regular teachers: A good academic institution will provide both 'knowledge and wisdom'. Professionals who are regularly teaching in FTII may not be the

ones who have done wonders in their film making career but they certainly possess enough experience and 'Knowledge' which can help students to acquire the basic fundamental knowledge. Students should try to make the best out of them. The 'Wisdom' part could be provided by the guest faculty. FTII management should provide the regular faculty with the latest teaching aids like lap tops and updated projection system in class rooms. Dedicated teachers like Karuppiyah Ayyathurai need to be sent to international technical fairs like IBC Amsterdam and the NAB show.

9. Ex-FTII alumni Relationship: The unique strength of FTII is the alumni who are well placed in the industry. No other film institute in this country can boast of such an illustrious alumni. The management should concentrate on frequent interaction opportunities between the current students and the alumni so that they can develop a rapport and the students can seek their help while entering the industry. FTII management needs to understand that today many other film schools/media institutes are coming up due to the NFAI getting condensed into a small hard disk and affordable digital film making where the former FTII students are heading them and using their personal contacts to place their students in the industry. It will be more and more difficult for FTII students to find assistantship in the near future. So it's high time due attention is paid to extract the best from the FTII alumni.

10. More budget: If one compares the budget allocation for 2014-2015, one would note that NSD received a budget of Rs. 5265 lakhs whereas FTII got only Rs. 2555 lakhs. One needs to keep in mind that theater hardly adds to the entertainment tax while cinema does so in a big way. FTII students suffer by not having scholarships for all the students like NSD students who get Rs. 6,000 each per month for 3 years. FTII should appeal to the ministry of I & B for more budget to be allocated to them.

11. Increment in diploma film production budget: Since diploma film production costs a lot to direction students in terms of getting artists, hiring locations and property etc and hardly anybody from the camera, sound

or editing team contributes. It is important that a minimum of Rs. 2 lakhs should be allocated to the final year diploma production budget. This amount could vary and can be decided by academic council after mutual consultation with the direction students.

12. International Networking Opportunities: FTII students should get 70% part payment refund from FTII and travel and lodging allowance if they register to attend events like the 'Film Bazaar' during the Goa film festival/Film seminars like 'FICCI FRAMES' where participation fee is around Rs. 13000 plus.

13. Collaborative programs with various European organizations: There are many funds of collaborative nature in which 2-3 organizations are participants. FTII with a strong credibility should certainly participate like the IIMC, which is very active on this front. These programs will give them opportunity to visit foreign countries where one can seek co-production funding. FTII management should concentrate on how FTII students can participate in such initiatives.

14. Students' Placement Cell: Many FTII students would like to make an independent career but if there is a placement cell or at least if there is someone responsible for job placement then it would surely help many students who are out of work after graduating during their initial phase.

15. Artistic Website: Today, at a time when things are getting more internet oriented and look is the hottest buzzword, FTII's website is certainly the 'most non-artistic' looking website for a film school which is supposed to produce artists. It is high time that this website is thoroughly updated with proper email address of various imp People working in FTII and faculty and Administrative staff.

16. Shooting Floors and Accessories: Shooting Floors need to be upgraded with modern catwalk and students should be provided with other shooting accessories like Rosco/lee diffusion material than the typical thermocol and gateway papers.

17. Residency program to produce

films: Director Ketan Mehta's 'Holi' was produced under such an initiative where FTII provided the equipment and necessary facilities and Adlabs came forward as a collaborative partner. Today when FTII has all the equipment, why can't it produce at least 2 films in a year where senior alumni can be invited to direct the films? It will give a professional opportunity for few students to work as assistants and some live activity for the FTII.

18. Database of film professionals: Half of the telephone numbers of Film India/Screen directories are not working. Since FTII gets students from all over the country and they will go to work in their native place, it is high time a team needs to be appointed to make a database of Bollywood and regional film industry where a regular faculty could be made in charge with a team of students who will work for it.

19. FTII Publications Unit: NSD should be the source of inspiration for FTII as it has a regular publication on theater. FTII has only 'LENS SIGHT' which is regularly published by the personal efforts of Indranil Bhattacharya and Chandrasekhar Joshi. There can be regular publications about various aspects of cinema and about FTII alumni's work who has contributed a lot in their respective field.

20. Monthly Seminars: As Bombay is close to FTII, management can collaborate with current students to have monthly seminars where more and more professionals can be invited to the FTII campus.

21. Beautification of FTII: Greenery is important but still the campus can be made more beautiful. There is a swimming pool but it appears as if it is not there. There is hardly any need to mention the rest of the part which is neither green nor decorated with stone tiles. There should be sufficient funds allocated to make FTII look like a truly international film school rather than an old dilapidated building.

22. Travel grant corpus fund for FTII students: A corpus fund needs to be set up so that FTII can provide travel grants to the students to attend at least one film festival each for direction stream

students if their final year diploma film gets selected in some reputed international film festival. FTII management should prepare a list of such festivals in consultation with students.

1. FTII alumni website should be controlled by FTII itself and should not be left with GRAFITII as sometimes they may not have enough funds to maintain it regularly. It should have data downloading facilities of the add/email/contact no. of the alumni in .xl file also so that in case FTII needs to send couriers to its ex-students for any function etc, one can easily convert .xl file into labels for printing purpose.

This is an output if one mind contemplates, but had you involved 120 minds of the FTII students community and not to mention 900 plus ex-students and other academic intelligentsia to prepare the agenda to work upon for FTII, this institution would have been a paradise rather than what it is. But Oops!!! This is my result oriented approach and I of course am NOT Mr. Chauhan.

For Students, I would just like to remind you what Jesus said.... "Forgive them, for they know not what they do". High time for you to know what you are doing, and show foresight as chairman of "FTII". □□□

“



Naresh Sharma is a Graduate From FTII, Pune in 1993 & Founder of CRAFT Film School in Delhi.

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“ ”

interview with

Dharam Gulati,

"Coordinator and Treasurer"

Bombay GraFTII.

regarding activities of GraFTII

You have been associated with GraFTII, the Alumni Association of FTII for many years. What general things, steps & plans has Graffiti been making and implementing from time to time?

GraFTII being an Alumni Association works like a bridge between the alumni and FTII, we keep in touch with the director and faculty of FTII regularly and we offer any help like providing guest lecturers, contractual faculty, external examiners etc.

We have an e-group of almost 900 alumni where we keep in touch and share information about our personal life, Film Festivals, Seminars & Workshops, world of cinema, technology, FTII etc.

We organised retrospectives of K.K Mahajan and Renu Saluja in Mumbai. I think we screened 16 films of theirs and all the shows were houseful. We published a book of Renu Saluja's work in which alumni and industry professionals shared their personal and professional experiences with her.

We had planned to do lot of big things but raising fund has been a big problem, as GraFTII doesn't have any regular source of income like yearly membership etc. We thought with

our alumni's creative contribution, GraFTII can produce some TV shows, that way we would be helping alumni to get employment and GraFTII can also raise some funds. So the idea was to make 52 episodes of different stories, which were to be directed by alumni like Saeed Mirza, David Dhawan, Pankaj Parashar, Ketan Mehta, Kundan Shah, Sriram Raghvan etc. I had spoken to some of them and they willingly agreed to do this for GraFTII. Somehow it went on till certain point smoothly but then some hurdles came up and it didn't materialize till the end.

We created our own website where alumni can upload their show reel, bio-data, pictures, articles, it has everything but the only unfortunate part is that we don't get that many footfalls. We are working on the ways to increase the footfalls so that we can get some advertisers to put their ads on our site.

Graffiti has been getting our alumni some laurels by way of recommending them for Padma Awards and some of our recommendations have been accepted also. This year also we have recommended some names and we hope we will get some this year too.

Apart from that we have our annual alumni dinner where GraFTII honours all those alumni who have won prestigious awards like Padma, National etc. for that year and we meet the new comers, catch up with old friends, relive our days spent at FTII, discuss cinema and bit of gossip too. Last year GraFTII team worked very hard to locate some of our alumni like Rehana Sultan, Vikram, Sabiha, who had been out of the circle. We had almost 300 alumni and some of them traveled all the way from Chennai, Bangalore, Kerala, Delhi, and Bhopal etc for this annual meet. We had among us, Subhash Ghai, Shatrughan Sinha, David Dhawan, Kumar Shahani, Santosh Sivan, Pankuj Parashar, Zarina Wahab, Satish Shah, Kanwaljit, Rameshwari, Sriram Raghvan etc.

Somehow GraFTII has been managing whatever is possible with our limited resources.

Oh yeah... And we have some big plans for the future, of having our own Awards and building a mini theatre with a library.

Can you elaborate on this library plan?

We are thinking of building a library of Indian and world cinema for the alumni and film enthusiasts. We will have a mini theatre where alumni can come and watch movies from the library or screen their own films, share their experience of making that film & interact with the invites. We will be requesting our alumni to donate their personal collection of films and books for the library. But the only problem is the space. We are planning to approach the Maharashtra Govt. to allot us some space in Film City or in any of the suburb for this purpose. I don't know when will it happen? But I am sure it will happen one day.

Though there is regular faculty but guest faculty is very important for any academic institution because they share their personal experiences. So what are the efforts in that line to get experienced guest faculty for FTII?

We are in the process of creating a Talent Bank of our alumni. We are not restricting our self to FTII now, but we trying to expand our horizon. As you know there are so many media institutes have mushroomed all over. We have realized that these schools don't get right kind of faculty and the students who come to study there after taking loans etc. don't get the proper education what they deserve. We have already written to almost 40 film schools all over India and the response has been positive, in fact one of the media schools from Hyderabad wanted a permanent employee and we sent one of our alumni who have joined there.

What was the role of Graffiti Bombay particularly in coordinating with the striking students as well as with the ministry to dissolve the recent crises at FTII?

GraFTII played its role right from the onset of strike. I remember it was 12th of June when it all started. I got a call from one of my colleague in the morning saying that last night Gajender Chauhan's name was announced as chairman of the FTII society, and the students have gone on a strike as they feel FTII deserves a better person to be sitting on that chair. The first thought which came to me was that how do we put pressure on the government to undo this thing.

When I saw some of our alumni's names such as Santosh Sivan, Jahnu Barua, Rajkumar Hirani & Imo Singh in the list I called them up and requested them to resign from FTII Society to which they all agreed. I could even convince non-FTIIian Pallavi Joshi also to resign. I called up the Secretary I&B and shared my disappointment over the appointment of Mr. Chauhan.

He expressed his helplessness in this matter. Then I informed the Director that these 5 members have agreed to resign from the Society. I called the president of students union and informed him of what Graffiti has done.

So was there a meeting of Graffiti where this resolution was taken?

No, unfortunately there was no time to call for a meeting at that moment but it was my instinctive decision. I knew everybody would be on the same page because we all at GraFTII are concerned about FTII's well being. The Director did try to tell the students that we can work out some arrangement and they don't have to go on a strike but students refused to withdraw the strike. Few days later we got to know that apart from Mr. Chauhan, there are 4 more members who do not have credentials to be on that society.

In the mean time GraFTII's managing committee meeting was called and it was decided to support of the students but we thought maybe they could have taken a little more time, as there were only 25-30 students in the campus who had taken the decision to go on strike. Anyway we organized a press conference in Mumbai where Santosh Sivan, Aruna Raje, Sriram Raghavan, Jabeen Merchant & I addressed the press.

Next day Graffiti took 40 alumni to Pune by bus to express our support to the student. We spent an entire day conversing with the students. We advised them not to make this strike political as we heard some comments which we felt were not good for FTII's ethos. Students wanted alumni to support them by stopping all the shoots in the film industry, so we explained to them that this wouldn't work as producers won't cancel their shoots but replace us with other technicians. We told them that we will discuss this matter further with our other alumni in Mumbai and will let you know in which way we can make our support more effective.

In the meantime I started a back channel dialogue with the ministry and with the help of FTII director, a delegation was invited to Delhi to have a dialogue. So I called a meeting of some of the prominent alumni to suggest some names for this delegation, some of the students also came down from FTII for this meeting. After long deliberations some names were suggested from alumni and students were to suggest their participants names. Ultimately a 10 member team went to Delhi and had a meeting with the Joint Secretary first and with Mr. Jaitley later. A memorandum was handed over to Mr. Jaitley. We apprised him of all the concerns students had and suggested a committee should be formed comprising of the alumni, film makers, educationists who would formulate guidelines for selecting the members of the Society and till that time the present Society shall be kept in abeyance. He heard us very patiently for almost 45 minutes and said, "We know we haven't made a good decision but I am sorry, we can't revert this decision". And there was no clear yes or no on the formation of the committee so we came out a bit disappointed.

But few days later through my back channel contact I managed to convince the ministry to form the committee.

Who will decide about the core members of the society?

It was decided that there would be an 8-member committee, 2 members would be from I&B side, 5 members and 1 Chairman from our side. GraFTII consulted the students



and ultimately 12 names were sent to the ministry. Unfortunately, the monsoon session started at that time and Mr. Jaitley got busy with that. In the mean time students contacted Vidhu Vinod Chopra and Rajkumari Hirani to help them connect with the Minister. They took two of the students Nachimuthu and Vikas to Delhi for a meeting with Mr. Rathore and Mr. Jaitley.

So what was the conclusion, what happened in that meeting?

After long discussion it was decided that 3 objectionable members would be asked to go and students will accept Gajendra Chauhan, Vice-Chairman would be of the students' choice with some extra powers and one creative mentor, for that Vinod Chopra offered his services. It was assured that 'Institute of National Importance' bill would be introduced in the winter session. Mr. Jaitley felt that lack of infrastructure and shortage of equipment could have been the cause of backlog so he offered more funds. Students couldn't take any decision without discussing it with the general body. Unfortunately general body decided to decline the agreement after discussing it for 5 days.

Were these 13 points you told me earlier, formulated at that time?

No...These 13 points were formulated after Mr. Pathrabe took over as new director. On one fateful night some of the students kept Mr. Pathrabe in his office for long to sort out their issue of assessment. Unfortunately the next day he filed a complaint in the police station that the students forcibly stopped him to conduct his official duties.

Was that the night when students were arrested?

No, it was next day, 17 students were named in the FIR. After this everything stood at standstill; from both sides nothing was happening, even our back channels were also quite. Few days' later students requested Raj Kumar Hirani to talk to Mr. Rathore to help solve the problem. Hirani was reluctant as he was feeling embarrassed after his failed effort to sort out the strike earlier. Students told him that the ministry was not giving anything in writing at that time and if ministry agrees to their demands in writing they can restart the dialogue.

Was the 13-point agenda prepared

at that time?

Yes... Raju spoke to Mr. Rathore and I believe ministry agreed to give it in writing and Raju told Vikas to come to Vinod Chopra's office with a mandate from GBM to agree on the arrangement discussed in Delhi. Next day Vinod Chopra, Raju, Dilip Ghosh, me, around 10 students, some ex students and 2 faculty members discussed all the contentious issues again for almost 4 hours and then students drafted these 13 points. Raju was supposed to send these to Mr. Rathore the same day but students requested and said that they still need to discuss these points with the general body.

But weren't these formulated by the students and weren't they told to come with the mandate from General Body?

Yes... They were supposed to... But they went back to the general body...

And once again general body did not agree to this deal. I think 4-5 days later an Art Direction faculty member decided to sit on the hunger strike on his own. Then students also decided to escalate the strike and three students also joined the hunger strike.

As students had backed out on their word, Government was not willing to talk to the students anymore. Once again it was status quo...

I think it was two weeks after the hunger strike, one of our alumni who have been in touch with the students requested me to help as the health of the students was deteriorating. I don't know he approached me on his own or was sent by some of the students. I told him that talks can happen only in a conducive atmosphere and strike had been escalated too much by the hunger strike. He told me that the students didn't want to talk to the ministry through the alumni but were ready to talk to with the ministry directly and were ready to take back the hunger strike if ministry gives them the date to talk. So I got back to the Ministry and told them that if ministry talks to the student directly they are ready to take back the hunger strike. Ministry sent a mail on Sunday to the student with the date of meeting in Film Division Mumbai. The hunger strike was taken back on the same day and four meetings took place between the ministry representatives and students where all those 13 points were discussed thoroughly and then a meeting was fixed with Mr. Rathore to take the final decision. Our alumni Aruna Raje was there as an observer.

Was nothing finally concluded in that meeting?

The points where both the parties couldn't come to any agreement were, what kind of extra powers should be given to the Vice Chairman and removal of those 3 objectionable members and the acceptance of Mr. Gajendra Chauhan as was agreed upon earlier. I don't know whether the ministry back-tracked on the earlier agreed points or students changed their stance? According to the ministry students kept insisting that Gajendra Chauhan plus 4 members should be removed.

I believe Mr. Rathore did not have a mandate to take a call on that and since he was traveling that week, he told them that he would come back and discuss it further next week. Mr. Mukesh Sharma from Films Division was sent to FTII to take the requirements for new

equipment from the students as I believe was agreed upon in the meetings. But the students refused to talk to him as they had already decided to withdraw the strike but to continue with the protest.

Why do you think they withdrew it all of a sudden after continuing it for 139 days and when so much support was coming from other quarters also?

I don't know. I can't comment on that because it was their battle, they started it and they decided to withdraw it. GraFTII's stand, right from the beginning has been to support them in whichever way we can. Whenever they wanted any help from us we were always there. In fact we fixed up their meetings with the ministry through the back channel. We organized press conferences, appealed to our alumni to support them, when they needed funds, we gave them our data bank and I believe they collected sufficient amount from our alumni.

Couple of film makers, majority of which are from FTII have returned their awards as their protest without demanding anything in specific. Do you think this will help the movement?

I don't know. I feel this is a very personal thing. Some people have returned the awards but there are many more who have not. I feel if they really wanted to put pressure, they should have made it very clear that they were returning it in support of FTII, may be then it would have helped but they diluted it by clubbing it with other issues.

Major agenda of any alumni is the betterment of the institution they belong to. So, what are the plans now, or how can the ministry be persuaded for the betterment of the institution?

What I personally feel is that we definitely need transparency in the process of selecting the right kind of professionals to run FTII. Graffiti as a stakeholder can definitely help the government by recommending some of our alumni who can contribute a lot in making FTII a world-class institute. In fact we have drafted a blue print for FTII's betterment and hopefully we will be handing it over to the ministry soon.

Another major thing that has been going on for past couple of years is the Centre of Excellence. How will it help the institute if it becomes a Centre of Excellence?

One thing we have to understand is that FTII is a totally different institute from any other educational institutes. In any other institute a qualified man who is either a PhD or M.Phil. fills the post of a HOD but there are no such degrees in the art of Cinema. Apart from this FTII has been suffering as no one wants to come and teach there because pay scales are very low. So the constitution of FTII needs to be changed. Mr. Jaitley had announced to give FTII the status of 'Institute of National Importance'. Once it gets that status, more funds will come in, pay scales will go up, the infrastructure will become better and equipment will get upgraded which will help improve lot of things.

There was an effort going on with the association of Indian Universities to upgrade FTII's diploma to a degree level. Has anything been finalized on that front?

Our application for up gradation is there but unfortunately I think it was not submitted the way it should have been. FTII asked for their diploma to be up graded to graduate degree but it should have asked for a master's degree because students come to FTII after doing graduation and spend another 3 years to complete their courses. There are courses of 2 years duration also, which could have been treated as graduate courses. The technical hitch is that if we change our request now then according to the new UGC's rules they will not consider our application. That's why, for now we will accept the up gradation as we have applied for but we are hoping once FTII becomes 'Institute of National Importance', it would be giving master degrees also in the Art of Cinema.

But what about those people who have already graduated?

As one of the stake holders, GraFTII would demand that diplomas awarded in the past should also be treated as degrees by issuing a notification.

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Film
Bazaar

Reflections of

Shoojit Sircar

on his various Films

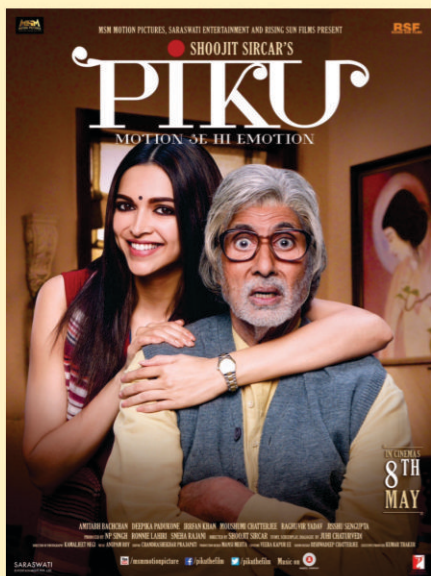


January - March 2016

Few years ago, in the FICCI Frames Conference, filmmaker Gurinder Chadha mentioned the reaction of British people, who after watching the film, 'Vicky Donor' in UK, felt that "Indian Cinema has arrived".

This is certainly true in every sense of the word. Director Shoojit Sircar has since then carried the flagship of Indian cinema through his subsequent films, 'Madras Café' & 'Piku'. The latter having won the Filmfare Award in 5 categories in 2016.

We bring you excerpts from an interview with Shoojit Sircar conducted by Anuradha Sengupta, during the Knowledge Series session held at the Film Bazaar, Goa, 2015.



Sansar' when the father comes back from Kolkata and he has not seen his son since his birth who is now 4 years old and he is leaving him and doesn't want to take him back but something happens to him and he takes the boy on his shoulder and he is walking away. I howled in the cinema hall after watching it. That's the kind of impact it had. I try and take influences and references from his films and adopt it in all my films. I think it's the basic for any film student who wants to come to films. He has to study Satyajit Ray for sure. His castings are absolutely real from life. One of my favorite actors is Rabi Ghosh. I think that he is one of the finest actors in India cinema. Piku's music was influenced a lot from Ray's music and Apu trilogy.

Influence of Satyajit Ray:

Satyajit Ray has been my mentor, teacher, though I never met him. Later I started doing theatre in Delhi and I watched 'Pather Panchali' again in Delhi during the International Film Festival of India. I cried after watching this film. It is one of my favorite film. Whenever I feel low, I just pick up 'Pather Panchali' and 'Apur Sansar' and I love watching those films because of their purity, simplicity of storytelling without gimmicks. One of my favorite shots is the last shot in 'Apur

On Piku:

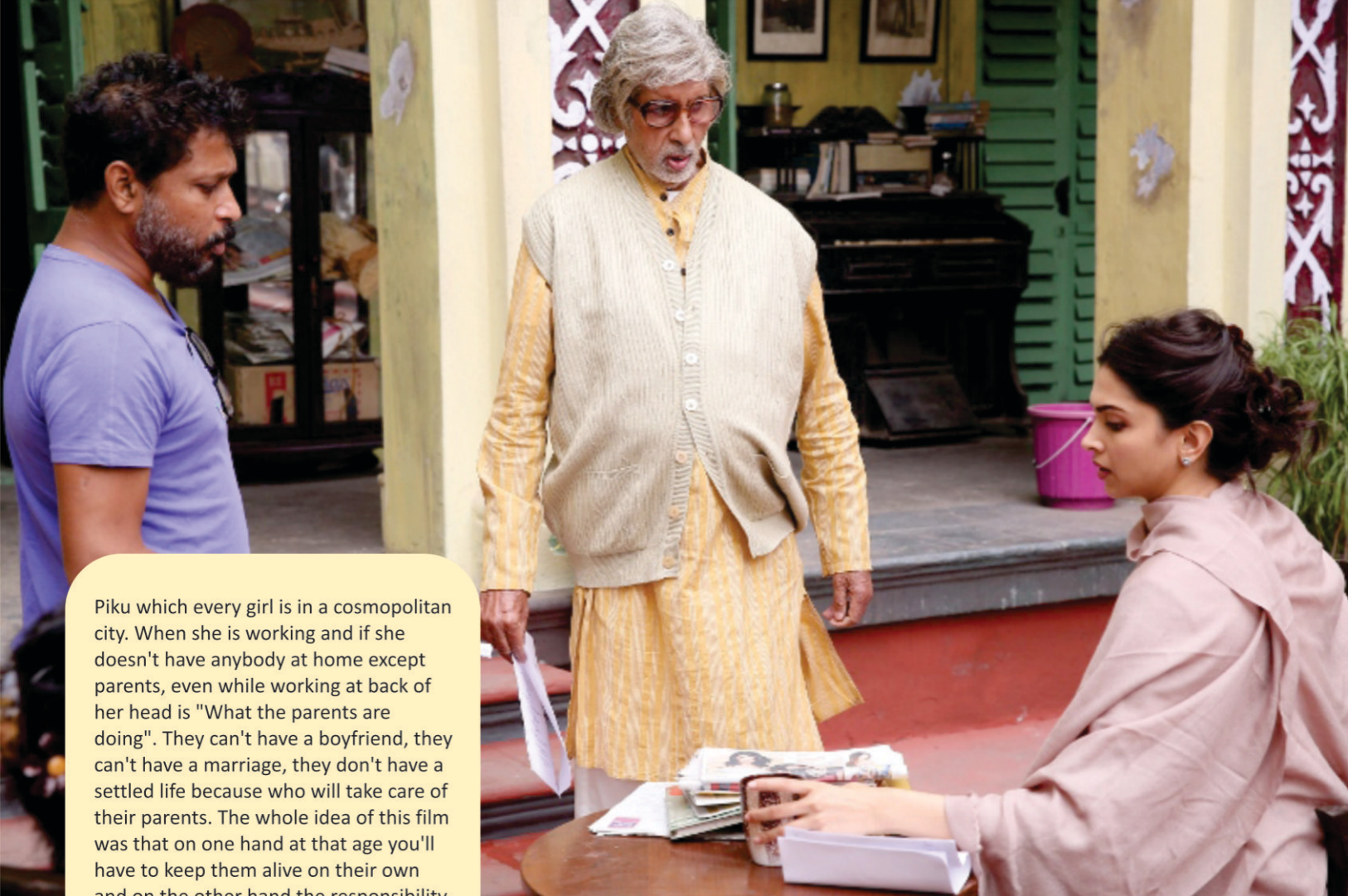
In Piku when I went to cast actors, they asked me what is the story of the film. I said there is no story in the film. Three of you are talking and the way the life goes. We will see where it goes. They didn't know the beginning what kind of film I am going to make. When you read the script it's really dry and boring, it's the same conversations which go on every day, every moment, everything is same. My brief to my script writer was to watch Ray's film. She did love all of



them. Somewhere, there is the reflection of that school in my film making. The fear my studio had at some point is that everybody thought that this is a Bengali film happening. I told them that yes it's a Bengali family but not Bengali film. I said that don't worry this is an everyday topic. Every day or everywhere in the country every home has it not only here in India but everywhere in the world. So this is the old age problem.

I have also seen this character like





Piku which every girl is in a cosmopolitan city. When she is working and if she doesn't have anybody at home except parents, even while working at back of her head is "What the parents are doing". They can't have a boyfriend, they can't have a marriage, they don't have a settled life because who will take care of their parents. The whole idea of this film was that on one hand at that age you'll have to keep them alive on their own and on the other hand the responsibility is with us - how to keep them alive.

The characters in the film are the way I have seen them, I have lived. For example even Irfan Khan's character is so flat and mundane. If you see there is nothing in that character but you know the way he has performed is exactly the way I had visualized it.

I think it's easier to direct than to write but the writing process is the actual process where the film gets made. I must say 'PIKU' is written masterly by Juhi Chaturvedi. Her writing is so simple that you see everyday reflections of the life of any family. You need to visualize it with your writer. My brief to my writer was that at some point the audience should also be in the middle of this drawing room, of this chaotic family and they should be left there and should also get irritated with this old man and that's the situation I gave to my script writer Juhi Chaturvedi. Bhaskor Banerjee is a character who irritates his daughter, he irritates his maid and he goes behind his maid to find out what she is doing in the house

because he is selfish and he also wants attention. That is his character. A lot of sequences in the film are from our real life.

We have improvised 'Piku' but first it was all scripted and visualized. This is the way it would be but it becomes very difficult for an actor at some point to judge how to take this on. At that time I tell them, you just surrender and then I started explaining and then they start seeing the scenes coming live and they started to enjoy the scenes.

There was a scene, where he is peeing. It was very difficult to explain and when I explained it to Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, that ok this is what we have to do, he stared at me and he asked me if I really wanted him to do that. I said yeah, you do it. He asked me if I am sure? I said yes, if it doesn't look hygienic enough, I'll cut it. Juhi and I had decided that we will do this particular scene but we didn't tell Mr. Amitabh Bachchan what is the scene in advance. We went to the location and a day

before we explained that scene because I knew that if I told him before hand, he might have refused it because that scene is very difficult for any superstar to do.

For example, let me tell you about another scene from 'Piku'. It was very difficult as there were eight people on the dining table and many things were happening there. It is a fully chaotic dinner. We also wanted that people should not feel where the camera is. For this scene we had almost prepared many months with dummy actors. My actors wanted to rehearse and rehearse. The shots were pretty much blocked. Normally, I read the scene the way I have visualized it and then we all move out of the set. Now it's like a home and I leave it to these three main actors. Deepika Padukone will pick up and do something slowly. They get acclimatized in that space and then they will call me. Then I will see what they are doing and we'll fix the camera. In this particular scene, I didn't restrict my actors at all. I said wherever you want to go, you go if I would've restricted them they wouldn't

have performed. They were given the scenes and then I will help them in terms of diction, in terms of the meaning, background etc. Then they will keep rehearsing. All three actors were from three different schools. Mr. Amitabh Bachchan is the one who will rehearse everything even the comma and the dot and the full stop. Irfan Khan just keeps mumbling. I don't know what he mumbles. Deepika Padukone will say one line and will do something, another line and will do something. She is like one take or two takes actress and she is done. Mr. Amitabh Bachchan is also like that, then Irfan Khan is another character who matures after few takes and gives his best shot. Working with three different schools becomes little tough. The whole film was executed like a theatre production because all the scenes were long, Irfan became our kind of bouncing board and then I told Juhi whatever we want to ask this family let him ask the same thing. He is asking the same questions what I as an audience would want to ask.

In terms of a love story I didn't want to have a physical proximity to show love. There are many ways to show that which is what I explored in 'Piku'. They don't meet, you don't know they meet or they come together in the last scene. In the end they start playing badminton. I let the people to imagine and make the story out of it but we deliberately didn't want to make a love story out of it otherwise we would have deviated from our main thoughts. I think that I am slowly maturing myself in terms of making. A lot of things remains unsaid, the audiences are intelligent enough to see beyond the scene, into the eyes. Through the eyes they can see through. Woody Allen was a big influence in this film too. Piku for us is a big example and in his films a lot of things are left unsaid but people get them.

I believe very strongly that you cannot fool the audience. If they get engaged they will watch the film even 'Madras Café' the kind of business it has done. It is quiet huge in its own category, I only bother about the cost. The day my film breaks even, I go out and party with my friends. I tell the producer that my job is done. I have recovered his costs and I could make the

film the way I wanted to but believe me even the censors give me a U/A. The film was made at the cost of Rs 4.25 crores which is absolutely low budget. In terms of results it made around 70-72 cr. Most of my films are in my head others have no clue about what I am making till the last final cut of the film comes up.

I never thought Mr. Amitabh Bachchan and Deepika Padukone will do a film based on constipation because stars don't talk about constipation. When I gave the script for the first time to Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, he was in London. He read the script and when he returned, Juhi and I were eagerly waiting. When we went to meet him, he opens the first page and I see a lot of marks made with pen. He marked everything because he reads the script once or twice. Believe me he knows which dialogue is on which page. He is so good with the script and one can't fool him. I saw a lot of apprehensions coming in and you know what exactly because he didn't know and also one film that he and I had done didn't get released. After a few days, I went to him again and I started to perform Bhaskar Banerjee. He even asked whether I have worked as an actor before? I told him no and that I was just performing for him. I performed all the three scenes in front of him. He had no questions. He said OK, I am doing the film. Sometimes I think they need hand holding as actors really want to know what is your vision.

With Deepika Padukone, it took me just 5 minutes. I met her around 12 'o' clock in the night because she was shooting for the film 'Tamasha'. She came in from the shoot. She was just the way she was at home. She came in her pyjamas. I said this is 'Piku' and just keep it like it. She said ok and she was quite comfortable. I narrated one scene and she was on.

One of the most difficult scenes was Piku's last scene when Bhaskar Banerjee dies. In India we have a habit of going over board and shout and cry and make a mess of it. It was difficult for me and Deepika to crack that scene. I think that scene was so beautifully performed and I am happy that we didn't go over-board. Also the last scene about how to end the film was difficult too. It is a scene in which they were playing badminton. One doesn't know what's going to happen.

On Madras Café:

Madras Café was shot absolutely on a story board. It was a sensitive issue on Sri Lankan Tamils and the revolutionary group. It involved a lot of political detailing of that time. Earlier the film's name was Jaffna. A lot of people could not get the meaning. We carried out a research and variety of people like students were asked what Jaffna is. Somebody said that it's a fruit. This reaction made my studio upset.

I had to create a civil war. I have just





seen civil wars in news pictures from Illustrated weekly and earlier magazines and we could not go to Sri Lanka, Jaffna because at that time the war was just over and it was too sensitive there. I had to find out a location here itself in Kerala. We found it in Athirapally Forest, Kanyakumari and Rameshwaram to create all the scenes. This film was really one of the most difficult films to shoot. I didn't have much budget and I was supposed to show a civil war. Since my expertise has been advertising films, picking up doing things, cutting corners and making films, I managed this film in an absolutely low budget. I had just 40 soldiers and I had two jeeps and one truck and then rest was CG. I kept my shooting at a time when the navy day celebrations were happening. They were practicing in Kerala. One of the choppers was lifting an army jeep. I asked my camera man to pick that shot and things like that.

Casting of this film was difficult because of the unique faces especially those of Sri Lankan Tamils. It was purely Kerala and Tamil Nadu and parts of Kanyakumari and Delhi. This is how the old city of Kerala was turned into the city of Jaffna. Kerala means the old city of Cochin. Actually, Fort Kochi looks a lot like the real Jaffna during this war situation. We could not shoot in some places due to the goriness and the kind of refugees which were there. They were crying. Some of the images were really affecting us even the unit members. It was quiet devastating shooting the film. In 'Madras Café' a lot of allegations were

made on me as to whose side I was taking. Was I taking the side of Anna, that is the Tamil rebels, whether I was siding with Sri Lankan army. My stand was that I am just mirroring a situation about how a Prime Minister was assassinated with whatever decisions he took and what affected whom. This is how it was presented. I feel it was quiet unbiased in terms of what was political. It didn't get released in Tamil Nadu yet the highest sales of DVDs were from Tamil Nadu.

In 'Madras Café', the most difficult scene for me was the assassination of the Prime Minister. On the whole set, after the blast had happened, everybody was numb. We could not work after that. John just sat with his head down because that visual was so horrifying. If



one sees the film it was actually the assassination sight.

On Yahaan

I went to Kashmir to make a documentary film for National Geographic Channel. At that time I saw Kashmir and the story of 'Yahaan' came from a newspaper clipping from Indian express newspaper about an army guy who was always supposed to be on patrol duty. If a soldier needs to go to the toilet, he will have to walk a huge distance. This soldier used to knock at the door behind his bunker to ask whether he could use the toilet. Once he used the toilet and come out, he saw one hand coming out and offering tea.

It was the hand of a girl and he fell in love with that hand. This was the story in Indian Express and that's how I picked it up. I really wanted to have my point of view through the film about Kashmir and that's what I showed. There is a small sequence where this girl Aadaa, played by Minisha Lamba just wants to wear a pair of jeans. When I went to Kashmir to conduct research about the film, I visited various villages in Kashmir and spoke to various girls to ask, what do they want? Few of them said, "Jeans pehenke jaana hai". I said fine and I will put that in my film.

on Vicky Donor:

I remember one night Juhi Chaturvedi called me up and said that she had an idea for a film about a sperm donor. I was silent on the other side because I could not think of it. But then I

said ok I'll call you tomorrow morning. All through the night I went through Google sites. I started seeing and I started laughing. Next morning I told Juhi let's start. We started to work on that film and somehow the script started shaping up.

The only thing of which Juhi and I were cautious was that we will not play with this subject because it is very very sensitive in our country. With this film, we were playing absolutely on the edge. If we would have gone a little that side it could have become slapstick. We made a conscious choice of not playing to the gallery. First we started controlling it at the script stage and then during performances because while performing also sometimes one can go overboard.

I didn't have a producer before John came in. It is just that John came in because he was starting his production house. He said ok let me do this film. I asked John whether he would leave the film half way because I was scared nobody would understand that film. As I said Vicky donor, people thought that I am making a very C grade, double meaning comedy. Later, Eros came on board.

If you observe, there are millions of Chaddha in New Delhi. One can find a Vicky in every Lajpat Nagar, every Malviya Nagar kind of areas. These are the people who don't know what to do in life. We were consciously not trying to make fun of them even though the audiences laughed. For me it was a serious thing. We kept it real. For example when Ayushman walks into the clinic for the first time and doctor says ok now go there. He gives him a small container and the nurse says ok "here's the dabba", "here's the sign" "ye karo, vo karo". I said to Ayushman that we will try and improvise. I put one camera in a way like on the top side where we have a security camera. It was a difficult scene for Ayushman to do and if I would have gone a little over at that, it would have spoilt the entire film. It was just controlled at the right time. At the first attempt when he goes in all long shots. When he gives the magazine, we cut it, then we didn't show what he did and he comes out.

Many a time people ask how you get these weird ideas of "Tathastu". When Juhi and I were discussing the film in terms of the story lines. One day this thought came to me. I was just watching Ramanand Sagar's 'Mahabharata'. One guy did this and "Udhar bacha paida ho gya". I told Juhi why don't we adopt this idea. Earlier "koi magic to hota nahi tha, to kuch donation wala hi koi system hoga". That's how that 'Tathastu' scene came.

Also I remember in 'Vicky Donor', there is one scene where these two ladies are sitting and having a drink in the night. It became a cult scene. When I was in Delhi, I had a theatre group called "Act One" and obviously we didn't have money when we were doing theatre. Some time on my terrace in the evening, friends would sit and to talk about films and drink. One night, I came down when my friends had gone. I saw that my mother was still awake and she was not able to sleep properly. I asked her if she wanted one small drink of whiskey. She said "What will your father say"? I said that he wouldn't say a thing and also I would give it to you in a steel glass. I poured Whiskey for her in a steel glass and she had one drink. Next morning she woke up absolutely well slept. She was happy and from that time onwards whenever I was going out she will just look for me to ask when I would be coming back home. This is the scene which I narrated to Juhi Chaturvedi and that's how it became an "iconic



cinematic moment". When the girl asks, Why don't you stop your mom's drink, Vicky replies that she sleeps well as she is old. She is not a drunkard. It is ok and let it be.

There was another difficult scene in 'Vicky Donor' but my actors made it easy. There was a scene where the women were drinking. These are the women who have not touched liquor in their life. They simply asked us to tell what had to be done. Both of them went into some room and came after some time. I said to the cameraman, just find a block where we can see everything, the mood is right and then roll the camera. Both women started to act. They were really behaving like drunkards. Believe me that was only one take. They did it so well and that's a cult scene to me.

I believe at the end of the day it's a director's medium. Only the director knows exactly what's happening in a scene and at what moment. It is a writer- director tuning which is very important, a understanding what the writer has written there because there are many interpretations to the text. Yes few improvisations were done in 'Vicky Donor' yes but more or less 'Vicky Donor' was also locked. Madras Café's script was little differently done. I always think that the script is the absolute hero and I believe in a bound script. If I don't have a bound script I will not start on pre-production or find the actors.

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Interview with *Derek Malcolm*

What are the things that you think Film Bazaar still needs to achieve and work upon for it to really become an internationally sought after market for film buyers, producers and distributors?

I don't think the market side will ever work properly. I think it's almost impossible because India just doesn't buy enough foreign films and if they do it's a very small amount of money. So, I think the market is the weakest section. The most important section is the way young directors can come here and meet experienced directors, talk with them and go to script and direction seminars. In other words learn their bit about the trade because I have noticed with the young filmmakers of India, a lot of them may have many ideas about how to make a film but they have no idea about the financial side and the way they should approach the subject. They need financial help and they need all sorts of advice that can be given by the professionals who do come here every year, whether it's about direction, script writing, production or distribution and sales and what sort of a film they're actually trying to make. It is very often they don't really know what they're trying to do. All they know is that they don't want to make Bollywood films. They want to make something better

than that but have no idea how to go about it, how to get a sales agent, how to apply to festivals and all sort of things that you have to know if you're going to have a successful career as an independent filmmaker. It's really difficult now in all countries let alone India, to actually be an independent film maker and there is not much money in it. They need all the advice they can get and I think Film Bazaar is gradually giving them a chance not to make the most obvious mistakes. I am here as a mentor sometimes of the fiction and sometimes of the documentaries and I can see that we could improve almost all the films with basic ideas as to how to make them better. The question is that once they have shown us the rough cut, have they any money to make the alterations? And that's a very difficult part for them. So the Film Bazaar is gradually developing a support system for them which is very valuable and I can't think of anywhere else in India like the Film Bazaar which gathers so many experts from all over the world to really teach how to make films, how to distribute them, how to finance them, almost everything and it's a great triumph. It's only a pity that it's on at the same time as the festival and they don't seem to like each other very much. Both are government operated structures and they ought to be together

and they ought to be friends. I think that they are doing really valuable work because there is so much ignorance, particularly in India. I wish there was a similar bazaar in England for the young British filmmakers. It would be a great help to them but there are more structures to help them than they are in India and I feel very sorry for a lot of these people who've desperately managed to make a film but don't really know how to sell it, don't really know how to finance their next one and don't really know what to do to make a success of it.

What efforts can Film Bazaar make to get the real buyers and distributors who are based in Europe, America and other parts of the world?

The problem is that people view Indian films away from India with almost total ignorance. They just think there was a director called Satyajit Ray and there is Hollywood and there is nothing in between and very often festival organizers find it difficult to get good Indian films for their programs. There is a lot of bureaucracy involved. This is why so often the festivals will go without a single Indian film. A) Because they haven't seen the right ones, they haven't been here and they don't know much about India. B) Because it's very difficult to actually get the business going, get the letters replied to, get very good prints. You must have a good print, good subtitles and you must know what you are doing and very often they don't. This is the reason why a lot of people who ought to be here don't come here yet. It's gradually increasing there is no doubt about it but there should be more people here and more concerned with Indian films because I've found throughout Europe, there is this idea that it's just 'Bollywood', and that's fine but the serious filmmakers are not here, we don't know who they are and there is a great deal of ignorance about India. That's partly India's fault because it seems to be in a great big world of its own which doesn't talk to the outside very much. Hollywood of course does because they can make a lot of money in England and America and even in Australia. They make their films on Sydney Bridge and London Bridge and other strange places. Bollywood is

caught under the fact that they are dealing internationally like Hollywood but the poor Indian film makers who want to do something different have no idea and they don't help themselves by having enough experience and they say maybe I can go to Cannes with this film and it's not really a Cannes film but it would be good for Oscars or it would be good for BAFTA. They haven't got the advice to do the right thing and they need say a European sales agent to take a look at their film and say that this is a film that's a perfect fit for this festival or that festival. If they go to Cannes and if there are not in competition they give up and you have to say that this is the director's fault. There is the critic's week and there are all sorts of sections at Cannes where you could go but they think if they are told, "Sorry we are not taking it for competition", then that's the end of the thing. This is terrible ignorance about the rest of the world which is actually quite depressing. Think of South Korea, they send the smartest prints and the best subtitles and then they send their films early. They argue in order to try and get their films in any section and will have them for any festival. They do this tremendously well compared to India, not with any better films necessarily but with this competent structure. They send people around all the festivals to find out how the festivals operate and then they work accordingly. I don't see that happening in India very much yet. This is the reason why I say that the Bazaar has still got a lot of work to do, as they would admit, in trying to get more people here but they have financial constraints too, its expensive business getting people, flying people over and putting them up in a 5 star hotel, etc. and now with the new regime in India nobody knows what's going to happen, whether their money will be cut and whether the new regime is interested in the work they are doing or not. For this reason it is a little bit precarious but the advances that have been made have been quite considerable and I have noticed it being a mentor to the documentary films and sometimes the feature films that young Indian filmmakers are beginning to understand the difficulties they face. The documentaries this year were stronger than last year but there isn't one of

them that couldn't do with a lot of improvement, basic improvement and that is what we're here for. But if they've got to re-shoot or re-edit, where will the money come from ? That's the problem.

Do you think that India is an emerging market for various co-productions for European and American producers to go for?

Yes. I think the co-production market in India can only get better and stronger and there are more and more people who understand that to have a co-production with India is a highly feasible thing. For one thing it's cheaper than many other countries, for another the work doesn't stop at 6 o'clock in the evening and the work is often quality work which they can now find in India which they never used to before. Earlier they used to bring their own technicians but now they don't have to do that. It's absolutely essential that this part of the NFDC's operation expands. There's no doubt that there are many people in the U.K. who would come here and make a film or certainly do a co-production with India if they felt that it was reliable enough but there's this idea that it is not reliable in India.

Can you elaborate the meaning of 'Reliable' in the context of a co-production?

1) Is the money going to be forthcoming? 2) Are the technicians going to be second rate and is it going to be too difficult with the bureaucracy. All sorts of things that they think come in the way of them actually operating in a sensible way in India. A lot of people go to Eastern Europe to make their films because it's cheaper and there is no bureaucracy in the way. They just let you do what you want to do. In India, it's a little more complicated. People have got to understand that technically India is much better than it used to be, that their studios are good studios, that in fact you can get really good prints from India now. When I was directing the London Film Festival, that was 20 years ago, everybody thought India was a closed book. There was no way we could get an Indian film, though we might get it, they'll say yes and not turn up. And then when a print comes it will probably be an absolutely lousy print. Director

Shaji Karun's film 'Piravi' went to Cannes with a terrible print. Director Aravindan's films went to Venice in dreadful prints and people were walking out of them saying these people can't even shoot a film properly. We know that Shaji can and we know that Aravindan could. Well that's no longer true, Thank God ! But, once that happens it takes years to stop the prejudices going on. So India's really got to take their finger out and show that they are a film nation. We know it is and knows what it's doing and is open to international finance and international co-productions but people find it very dangerous. They think it's still a problem from all those years back when it was so bad. I'll never forget Malayalam director Aravindan going to Venice with the most awful print produced for him. It must have been in the early 80's and it was a lovely film but it didn't receive what it should have got in way of accolades.

Any advice which could help the Film Bazaar to grow?

If the Bazaar is to grow, the obvious thing is that it does need a bit more money. It needs the confidence of the government, it needs the people behind the Bazaar who are backing it and who understand how valuable it is. Sometimes you feel that it's fighting against the government itself which is very suspicious and you don't know which way it's going. Poor Neena has to fight like hell just to keep it as it is let alone expand it. But with the bureaucracy behind it realizing its value I think it would be a lot stronger. It is gradually getting stronger but it's not because it's got money, it's because it has got money but not quite enough really to expand it and of course this is the idea that one lot is fighting another. If one is fighting for the Film Bazaar, authorities resent the fact that all the international people are here and don't go anywhere near the festival and there is this feeling that somebody's being a little too ambitious for their own good and for India's good. That's the problem. The real problem in India I always feel is that if you fail people don't like you very much. But they really hate you if you succeed.

- As told to Lalit Roa (FIPRESCI)

Interview with

Sophie Soghomonian

**Manager Asia, Aus/NZ & UK
The Festival Agency**

What motivated you to attend Film Bazaar 2015?

I work at The Festival Agency, and as you probably know, we represent different catalogues from companies such as HanWay Films, SND, Pathé, Studio Canal, Altitude, and more, in all the non-commercial circuits. This year we had four of our client's films at the GOA IFFI, and we also had four at the MAMI. It was really important for me to come to the Film Bazaar to meet with festival programmers. It is essential to discuss with them in person to know what they are looking for. I am responsible for film distribution in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and the U.K so

the Film Bazaar is also a great opportunity for me to discover new films, especially Indians. As a matter of fact, in our catalogue we also take over some independent titles.

Do you expect any future collaborations between your company and India?

As for the collaborations with India, we are just getting started. Indian people are film buffs, they love to see all kinds of films. I am already working with the Mumbai International Film Festival, as well as the Goa International Film Festival of India and several others, in Kerala for instance. We are really excited

because we represent many films in each of those festivals: I am looking forward to meeting many more Indian programmers and seeing more Indian being shown in Europe.

Why do you think Indian films will attract the French audiences?

I think that the French audience is very open-minded when it comes to cinema in general. In French movie theatres, many international movies are constantly shown. It is not a big issue if the film happens to be Indian. Indian films are very dynamic and energetic. I really hope that the French audience will love to see more Indian films.



Will there be more Indian films subtitled in French or will there be dubbed Indian films for French audiences?

No. In France, people don't watch dubbed films. I think it's a trend like everywhere else.

What kind of regional cinema might appeal to the French audience as Indian(not only Hindi, since there are many regional languages)?



Indian films are broadly categorized as 'art house' films and 'commercial' films. Towards what kind of films do you think French audiences will be more receptive?

My personal point of view, as far as Indian cinema is concerned, is that in France, people are more interested in art house films. Although I like Bollywood films, the format is not at all adapted to French audiences as they tend to be quite long. Hence I don't think Indian commercial films will appeal much to the French audience.



I don't think that it's a problem of territory, or regional cinema. It is more about the kind of film, the genre, the quality, and so on. The language of the film does not matter to the French audience.

What do you think Indian filmmakers need to do to promote their films in French?

In France, everyone likes mystery when it comes to movies. For instance, French trailers should be more mysterious in order to rouse the public's interest. □□□



Interview with Editor

Antara Lahiri

Antara is a true-blue Kolkata girl, having been born and brought up in the City of Joy. She completed her schooling from La Martiniere for Girls, following which she joined the Mass Communication course at St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, in the hope of having easy access to films and TV, both of which were practically forbidden at home.

In the process, she fell irrevocably in love with films, and after stumbling through some good and some forgettable stints in non fiction TV, both in Kolkata and Mumbai, Antara found her way to the FTII, Pune, in 2004. She completed the three year diploma course in film editing in 2007 and in the 2008, her diploma film "Narmeen" (directed by Dipti Gogna) won the HBO Short Film Competition Grand Jury Award in the South Asian International Film Festival in New York, and in 2009 Best Short Film at the Indian Film Festival in Los Angeles. Her documentary project "A Call Too Far" (also directed by Dipti Gogna) won the Silver Award at the 2007 IDPA awards.

The inevitable big move to Mumbai followed, and Antara found herself back in the city, assisting various senior editors on feature films to get some hands-on experience in the editing and post production process. She assisted on projects like Ghajini, Daayen Ya Baayen, Road Movie and Jhootha Hi Sahi.

From 2011, Antara started editing independently starting with the children's film Gattu (CFSI), followed by - From Sydney with Love (Prasad Films), Mere Dad Ki Maruti (Y-Films), Bewakoofiyaan (YRF Studios), Time Out (Viacom 18 and Aexor Entertainment). She is currently working on two films, Junooniyat (T-Series) and Bombairiya (Beautiful Bay Entertainment)

What is your process while editing a film? What is your first priority, to be on the set, or have the whole footage given to you after the film has been shot?

Before signing a project, I ask for the script, after reading which I do copious amounts of 'sticky-noting'. I prefer not to know too much about the film before editing it, so I try steer clear of being on set or participating in the shot breakdown. I think there is some merit in viewing rushes and cutting them for what they are, rather than what they were intended to be. However, in my initial discussions with the director, I do address transitions or the lack of them in the script. Transitions are a very vital part of the entire film because once you put the shots together and you put the scenes together, and if you are missing transitions (visual, conceptual or aural) between scenes, their absence is suddenly going to leap out at you. It's the "kuch" in "Edit mein kuch problem hai". The problem with talking transitions is that people tend to dismiss the idea... ("Oh! we have lots of

city shots/ B-Roll"). I feel that good, well thought transitions, to and from scenes, uplift and define the film, for eg: I remember the kind of impact "The Bone Collector" had on me because of the excellent use of transitions in it.

Secondly, at the script level I also try to scan through the time taken to set up the film. Often enough, once you put the edit together the setup itself spans almost 30-40 minutes and I think in this day and age where even a minute of boredom means the movie goer has switched to looking at his mobile screen, it doesn't make sense to linger on setting up the story. So a good rule of thumb for me is to finish the setup in 20 minutes or the first reel as we used to refer to it earlier. I think it's also important to note that 1 Page = 1 Minute is not really a valid calculation because in my experience it has been rather misleading. We are not accounting for the duration of songs, we don't account for the duration of montages (if any) or if we are extending or compressing moments.

I generally prefer not to be on set because I think everyone should do what they have to do. I've worked with a lot of first time directors, and I think interference from different HOD's only gets confusing. I think I am most comfortable when the material comes to me after shoot and then I make what I can out of that.

We often hear that the rough cut is 4 hours and the final cut is 2 ½ hours. Why is there so much of a difference in terms of duration between a rough cut and a final cut?

I have never edited a film where the first cut or the rough cut has been 4 hours long but I have heard of films where that has occurred. For me my first cut is really the script cut, which is basically an audio-visual representation of the written word. I think if you're being very literal to the script and if the script is a long one you tend to have a long first cut, but then you have to find cinematic ways to express the same thing concisely. It's like a virtual Masterchef kitchen where we are given

a bunch of beautiful ingredients. The ingredients themselves are great and wonderful, but the true beauty of the process lies in extracting their essence, combining the right proportions and 'cooking up' something unique and wholesome.

There are things that can be said in a couple of lines and we don't need ten lines for it, so in the edit we can address that, but I am not a big fan of scrunching lines because I feel we tend to lose out on a lot of moments and rhythmic pauses to the brutality of a 'tight edit'. So if a script is rather verbose, its best to cut out the meandering at the writing level, rather than crush its spirit in edit.

How much difference have you experienced in your rough cut and final cut?

Actually, there was only one film where the timing was way off. It was a 2 hour 45 minute first cut and we brought it down to a slightly more acceptable 2 hour 20 minutes.

Two words are used very often in editing, one is rhythm and another is pace. So what do these two words 'Rhythm and Pace' stands for you?

I think when things are moving really fast and there are a lot of things happening and there is a level of engagement with the proceedings, we like to call it a "pacey edit". It's almost like an external force we impose to make things HAPPEN!

Rhythm is a more internalized concept. It is dictated by the movement of the story, the camera, the movement of actors within the shot, the delivery of

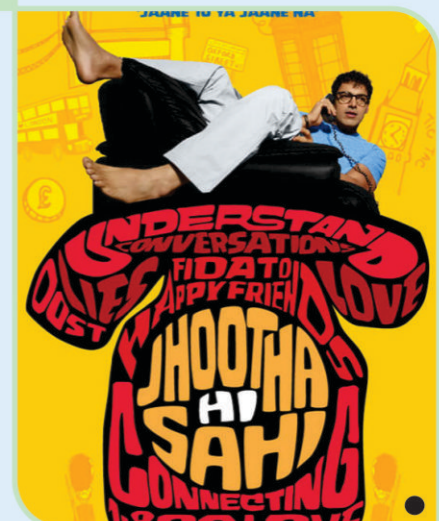
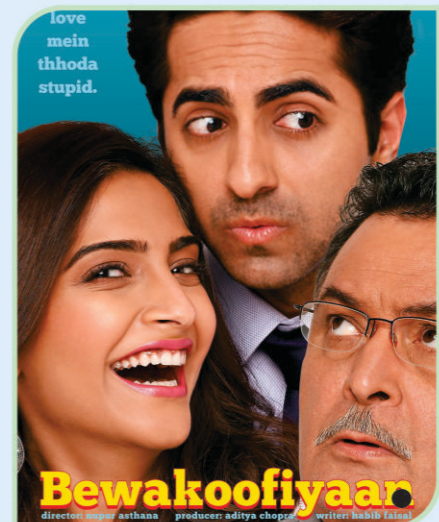
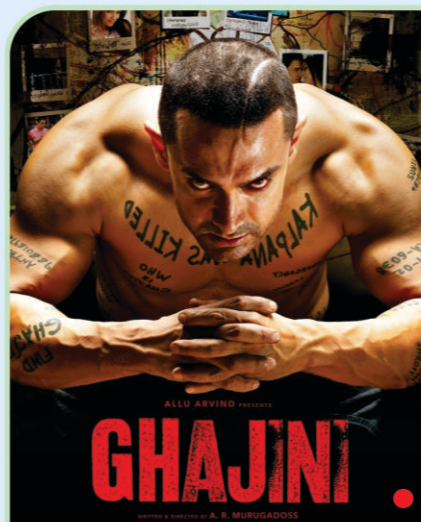
the dialogue and what I like to think of as our own internal rhythm as editors, which is what makes one editor's edit so different from another's.

For instance, my first film was set in a small town in Roorkee. It's a small sleepy town so the rhythm was really nice and slow and things were taking their own time, as opposed to some other films that I did later, that were urban comedies, rich in repartee, with a quick to and fro rhythm.

Do you think that 'Rhythm' and 'Pace' need to be controlled at the time of the shoot or it can be controlled only at the time of edit or both?

I think rhythm is something you definitely can and need to set at the time of the shoot, and even while writing the script. As an editor, I'm first

Important Films of Editor Antara Lahiri



● Independent Films ● As an Assistant

feeding off the rhythm within the shots and then tying it together with my own.

It is said that a documentary is made on the table, so what is your experience of working on a few documentaries in the past?

Most documentaries I have worked on have come to me with endless footage and a concept. So yes, we were making it on the table in the sense that in a feature film we have a definitive beginning, middle and end put down on paper and we have an idea of what the order of scenes will be. While there are possibilities of restructuring later in the edit, but with documentaries there is a lot more liberty because for one you are not looking at costume continuity, you are not looking at continuity of day & night. What you are really looking for is a continuity of thought, concept and emotion.

Due to the sheer quantum of footage one receives, I like to ask for a treatment of the documentary before I start. This also helps me get clarity on how the director is engaging with his or her material. Has he/she just filmed hundreds of gigabytes of footage with no particular intent or does he/she actually have a plan?

While we like to put documentaries and feature films in watertight compartments, I have found working on one has helped me develop a closer understanding of the other. From documentaries, I have learned the importance of watching the rushes, revisiting the rushes, and organizing the rushes. I extend this learning to feature

films as well, namely that the answer to most problems lies in your rushes. From feature films, I have learned the importance of investing the audience very early on in your character/s and their story, something I try implement while editing documentaries.

Is it more creative to edit a documentary than editing fiction, where there is a defined pattern?

I think feature length films are equally creative, but with more money riding on them, the tendency is to play it safe and stick to the tried and tested. Since feature films are intended to have a 'mass' appeal, one doesn't want to be too many steps ahead of the audience. The nature of documentary is such that it lends itself to greater leaps of faith. Even the audience is more discerning. The storytelling is not bound by linearity or continuity so you are, in effect, paving the way for greater creativity.

Often people say that when one editor has edited the whole film, and they were not happy and got some other editor and he changed the whole pace and rhythm. How correct is it to get a new editor to change the structure while there is already a fixed pattern in terms of fiction?

Editing is rightfully called the 'invisible' art. The process is internal, it doesn't lie in keyboard shortcuts or in the software, nor can one always explain where to cut, and why to cut at a frame as opposed to the next frame. It's a conversation with oneself, and so internalized that it is often mistaken as being absent altogether. Which explains

why people are so dismissive of it as a process.

Bringing in a second or 'consulting editor' to all intents and purposes is, to get an 'unbiased opinion' but to me, it reeks of a lack of communication and trust. This much celebrated search for 'objectivity' is pointless and contradictory. The editor has invested large parts of himself/herself into the film and it's making. They have immersed themselves in the world of this film and its characters in order to narrate the story better. It's impossible to think of cutting a film without losing oneself in it. So where's the room for objectivity?

Bringing in a new editor to make artificial changes to your edit is like renovating your interiors, even though termites are eating away at its core. It's rarely saved a film and I actually have it in my contract that if you want to bring in someone else to 'improve' or 'improvise' upon my edit, I don't want to be credited because that style and cut will not be mine.

We say that somebody who has edited the film should not edit the promo or generally they are specialized people required to do a promo edit. Do you think the same, if yes how and why?

Promo editing is a very specialized skill set. Firstly, it's the telling and selling of a story within 2 minutes, or 60 seconds or 30 seconds, packaged attractively and consisting of the right elements that can potentially grab eyeballs. Secondly the story you are telling is not necessarily the story of the film, it's more of a tease, or even a red herring. The presentation of the story and the characters is very different from what it is in the film. Sometimes the way I perceive a character's personality while editing the film, is very different from the way that character is projected in a promo and I may not always agree with that in which case I think it's better that everyone do what they're best at.

Do you think editing a song and editing a music video are different in today's context or it's still about the skill?



A music video is a set piece and you are presenting it as a standalone sequence. With a song or playback sequence, especially when you are watching it in the middle of a film, you need to know the character's graph, and where in the sequence of events do these song situations feature. Usually we have what we call 'cutaways', or a character's reaction shots that we place within the song sequence, depending on his/her emotional graph. In most feature films, we have choreographers who come into the edit and they do their own cut and a lot of films actually just fly with the choreographer's cut.

I prefer to sit with the choreographer on the song edit, or after the choreographer's done I do one pass on it with the director. So we are integrating it into the story of the film and not leaving it as just a music video.

What is the difference in terms of the editing pattern in a commercial film and an art house film?

I don't think editors consciously edit commercial and art-house films differently. The idea is to be true to the story and its demands. Also I think the lines between 'arty' and popular films are blurring to a great extent, and this is having a very positive influence on the way we are choosing to tell our stories. One of the films I am working on right now is what one would imagine to be an art-house film because it is produced by an independent company, set in real locations, showing real people, but the narrative style they are following is extremely commercial. So it's really not possible to edit a film keeping preset patterns in mind.

Editing is a very tiring job, seeing the footage, remembering the footage & remembering the shots, etc. What is so exciting that keeps you motivated to do one film after another?

It's very hard to pin point. On a good day when you've made a great cut, when you've cracked that one really difficult scene, when the chemistry between you and the director is reflecting in the edit, one is left feeling almost euphoric. There are also an equal number of bad days that leave you feeling suicidal or murderous or both.

The motivation to keep moving on is derived from a combination of really enjoying what you are doing and working with really good people on really good content.

Many a times you hear, "editing me dekh lenge", and there are also situations when the director is stuck and he says now you do what you can to save my situation. Have you ever faced a situation where things got stuck and you could help the film?

Yes, absolutely and I think the edit table can often work miracles. I dislike being asked to do a 'salvage' job though. More than anything, I think the idea of 'salvaging' something is rather disrespectful to the material.

There have also been times where I haven't been able to help the film or the scene in question because at the end of the day an edit is really as good as the footage you receive. I am not a magician. I am not going to be able to create scenes and performances where there are none.

There is a fixed pattern of editing particularly in dialogue sequences in fiction. How do you creatively contribute to it or create something different where you can say, "This is me" and not somebody else?

Even within the parameters of a dialogue scene or any scene for that matter, where you choose to cut, which take you choose, which shot you place first, all are indicative of you and your personality. Looking at rushes is a bit like the Rorschach experiment. What everyone is looking at is the same yet what you perceive is a reflection of yourself and your state of mind.

There are some people who have the habit of taking long duration takes. Where does the editor fit into a situation where you have long duration takes for an entire film?

I'm a very impatient viewer and get bored watching films that have long indulgent takes for no reason. Having said that, mise-en-scene style shots are fascinating when executed purposefully. "Rope" and "Birdman" are both brilliant examples of films with long takes, and I



absolutely loved both. As far as the role of the editor is concerned, sometimes making the decision to not cut is as crucial as the actual act of cutting. So its not cutting alone, but even the decision to hold back, that marks the skill of an editor.

Often a fixed footage which is called editing exercises, for example, a song footage is given to 3 people and they do 3 different versions. Do you think that a similar kind of thing also exists in the fiction pattern?

One of my professor's had said something very interesting, that the way we edit is the way we look at the world. I am talking to you right now and I am breaking down the scene visually in a close up, in a two shot, etc. That is how everyone's edit also starts differing because everyone perceives things differently. I might be looking at you right now in a close up and imagining we are talking in a two shot over here. Someone else must be looking at it in a completely different way and just looking at themselves in a close up. It's classic Rashomon. Everyone has a different reality, a different truth.

Is there anything you want to say about editing in general?

As I've said earlier, learning editing is not about learning the software or keyboard shortcuts. These are just the tools. Like any other art form, one's style of editing is honed with practice, so it's interesting and enriching to do all kinds of work... big films, small films, wedding films, corporate films, anything you can lay your hands on.





Prof Yogesh Mathur,

EX -HOD EDITING DEPT, FTII PUNE.

Tell us about the process of editing “Positive Married Print “ which became obsolete 60's onwards.

When sound was introduced in motion picture, the earlier sound cameras were recording the sound on film. It was during the 2nd World War in the 30's. So the war time footage used to be shown in the theatre. Unedited with the original soundtrack. Now when feature film people started using sound, they also started shooting married print and in feature films they edited the married print. If you cut the picture the sound would also get cut because sound is printed on the side of the picture and the standard shift in the camera was 20 frames, that's what the designers of the sound camera found out that at 20 frames the sound and picture comes in sync. Hence the picture was 20 frames behind. Another reason for 20 frames shift was that picture is exposed in camera intermittently at 24fps and also

projected intermittently. If sound is recorded at the same point where you have the picture head, then sound cannot be heard properly. So, in projector after the picture head the movement of film is smooth so sound head was fixed 20 frames ahead of picture head and that is the standard shift in all film projectors, all over the world.

Before the tape recording, sound was recorded directly on sound negative. To save money on sound positive, they asked the editor to send synchronised ok picture and sound for making a married print. On the married print edge numbers or footage numbers of both picture and sound were printed. Very few big producers were editing sound and picture separately in forties, fifties and sixties.

That's how married print editing started but for the song there was no possibility of married print cutting

because sound had to be 20 frames up. So for songs the producers used to buy stock and print the sound on positive stock and sound picture editing used to be done only for the songs. But for the entire film, the dialogue sequences were cut according to the soundtrack. Now the problem was about the reaction shots because in a dialogue scene you have to have lot of reactions. So, on the positive print for the reaction shots the editor used to run it on the Movieola and mark the expressions for the beginning of reaction and also the end of reaction according to the dialogue track. First he used to mark the sound track, that at this point he will bring in the reaction and come back to the person who's speaking.

So this is how it started but to show it to the distributors, and actors, married print editing sound wise was perfect because they were no jerks on the soundtrack but picture had jerks because picture was cut and its sound



was 20 frames up, since the editing was done according to the sound. For final print the negative used to be brought out from cold storage in the lab and matching the edge numbers of the sound negative as well as of the picture negative, the editor used to cut the sound and picture and put the reaction at the right place and that's how you see the films of 30's, 40's even 50's were cut perfectly. This process of editing was going on even when I joined the industry in 1964. I have seen the senior editors working on certain films doing married print editing and then I asked them that now color has come, why you don't edit sound and picture separately. Why married print editing now? They said these are low budget films so the producer is still saving money on the sound positive.

Tell us something more related to editing in that period.

When I joined it was a transition era. Black and white was also there and color had come. Color was expensive so the producers used to ask the editor to select ok's, assemble them and print them on black and white and edit on black and white. So we used to edit

sound picture separately on black and white. Only ok shots were color printed so by matching the edge numbers of the black and white positive with the edge numbers on color positive we used to cut colour print. It was like negative cutting only. But that color print we used to preserve and keep separately. That was shown only if the actors were coming to see the film or the distributors or the producers family was coming to see. Otherwise color print was not projected. So this was one change which I saw with the coming of color and in color at that time the lilies used to be printed. Now what are the lilies? At the end of the shot in the same lighting the actors were asked to stay in the same position and the cameraman exposed a few frames and those few frames were at the end of the shot which were the lilies and the lab people will do the color correction on those few frames.

Usually the print was one light print. But for certain sequences the director wanted color corrected prints. Lilies were shot for every shot because in the final print for every shot you have to do the color correction and in those days the machines were using filters. In that the biggest problem was that if you're

correcting the blue, the red and green also used to get affected. So if you see the early colour films of 60's, you'll find that colors were not very perfect but somewhere in 70's the color analyzer which is a computerized machine came. In that they overcame this problem of color correction because red, blue and green in the ratio of 1:50 could be corrected individually without disturbing other colors. So with the color analyzer practise of making one light print stopped and color corrected rush print was used for editing. Even the practice of making black and white rushes for editing also stopped. Editing was done on the color print only. But again the problem was of dissolves and fade outs because color processing of intermediate negative and positive had not been perfected. Naked eye could see the jerk in colors. There was a difference between the original print and the color corrected intermediate print. Perhaps it was because of the optical printer some generation loss was visible to the naked eye as it was a second generation print.

**-As told to Naresh Sharma
(Editor, Cinematography Art).**



Interview with DOP *Chirantan Das*

Let's start with Hansal Mehta with whom you have done quite a lot of work

It was a challenge in the sense that it was my first film. It had all the challenges that come with the first film—those of insecurity, nervousness, basically everything one would experience before one shot one's first feature length film. I will always be thankful to Hansal Mehta because he offered me the film at a time when I was really desperate to get a break in feature length films. The film was based on a group of young teenager boys and their love stories. It starred eight newcomers—four boys and four girls. We shot it in Bombay and Mauritius. It will always be special to me as my very first feature film.

How does he brief the DOP about the look of the film?

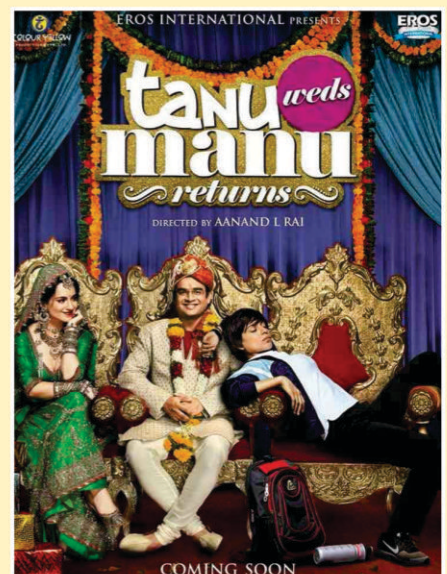
Hansal's way of working is very clear, very precise. He has clarity about what he wants, there is no confusion. This makes the life of a DOP easy. I had worked as an assistant DOP in his projects earlier. I was familiar with his

working style. Which is why the comfort when we shot the film together.

Moving on to director Nagesh Kukunoor with whom you have done four films. Can you share the experience of working with him?

Nagesh Kukunoor, I would say is extremely planned, fairly meticulous. There are no surprises with him on the set. We would have seen the exact locations, doing at least two recs. The schedules are quite adhered to keeping seasons in mind. Out of the four films I have worked with him on, two of them were shot in Rajasthan. He loves to shoot there. He loves the visuals, the terrain, the ambience there. The first film that we worked on together was shot on location in Rajasthan.

The film centered around a village which was completely arid and dry, but when we started to shoot, there were unseasonal showers, that threw us off our schedule. We waited for three days with the shoot on hold and finally had to call the schedule off. We returned to the same location a month later and finished the shoot this time with the exact



requirements that Nagesh wanted- climate-wise! The other film we shot together in Rajasthan is called 'Dhanak'. It is about two children and the journey they take, leaving their home to reach their goal. Since the story follows them through the entire state, we shot in different locations, across the state's length and breadth. It was a very unique experience shooting 'Dhanak'.

We also shot a film called 'Lakshmi' which dealt with the very sensitive and difficult topic of child prostitution and human trafficking. Nagesh and I had previously, shot a documentary on this subject in the interiors of Andhra Pradesh. The idea to make a feature film of this theme, preceded 'Lakshmi'. This film is unique for me as a DOP- since even in the film, just like in the documentary, I used no film lights. The entire film was shot using only regular bulbs on house power. This film was shot in Hyderabad, entirely in real location, most of them cramped spaces, quite tough to work in. We had a marathon schedule and completed the film shoot in just twenty two days. In that sense, it was a very fulfilling shooting experience.

One of the films you shot, '1971' is quite a regularly screened film on movie channels, but went largely unnoticed when it released. Your work though was quite appreciated. Please share your experience while shooting this film.

'1971' is a film that I shot under extreme weather conditions- we were shooting in sub-zero temperature in upper Manali and Rohtang Pass. After the first night's shoot, even the local crew couldn't handle the pressure of the cold and left the unit. We all from the Bombay unit, carried on and completed the shoot, on time. The director, Amrit Sagar was a debutant. And to choose this subject for his first film was very commendable. He had done a lot of research on the subject and we kept it as authentic as we could. All that hard work showed on screen in the final film and earned me that appreciation.

Moving on to your best known film "Tanu Weds Manu" and then "Tanu Weds Manu Returns". Did you have to make any changes in your working style

to adapt to a more mainstream director?

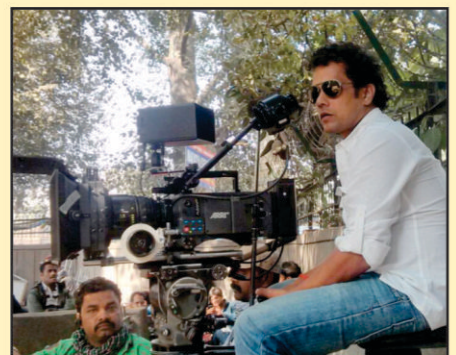
Aanand Rai may be a more mainstream director, but he is a very visual craftsman and knows exactly what he wants from his technicians. 'Tanu Weds Manu' is very special for me because it was the first film of mine that was such a huge success commercially, all over the country. Aanand wants his unit to always be comfortable and everyone on set is usually having a lot of fun while working. In terms of working style, his craft is such that everything looks natural, not 'lit up'. The people in the audience feel that they are right there in that space with the characters, going through the emotions or laughter in the scene. His brief has always been that I could 'use all the lights in the world', if I wanted to, but the scene should look natural on screen.

I also remember the shooting of 'Tanu Weds Manu Returns'. There were a lot of Delhi scenes during winter, and the scenes had a foggy quality. Was it a planned thing or did it happen naturally at the time of shooting?

It was totally planned and he wanted to catch the Delhi winter. He is from Delhi, he loves the winter there and he always wanted to shoot during the winters. In those months, I did have a lot of problems because Delhi's winter is really foggy, in the morning. While shooting, I realised the camera was not registering anything in the background due to that heavy fog. But, Aanand was very confident that the scenes needed that visual quality. So we shot entirely from mid November until the end of December, and it was when we saw the entire edit, that everyone was clear about how correct the director was.

From these two films 'Tanu Weds Manu' & 'Tanu Weds Manu Returns', is there any specific sequence in terms of lighting or in terms of anything which you think is worth mentioning?

In the song 'Move On', the song is the catalyst for the character's transformation. It needed to make a drastic change in the emotional mood of the film. I had to keep the song looking real part of the film's world, and also





infinitely more possibilities in DI now but one has to be very aware of the parameters so that the film doesn't end up looking video-ish.

In any sequence, sometimes people go for shot by shot lighting and sometimes people light the whole scene and do minor changes shot by shot. In such a scenario, how do you plan overall lighting scheme?

Whenever we are starting a new scene or a new location, the director will brief me completely about the action that is taking place and what the boundaries of that action are. I then plan and light the overall scene's master shot, keeping in mind the coverage. Once that is done, it is very easy for me to tweak the lighting according to mid, wide, close, etc.

Have you ever found a mismatch between what colour correction you have done and what is being projected as first copy?

Not so far, touchwood! But, yes, I have been sometimes disappointed with the projection quality of certain theatres.

To conclude, please share with us your experience while shooting your latest film 'Sanam Teri Kasam'.

'Sanam Teri Kasam' is a tragic love story directed by Radhika Rao and Vinay Sapru. The directors had a very clear vision of what they wanted the frames to look like - they both wanted a 'fairy-tale' and ethereal look for the film. Being a musical film, I had the scope to light up some very beautiful set pieces. For some of the songs, I have pushed the lighting to bring about that fairy tale feeling.

- As told to Lalit Rao, (FIPRESCI)



add the element of edginess to what the character is going through, that was important to convey. This song went against the regular framing scheme we were using for the film. We used a lot of flare, included a lot of sky and maintained an unconventionality in the framing of the shots. Of course, I knew we were taking a risk with breaking the pattern, but when we saw the song finally, it paid off! Also in TWM 2, the 'Jaa Jaa Bewafaa' song, was tricky to light up, but also one of the most exciting and fulfilling lighting I have done. I used a few street lights as the main source of lighting and the character walks down a long street lit only by the lamps.

Now that film making has moved to digital, how risky is the feeling that the shot which one has taken might get erased or there might be some glitches?

I have never encountered any such

problem 'Tanu Weds Manu' was shot on celluloid and the sequel was shot on digital. There is no difference in the visual quality. I have heard stories about DOPs very occasionally having unfortunate experiences with Digital, Luckily, I have never had any mishaps.

As there are currently many cameras in the market, do you have any specific priority for any particular camera brand or lenses to shoot the films?

My personal preference is to shoot using Arri-alexa. I have shot films on Red Epic, too and it is equally good. But the ergonomics of Alexa suit me better and that's why I prefer it.

How important is it today to be a part of DI correction during Post ?

It is as important as it used to be when DOPs would be a part of colour correction on the Analyzer. Yes, there are



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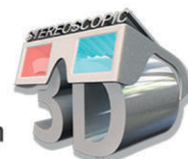
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Interview with DOP *Jehangir Choudhary*

Important Films of Jehangir Choudhary as DOP

What is your primary approach towards lighting ?

Every shot has a purpose. Once you are sure of exactly what you want, it becomes very easy to define how to light it. One has to understand the requirements of the shot before one approaches the shot. There are two schools of thought, one is source lighting. One sticks completely to the source lights which are established. It has its own reason and the reason being authenticity. In films generally we try to interpret the emotions required as per the shot, which means that they have to define specific parameters by which we can convey the thoughts and the lighting follows that design. It is basically an outcome of the thought process that is decided behind the shot. Once that is decided then the rest is just craft, how to achieve it is a secondary matter. What I think is critical & will define how you light is the intention behind the shot. The other type of lighting is dramatic or the stylistic lighting. I think that what is important is not the schools but the methods of lighting and it all follows from what is required.

When you talk about source lighting sometimes when the characters might go dark how do you resolve such issues?

You see that refers to knowing the craft well to ensure that and you just see the right amount of detail, which is basically the cinematographer's art.

How much to show and how much not to show is very much a part of our repertoire! It follows from what you are trying to convey.

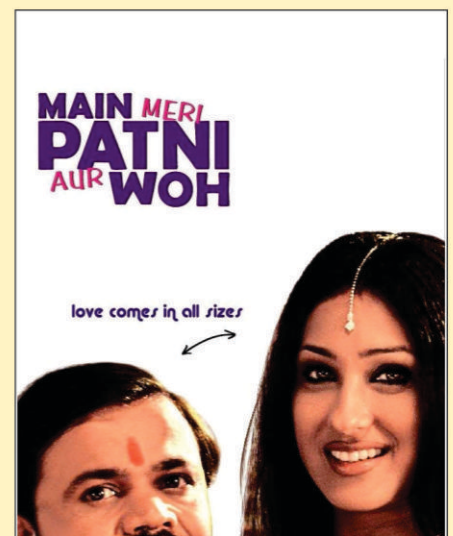
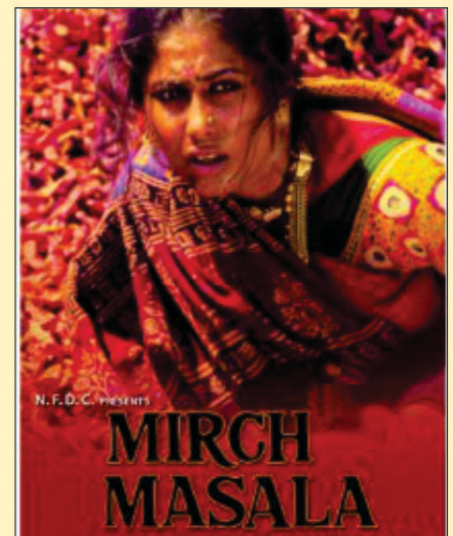
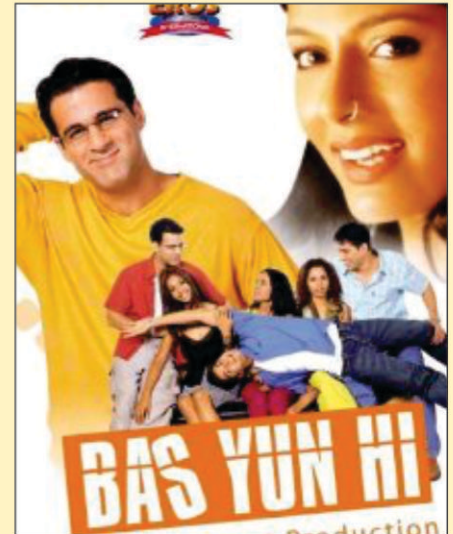
Advertising cinematography works on the level of "glossy" how do you use the source lighting there?

Of course, advertising requires certain more amount of gloss than feature films therefore it is addicted to a different style. It has to be more pleasing. It is very rare that one gets a chance to do dramatic lighting in advertising films. It is basically to lull the viewers into having some sense of comfort and willingness to buy the product. It is putting them at ease. Hence it defines that kind of lighting.

How did the idea of long duration takes arrive particularly in the context of the film "Holi" ?

"Holi" is an interesting example. We had an extremely limited budget that dictated the number of days that we had to shoot which also dictated the fact that we had to finish a lot of work in a very short time per day. It was further complicated by having forty newcomers facing the camera, getting them to hit their marks. The task was almost impossible because of their inexperience.

We also further complicated our own work by trying to shoot sync sound with this in mind. With all these parameters in mind what we decided was to have very fluid takes and the camera should be continuously moving in order to be able to adjust for their lack of hitting the marks. I must be able to re-compose as it is happening, so no fixed camera would ever be able to do that. Yet we needed to finish the work in time. I had actually designed this entire film in 22 (twenty two) shots and it was designed with the steadicam in mind. I used to love this steadicam because I was the first steadicam operator in India





and I had lot of experience with that. Of course things were what they were before the last minute. Just a day before the shoot was to start, we were informed that we cannot afford the steadicam. Hence instead of giving up that entire style, I took up the challenge of shooting almost all of it on a handheld device. It is also due to budget constraints that we had to shoot on 16mm and not on super 16. We also didn't have enough of lights, I had to shoot on higher speed film knowing that the grain would be very emphasized by doing such a thing. For this reason, on the blow up print one would see the grain but again we made it a style because of the gritty subject and it worked pretty well.

How was the problem of lighting sorted out ?

It was more than 360 degree because very often we took many circles and there was no restriction put on the artists on their movements. Actually I had to constantly do a dance to compensate with their movements and interestingly enough, I developed a sort of toilet seat by cutting off about 1/3rd of it and put that around my neck with the camera on one side and the battery on the other so that it gave me a kind of a platform which would not wear me down considering the long takes involved and the entire day of shoot, I must say it worked very well.

Tell us about your experience of shooting the film "Mirch Masala" ?

The film "Mirch Masala" was another challenge. There were barren landscapes which were extremely hot. I could only play with color and I relied a lot on the art direction for the costume



colors and the tent that we had put up. so I used the starkness of the location for the project. As far as the shot taking is concerned I always had a free hand with Ketan Mehta because he knew what we wanted. He used to trust me implicitly. It was quite interesting and what I used to insist on was to let the sequence of shots be decided by me and the rest he would handle so that suited me perfectly and I think we were quite successful in exploiting the location.

What do you mean by the sequence of shots ?

Which shot to be taken at what time was my control because that way I could have sort of economized the film making and yet give the best quality possible. When one has to rely on the available light, one has to go with the time flow. It is unfortunate that many of our feature films don't follow this and they end up becoming expensive in the long run.

Why have you extensively used the Zoom lens in the film "Mirch Masala" ?

I love zoom lens but not as a zoom. For example even in "Holi" the entire film was on zoom. I had to have that kind of flexibility of adjusting the frame when one doesn't know exactly when what is going to happen. One has to have that flexibility and even when one has full control sometimes that slight movement of the zoom makes all the difference in terms of the emphasis of the camera.

My entire endeavor was to make it as imperceptible as possible. I believe that cinematography should be invisible unlike the trend to call attention to your own work I don't believe in that. I



believe that the story is paramount and nothing should supersede that.

Sometimes one wants some results which one is unable to achieve. Do you remember any such incident ?

I don't think there is anything like impossible. It is just that sometimes things take longer or require more money to get the desired result. With the coming of digital format, it is getting more and more easy to achieve the results. There are lesser restrictions today than what we had earlier. Technology is so good and ever evolving that people who keep up with the technology can always be exploited for better results. This is the reason why I own my own cameras and I keep investing in newer and newer equipment to exploit it fully.

As an artist, one wants to evolve with the work. How do you upgrade yourself ?

Before the beginning of every project I am absolutely apprehensive of my abilities. Before every project without exception, I question myself whether I can do it or not and there is that fear which drives a person. One may have years of experience but for that particular project, for that director, for that film, story, the particular location one is actually starting from scratch. It is said in our profession that no two days are ever the same. Hence, there is no question of boredom setting in. I think we are blessed because of that. It's new everyday and one has to prove oneself every day. This is something which keeps me going.

You have done 9 feature films with debut feature film directors. What is



the difference you have felt while working with a first time director & with an established director?

You know it's surprising but the established people don't demand much, they trust you implicitly and that is why they have hired you. Whereas the young people have to prove themselves. Thus they actually go out of their way to demand things even if they don't understand their demands.

One thing about the début directors is that they don't know what is not possible. For this reason they continually demand it. I thrive on delivering it and of course the whole dance is about getting it all in the budget. This is one aspect that many people don't understand because anybody with a great amount of budget and time can always do good work. The challenges are there when one doesn't have budget and time and yet one is required to do good work. It is there that the challenge lies and I love to do that.

Today's DOPs and directors are more concerned about the look of the film. How do you achieve it?

Basically, this is a change which took place from our old film days where all the films began to look similar. To differentiate each and every one the colorist is asked to pep up the visuals and a lot of new filters were put into place and people tried to make their films look little different from each other. Hence, I guess that is where the so called looks featured but this was often a post decision.

The way to do it is to think about it initially, figure out the needs exactly at first and then expose according to that. Then the look becomes more successful because it is more intrinsic, it is more

consistent. When one does that in post it is never as good. There is no doubt that it enhances the quality but if one had thought about it earlier and planned for it and worked accordingly one would have been more successful.

Since now there is a complete shift from the Celluloid to digital, how "reliable" and "beneficial" is the digital medium ?

One has to be prepared for tomorrow's technology. There is always a variety of cameras available at one's disposable but one has to understand that each camera has its own strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, it is very critical to know how to use the camera best for the purpose which is suitable. This is why cameras are tested so much just to ensure reliability. Ideally when a take is finished, you replay it in the camera, you check whether things are good and then move on. These cameras are designed in such a manner that once you have recorded one take you cannot erase it. I mean one cannot record over it again until one has re-formatted everything. This is why in one instance once a card is full, it is immediately transferred and copied simultaneously on the set and until we get ok from the person, that we don't move on.

One can record simultaneously on two mediums. One can record Raw and ProRes together so that even the monitoring output is recorded and if one is careful, one can use the higher quality of ProRes while simultaneously recording Raw.

Many films have been shot on ProRes also so the worst comes to worst one can pick one shot from there but



that hasn't happened to me. Sometimes the glitch has to cut because of the extra dust which is there in our Indian climate but that can be made out immediately on replaying.

In fact 4k TVs have already been sold even though the content is not transferred to it yet but everybody is planned for it, it is in the pipeline, it is inevitable .

There is also another technical advantage of shooting in high resolution an then down sampling it.

It is not really compressive, it is reducing. Scaling it down is the real word. One gets better quality than if one had shot it on original format.

According to me ideal is also that one should down sample at least 50% say supposing it is a 4k Projection you should be shooting at least 6K. If you want 2k then you should be shooting at least 4k. Digital age requires more collaboration than ever before because there are more variables in a chain now. So more care has to be taken at more steps to achieve a good result but if you know it and you can keep your work flow clean and well suited to the project it will be fine.

I think ultimately projection will move into homes. We are getting better and better display screens which are going to be cheaper and cheaper. One will end up with one whole wall in your room as a theatre and sit at home to watch movies.

What will happen to the Cinema Halls?

They will become shopping malls and back to back offices!!

□□□

If you are an art house cinema lover and do not know where to find such films and download them legally 'FilmKaravan' is a big relief. Also if you have made a wonderful film and are looking for a digital release worldwide, it is one of the best platforms.

'FilmKaravan' is a streamlined aggregation & delivery solution house that aggregates, encodes, packages and delivers your digital assets to major digital platforms like iTunes, Google Play, Amazon, Dish, M-GO, BSKyB & 40 more in one efficient stream. The ingestion and packaging facility in Mumbai, Gateway Digital makes it faster and most cost-effective to deliver assets packaged directly to the platforms.

Their Marketing and Discovery engine, FlixMatrix helps audiences find the content on the platform of their choice for easier consumption. Besides, their financial dashboard gives our partners daily transparent access to their content's sales performance on various platforms across the world. The firm is privately held with primary offices in Cupertino, California and Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Among important team members, Apoorva heads Acquisitions & Partnerships at 'FilmKaravan' and founded a special initiative to distribute & market South Asian Independent Films. Indies that have found an unapologetic and successful digital release worldwide under this initiative are Fandry, Kshay, Gangs of Wasseyapur 1 & 2, Patang, Amal, Chittagong, Lions of Punjab, Club 60, Pancham Unmixed, et al

Apoorva post her corporate stint went on to lead strategic business development at Sikhya Entertainment, the makers of Tigers, The Lunchbox, Gangs of Wasseyapur and more. Having had experience on both the creative and business side of the entertainment industry, Apoorva has successfully navigated both and continues to find new ways to innovate and merge the two.

A professional sharp shooter and a formally trained Bharat Natyam dancer, Apoorva loves to backpack the world.

In this interview with Apoorva, **Naresh Sharma**, Editor, Cinematography, Art finds out various aspects of the Digital Release.



FilmKaravan

Interview with

Apoorva Bakshi

How did the idea of setting up 'FilmKaravan' come into being?

The founders of the company are Pooja Kohli and Sanjay Bachani. Pooja actually ran a film festival in New York prior to this and she used to curate these amazing independent films emerging out of South Asia for the festival. These films would come to a film festival, they would be viewed, applauded, get immense critical acclaim, written about by the most important and prestigious publications, but would not find distribution.

People who couldn't attend the festival would only hear/read about these films. There was no avenue to really watch these films. When you make a film, be it Bollywood or an independent film, your two objectives are – reach and revenue. A theatrical release for any film is extremely expensive, you need to put a substantial P&A fund behind every release. There was no way an independent film could find an unapologetic release when the big blockbusters were being released simultaneously.

We wanted to find the solution. The digital revolution that was brewing in the West was an indicator to what would follow. There was such an amazing slate of films that was made with so much passion and love but there was no distribution that was being offered even after they were showcased at the most prestigious film festivals like Cannes.

That's when we started distributing South Asian Films. With the launch of iTunes, Google Play, Amazon, Dish, M-GO & Netflix, our content found a home on platforms across the world. 'FilmKaravan' handles digital distribution for major Bollywood Studios like Yashraj, Dharma, Excel, Rajshree, T-Series, Ultra, Shemaroo, Broadcasters like Sony, Star, Zee & Viacom and Independent Filmmakers as well.

Is it possible with your platform that if I release my film today and it is available for the rest of the world immediately but only for India it should be available after 3 weeks on your platform?

Yes it is possible. We can geo block a

country. We can geo block 10 countries if you have a theatrical release there. We can geo block a country for perpetuity because you have sold the rights to somebody else. There are certain films that we only distribute in India.

How does one tie up with you?

There is a huge process why content partners want to work with aggregators and not directly with platforms or vice-versa. It's because of the process of the delivery. There is a post production house that we have set up in Bombay just to make deliveries of film to these platforms the most cost effective for filmmakers. Every platform has a different spec.

If you are an independent film maker and you want your film to be on the platform, you need to give me an Apple ProRes file and a 5.0 stereo audio. We will ingest and onboard the title within two weeks.

There is a cost attached to it which we mostly recoup from revenues earned. Windowing is important. A film title should first go on TVOD- Transactional VOD platforms like iTunes, Google Play, M-GO and Amazon and then go on to SVOD- Subscription VOD platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Lebara and Eros Now, etc. Then comes AVOD - Ad funded Platforms like Hotstar, YouTube etc. This is the windowing that a film should follow. You must not break this windowing in the digital ecosystem because if you go directly to AVOD - Hotstar or YouTube all potential revenue that can be earned in other windows gets killed.

If today your film is available to view for free on a particular platform, you should not expect anybody to pay for viewing it on other platforms. I urge filmmakers/rights holders to understand nature of rights and windowing in the digital space. You can reach us at www.filmkaravan.com and submit your requests and queries.

For how many years is the contract valid?

We sign-up for a minimum of 5 years.

If I sell my satellite rights to Star TV,

do they force one to be on their digital platform also?

Yes. See if you have a satellite deal for an independent film for a couple of crore rupees, please take it! What is your purpose as a film maker? Reach & Money.

When you have a satellite deal and your digital windows get killed because it goes to Hot star directly, it's fine. Just calculate what every platform will pay you for non exclusive, for how many years and what would be the premium to go exclusive. If you calculate that amount and if that amount is lesser than the offered amount then yes Star Network is the best broadcasting partner you can get for your film.

Can the film maker choose how many platforms he would like to be on and is there any specific cost involved?

Yes. We make a customized release plan for every film. The process is as follows - we ask for a password protected link, we go through a viewing process among the team and after that we work up a projections and deployment plan. The ingestion and onboarding follows. Once revenues are generated, the same is transferred to you. The filmmaker/rights holder has access to an online dashboard with a log in and password where you can check all sales on all platforms where your film is deployed.

How do you plan the strategy in terms of release ?

Onboarding on time, in the right window and marketing the release of the film online is very important to generate revenues. We have a dedicated marketing fund per film which we deploy to ensure digital natives know when a film goes live on their favourite platforms. We just don't onboard films on platforms, we encourage viewers to watch the films as well. We have a very strong loyal community on Facebook who via our page, Flixmatrix read about films going live on various platforms. We have a great website called www.Flixmatrix.com where you can actually go and see where the film that you want to watch is available. You really don't have to search and browse



FilmKaravan

through every platform. We do a lot of tie-ups with blogger networks and press publications to announce digital releases of our titles. Platforms also give us great marketing support.

What is the future for documentary/short films on your platform?

We have been successful in distributing some prestigious documentaries, like 'Inshallah Kashmir' and 'Inshallah Football'. Please reach out if you have documentaries and we will be happy to distribute your film.

What is Mode of Payment and is it monthly, quarterly or annually?

We wire transfer the money directly to your registered bank accounts and the payments are remitted quarterly.

How much revenue do you think a film would generate from digital viewing in a year?

Really depends on the film, the territories available and how close to the theatrical premiere did you go live. For independents, the revenues could range between \$10,000 to \$50,000 a year.

You can avoid piracy by ensuring you go live in the right window. Piracy today is a result more of non availability than the willingness to pay. If you don't make your film available at the time that the viewer wants to watch your film,

then you do leave them with no choice but to explore piracy. Film makers need to keep that in mind.

The West has realized the same and that's why the day most films are released in theaters, you have a day and date release on VOD platforms. If you are releasing a film in India only on 1000 screens, you must make your film available on legitimate digital platforms across the world on the same date. A viewer across the world who is ready to pay \$3.99, who understands viewing patterns, finds your films on a legitimate platform will definitely be less inclined to watch it on torrents.

Any advice that you want to pass on to independent film makers?

It is very important for film makers to understand this medium before indulging and signing off rights to anybody. It's very important to understand the opportunity revenue that you are letting go off by wrapping up your books when you really have the potential to earn revenue due to the long tail nature of this medium.



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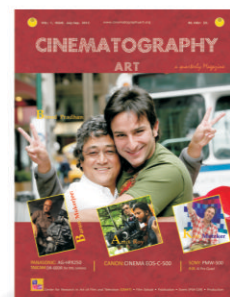
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**CINEMATOGRAPHY
ART**





There are only three people in cinema: the person in front of the camera, the audience member, and the person who is the real passage between them—the cinematographer. Saji Nair, does precisely that for the past two decades. He started the humble but profound journey towards creating the universal language through painting. With natural ease painting blended with his original inclination towards music where he spent a few years learning Carnatic vocal. On graduating in Chemistry his decision to specialise in Cinematography brought him to the best centre in the country, FTII in Pune to learn the craft of creating moving images.

The second phase “Learning from the master”, for Saji Nair started with assisting a real master Kiran Deohans, renowned DOP who worked on features such as Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak, Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham, Aks, Jodha Akbar, Agneepath and loads of advertisement films. His learning continued with another master craftsman Renato Berta who cinematographed the modern Indian classic by Shaji N. Karun “Vaanaprastham”. Berta is the Swiss cinematographer and film director, best known for his collaborations with directors Alain Tanner and Jean-Marie Straub.

Saji Nair went on to become cinematographer of the Shaji N. Karun film 'Swapanam' in 2014. He has been the DOP of many national and international projects, including music videos, documentaries & short fiction films.

Lalit Rao, film critic (FIPRESCI) finds out more about his insight into his world of lighting.

Interview with DOP

Saji Nair

January - March 2016

How do you define moulding of Saji Nair as a Cinematographer?

It is through four stages that a cinematographer gets moulded. I think these stages are- the perceptions about images and colors, the learning process in FTII, the interactional experiences with the teachers/gurus with whom we work for a better understanding of the craft and lastly our study and practice from our own work. Fortunately, all the four stages were unique to me.

After understanding the basics of image making from the Institute, I got the opportunity to assist many seniors of high repute. It helped in polishing, sometimes re-learning certain areas of the craft. Working with the renowned DOP Kiran Deohans, for the first time I experienced how meticulous detailing, set designing and lighting can do wonders to your image making. It was also a wonderful experience working with V Narayan, shooting advertisement films, music videos and corporate material.

Can you elaborate the creative process of image making?

A premise may come out as a flash. We can develop it by giving flesh and blood, by seeing surroundings, by staging it without collisions, by dressing the artist, by taking them to the locations created or as it exists by enacting. Ultimately, how we make it with the tools and take it to the spectator for entertainment is the challenge for any film maker. I think it comes from our perceptions and years of practical experimentation. It is also an expensive process. It is to be learned; I think, other things can be experienced from surroundings if we open our eyes ears and mind, and it is available for free.

Tell us about your FTII, Pune days and how you started working with director Shaji N. Karun ?

I got admission in the year 1989. I was the first person to do my diploma film in color 35mm format titled "Ordinary Love" directed by Anand Subramanian (Film maker based out of Bangalore). Director Shaji N. Karun had an international reputation after the



success of the film 'Piravi'. Thoughts, expectations and worries of an old man in search of his missing son - is the plot of 'Piravi'. The film travelled everywhere where Cinema is celebrated. It did a lot to me. The film gave my ideas on cinematography a rebirth after my institute days. Shaji found ace cinematographer Reneto Berta for shooting 'Vanaprastham'. It was an eye opener. He taught me the levels to which we need to be careful and accurate while practicing cinematography. It was thoroughly wonderful for me! There were small lights, new lighting schemes, so many new ways... it was amazing.... 'Vanaprastham' gained popularity around the world. The official entry at Cannes, it bagged almost all awards and recognitions in India and abroad. Actor Mohanlal got the National Award for his role in the movie.

Tell us about your major independent work with director Shaji N. Karun - on the film "Swapaanam".

Since Shaji N. Karun knew me for quite some time and my way of working, he offered 'Swapanam' to me. The script motivated me to work as it had a good

combination of music, art and dance. Shaji loves to indulge in working on screenplays which is based in some art form - dance or music. We are unable to distinguish the role of a technician in any of his movies, neither cinematographer nor production designer, for that matter any craftsman, instead we keep feeling the movie. Each and every scene demands a certain kind of look and lighting. We had realistic situations, for example, we had to shoot in aristocratic traditional houses (Mana) and my challenge was how realistic could I make it appear. We had brainstorming sessions to reflect upon the mood, the feel which Shaji wanted to create for the film. With more than 100 percussion artists performing the Chenda Melam (traditional drum ensemble), the choreography and the lighting had to look real. A warm tone was given to recreate the feel of oil lamps (Vilakku and Theevetti). The depiction of the nature, seasons, their manifestation at various layers of the plot are some things which Shaji N. Karun uses very constructively in most of his films. For this reason, we had to hunt for the location where nature could convey the essence of such scenes to the fullest.



Another challenge was shooting during rain because we had to be really on our toes, quickly altering the set up before the light could take its toll.

What is your typical planning for shooting a feature film and do you think an ideology can be reflected in the shot taking?

I love preplanned projects. It will help overall production. It saves the cost, tiresome work atmosphere, there is more room for everything. A bird's eye

view of scene, schedule, story board and everything helps. But the reality is that most of my works happen in less pre production time.

More than an ideology, it is the rational thinking which makes us think quite positively. I will give an example: while working on night scenes from earlier times we are used to creating the moonlight as blue. Why? Moonlight is not blue but that practice got accepted from the early days of cinematography. I have tried a pale greenish tone, instead

of blue, in a recent work and it worked out well.

What kind of a camera do you prefer 2k, 4k, 6k, or more higher resolution?

Camera is just a tool. There are so many options now with the digital cameras. Yes, the more the resolution and the latitude, a cinematographer gets to play with the visuals during and after the shoot.

What are your ethics and Ideologies while working as a cinematographer?

All of us, in one way or the other live with double standards. I love elephants happily living in a jungle, not surrounded by loud drums and thousand of human beings. If I am asked to shoot Thrissur Pooram, I would do it. It is sad but that is the how life is. A captain can decide, a sailor is doing a task for the captain. The cinematographer is just an aid. Colored drink is carbonated water and I know that it will kill, but when I am thirsty and there is no alternative, any kind of water helps me to live the moment.



Do you enjoy shooting short fiction films?

I have shot 'Ore Udal' (featured at the Indian Panorama 2015, directed by Asha Joseph), 'Notice Vandil' (directed by Sujit Lal) and a few more films. Well, short duration, great ideas shared, small production, less crew and less lights. Everything is small and small is beautiful. That is why I did so many short films.

What are your random thoughts on "cinematography" and "life" in general?

Images should be effectively used in telling the story, communicating the feel and the idea. These challenges are not generated or organized by the new comers working in this medium. The camera is the eye of the movie. It captures events through which the film is told. Debates rage over resolution, format, projection etc.

But, ultimately it is all about the story as I have already said, the fact which is very often forgotten by a large number of new film makers. Cinematography should just flow with the story telling and should never supersede anything. "Vaanaprastham" is the best example. I can find me again and again in that movie.

Renato Berta is a Swiss cinematographer and film director. He got trained at the 'Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia' in Rome. Berta has worked as cinematographer in more than 100 films since 1969. Working with him was the luckiest part of my life. My excitement helped me a lot for my interaction with that project and that resulted in my working with the master craftsman Shaji.N.Karun in "Swapaanam".

Visual is the most sought after language of the digi-run world today. As we flip through the internet pages we see the moving visual has achieved paramount importance among various types of content afloat around us in each second. Cinema has attained core significance more than ever in such circumstances all over the world and the maker who understands the medium has never been more looked up to. Cinematography is the profession that facilitates the moving visual.



Cinematographer becomes the facilitator in demand where he/she becomes the organic bridge between a story teller and the spectator. As the eminent cinematographer Christopher Doyle puts it, "The function of the cinematographer is to be the bridge, the conduit between the audience and what's in front of the camera.

Life is all about celebration and sharing. Celebrating the knowledge, celebrating the concern, celebrating mutual respect, celebrating the ideas not ideologies, celebrating positivity, celebrating love, friendship, happiness,

everything. It is all about living natural. Like my experiences told me "Be yourself, don't try to be someone you are not".

What are your forthcoming projects ?

I have a few international commercials and 3-4 fiction films in Malayalam as well as in Hindi.

Saji Nair can be contacted at: movingimages3@gmail.com





Interview with *Prabhu Doss*

Give us a brief about how this idea came to your mind ?

Basically I was a co-director of Pizza a tamil blockbuster film .Those days digital was not that much, so we were like one of the earlier adopters of digital film making. The producer Of Pizza film has deleted the film unknowingly he wanted to use a hard disk for some other purposes. only later we got to know when we wanted to take a raw output again, we realized like you know it's all gone . So I thought we need to

have a solution for digital data management and preservation so that's "Cinehive " came about. So after Pizza we I was very clear we are gonna start this start up

How did you execute it?

During the shooting of the film 'Jigarthanda', directed by Karthik Subbarajso that's when we realized to fist understand what are the work flow involved currently.

Because even though this is a



Cinehive
CINEMA FOREVER.

If you are a film maker who has been going through the nightmare of recovering the data of a lost film from a crashed hard disk after having invested crores of rupees in the film, there is a crucial sign of relief. Our indigenous techno boys have come out with a revolutionary solution called Cine hive. In an interview with film critic Lalit Rao (FIPRESCI), founder and CEO of CINEHIVE describes how an Indian film producer can benefit from their services without spending much money.

disruptive technology but we don't want to change the status quo of the other stakeholders in terms of work flow as they are already technology aversive, so we don't wanted them to say NO to a new technology without compromising on the vision, like to make a completely data leakage free etc

Thanks to new wave which is happening in the Tamil Nadu, most of the directors and the producers are coming from an engineering

background, so they were pretty adventurous, risk taking, try new formats.

So first thing we wanted to be clear was like you know we realize pain point of the film Director , of the producer and also we did a small case study. we realized there was data loss happening at large. you know sometimes the copying was not proper, sometimes the handling of the hard-disk was not proper and sometimes after all those things there was a wear & tear on the hard disk or bad sector. Even a single day loss of data might end up in scraping the film, they may not be able to get the same dates again to reshoot.

So we understood first thses are the other things which has to be fixed. So after that during the shoot of 'Enakkul Oruvan' we took a complete case study like monitoring every data movement where are the possibilities of data leakage and how the data has been encrypted so that came as a surprise because no where the data is encrypted.

Encrypted means?

Encrypted means now you take a hard disk, all the films are put it and they are copied into it, so now by any chance you lose it somewhere. I get hold of the hard disk so I can use the film to my advantage.

So it poses a huge risk for the film so that's why we have brought in encrypting, so the Film data is not stored as a film. it is converted into an encrypted data so for only the producers or the stake holders of the films can access it , for this we have partnered with RSA security you know the pioneers of encryption. This is like a first of its kind in terms of partnering in cinema production house especially in India.

What are the advantage of using your System For Storage /copying their film for the film producers?

For Producers, Technically speaking on an average for a 50 days shoot, we need close to about 30 TB of hard disks. To minimize the risk, what they do is like they store it in 2 TB hard disks. So that's essentially 15 hard disks and the cost comes to about 3 lakhs.

To have one more copy to play safe there has been another 3 lakhs. for about 6 lakhs all they have to spend and the "weakest link" is that it the "Hard Disk" .

There are other recurrent hard disk which is required for the post production. Further they spend another couple of lakhs for transcoding it.

So all of this data, one it is not encrypted, second thing is a hard disk. The biggest weak link is the hard disk by itself, because it is consumer grade storage, it is never meant for any industry they have servers.

But now-a-days there is a Raid system in hard Disk is there with I would say Lasi itself

RAID is much much better than hard disk but still it is prone, it's a consumer grade.

The reason why the servers have not come into film industries, because our's is not a centralized industry. A producer comes all he makes is a films. He cannot afford to put a 1.6 to 2 crores worth of a server there. That's where our Model coming in .

What we thought was that why don't we buy a server, build the infrastructure, make the centralized state of the art and give it as a lease per film. So the film gets a state of the art data management for the raw footage, The music files, the composer's music files, the mixing files, the dubbing files, your film posters, end to end the entire digital artifacts of the film, everything is stored in Cinehive.

There is no data liability on the director or a producer because they have enough problems from shooting to distribution. what we give is for the 30 TB they're roughly spending about 6-8 lakhs is what they're going to spend and for the same price point were giving a bottomless data management which means If your film goes a 100TB or a 200TB , you needn't worry.

How does it work?

There are two models that we're working on. One of the models is again



not to disrupt the flow . You know let the cameraman shoot it right now, our person who is on the set copied into SSD drive and While transferring we encrypt and transfer. We put the SSD disc into a biometric safe which has a GPS sensor. once you close the biometric safe , only when it comes to Cinehead office it can be accessed. Even during the transit if it gets lost or whatever it can be tracked because we have a GPS sensor. Second thing is even if it is broken open nobody is going to take the data away. Third thing is in a ramp they can keep tracking where the particular data is located right now. So once it reaches the office all the other notification goes .

We also keep the tracking of the data. We're going to have totally 8 backups. 3 backups in the servers located in India, other 3 backups in the servers located in the U.S, California and 2 LTO Tapes backups which is like an archival format.

What is the durability of LTO tapes?

It's close to about 10yrs because after that the magnetism come down .once it's reaching about 9/9.5yrs , we'll copy it from that into another tape. Tape can be destroyed only by fire you know so it's a completely redundant mechanism, Which is a constructive term because typically the films have 2 backups. We already have 3 backups in one server and we have another server which is located elsewhere and we have taped backups also.

The reason why we have 2 different servers is like we need to have servers in 2 different seismic zones. So if in India, even if there is a continental earthquake , it will not affect because that's in a different seismic zone altogether. That's one thing. Second thing is in different media also. Assuming that some kind of a virus which is injected and it destroys the server data still I have another backup which is in the tape which is on 2 locations. One will be in Chennai and



in 2 ways. One if they're not in a place where they don't have our LAN connection or good internet connection we send the encrypted . SSD hard discs to the editor on the same day physically. Again encrypted so again it can be sent via office boy or anybody. Now editor has to enter the secure ID thing and for him then it is kind of local then can then copy and paste into his local system. That's one thing.

But this transcoding does not affect the kind of file it is because there are different kinds of files are there ?

Whatever format they want its transcoded into that and given via the SSD drive but most likely in our case study we realized most of the editors operate out of the base cities which is Chennai Basically Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Hyderabad .So Cinehive is in partnership with Airtel so we have leased lines with major studios and such collaborators. All they have to do is in the evening log into their system after the secure ID , then it is CTRL-C, CTRL-V, they can just copy paste. There is not even this delay of, a physical delay of traffic or whatever because once we've copied into the server they get a notification on the app saying that backup is done transcoding is done now it is available. So, for them it's like more of a ctrl-c, ctrl-v. they just have to copy and paste into that.

What is the guarantee that this data will remain there, it'll not be deleted from there.

As per the the agreement , once you start the shooting, three years from the release of the film if for some reason if the release never happens even for 3 years from the shoot, all the data will be there on the server, come what may. And it is insured. If that is not there we are liable to pay back slowly when the technology keeps changing its very very difficult for a non techy person to keep

other will be in undisclosed location. So one thing what we can guarantee is for about 6 – 7 lakhs which is what you're going to pay for 30tb hard disc we're going to offer you a Safe & secure and accessible as well.

Once the footage gets transferred there now it needs to be edited , how you connect editor to the Footage.

Once the footage comes into my office ,within 2 hours we transcode it and it gets uploaded into my private cloud and they can be accessed by the stakeholders of the film. From the producer, financier, actor.

How do they do it?

We have developed a cinehive app. It's called 'cinelab'. So this lab is completely secure via secure ID . The access is given only to the people whom the producer has asked for like A director, cameraman, composer, editor.

They can be anywhere in the world they just have to log in with a secure ID and once they log in they can choose the date and they can see the ok takes. They can pass their comments etc.

But how one can edit that footage with the my mechanism?

Whatever is in the private cloud is only for the reference because after the shoot is done within one hour within less than couple of hours all the stakeholders are able to see what are the shot today. They can, we have an online editing in the phone itself in the app itself you can drag and drop and

But you know editors prefer to edit the way it is.

That is only for the reference point/file for an editor, composer and other stakeholders who are not on the set per say, they're elsewhere. They are all connected in the grid. So we operate

accessioning it.

5-years down the line suddenly whatever the data which is there on the hard disc, you may not be able to read at all. So that's where we come in. That's why we call it the Digital Preservation. Because every now and then technology keeps changing, so we keep accessioning it. It is not that we're converting it. Your real files will be there. If a particular format is changing in we'll convert that and also keep that as well. So on any given day whatever the shot is untouched but whatever is relevant is also slowly accessioned. It's part of a simple archival process. Most of the museums and libraries across the world, they follow this proper digital preservation.

People are shooting 6k , will become 8k one day. So more space would be required on the server. So you have that enough space on the server to upgrade to manage that level?

We have 3.2 PB servers now. It can literally hold 200 films at any given time Raw footage, also architecture is like scalable architecture so we have enough racks. We've reached 200 films within 3 months and all the films are still under production So we keep adding the servers and also Emc square is joining with us.

What is the mode of payment for the people whosoever wanted to be a partner with your company?

We want to be a pioneer in data management and security so rather than selling a product and pushing the margins , The way we're going to go is like minimum you need 30tb to do a feature film for which you have to spend about 6-8lakhs. With the same money we're going to give you 3yrs of data. After 3years if you don't want all the shots because by now all is sorted out so only the final film and the final audio files. The edited ones, the edited raw file, the edited, the converted DCP, The DNG, projected file and cube. They come close to about 3 – 4tb. That will be archived for lifetime.

We want to make sure the film exists forever. Our tag line is 'Cinema

Forever'. It's like metaphorical and it's literal as well. We want whatever you're shooting to be forever and it is our job to keep accessioning it..

What kind of partnership you have with Private cloud and security management ?

On the private cloud we have partnering with Amazon along with other partner RSS security. By default amazon cloud is by itself 256 bit encryption so they're completely secure. But we are adding our security protocol and also RSS security protocol which is the state of the art protocol's in security for cinema. for every other industry are the servers because they are all centralized so we felt the product that we're handling it might be worth 10lakhs, it might be worth 100crores, that product is nothing but a data and it has to be secured. And second thing is that it's a film. Earlier we had analog films only fire can destroy it so somewhere even you can pick an old film now, scan it to 8k and project it per say some of the films which are shot in early 2008, 2010 they are not there at all. All you have is a final projected thing. That projection format if it changes we can't do anything because your raw files have gone. So that's where we felt this raw has to be preserved and now it's never going to go back to analog,

Films which are already existing 10years before shot on the negative, how you are preserving them?

We have a central scanner which scans 70MM, 65MM, 16MM, 35MM films. It does an automated colour correction if required or scratch proof or whatever. So once it's converted, once it's scanned we follow the same digital preservation. It's like copy into the server and put into a tape and it's archived.

SO say for example somebody has a 2 hour long film. How much it'll cost him to scan and keep it in your server?

Ans. As of now we have not done the pricing, we're not going to charge for the scanning . Because it's analog it's our job to convert into digital first. So



whatever the pricing is mentioned for an archival of a film for 10years or 15 years whatever that applies. If it is a born digital films we take out the raw files and edited files and everything and we do the thing.

What are the other advantage of Archiving Film with "Cinehive"

E.g if you want to screen that somewhere, you want to show it, you want to give it, it's accessible. It is not that like I'm putting this in a cold storage you come later 10 years back and then you ask for it. You can access it anytime. You can open it to the people, you can open it to festivals or cube, you name it. So all you have to give is the link to them, it gets streamed. They can access it from there. If they want the file they can copy it and we also provide the streaming service for free. If somebody wants to watch the say you have 30 films, somebody wants to watch the film on their mobile or their TV or whatever.

So we'll be giving a particular link where they can download the film wherever they are and if they have enough bandwidth we can give the streaming link directly in whatever format they want it in a DCP or whatever. If say for example you've given us a film, I've scanned it to a 4k or 5k and we've done it in the DCP after a process. We can give you the DCP files directly where you can stream. That's the beauty of digital archival. It can be accessed from anywhere.

Do you have the facilities of scanning in a city like Bombay?

Right now it's in Chennai we have the scanning thing but we're going to have a decentralized thing again there so Chennai's going to be the head office but we're going to have office's opened in the first quarter or second quarter of 2016 in Mumbai and Hyderabad to start with.



Nihar Ranjan is a name which has become synonymous with the technique of location sound recording. He is quick to think creatively in order to solve problems created by particular locations or situations. His work has been immensely appreciated in films like 3-idiots, PK, Piku and most recently in "Bajirao Mastani". In an Interview with film critic Lalit Rao (FIPRESCI), Nihar Ranjan discusses the challenges faced during location sound in "Bajirao Mastani".



It was a privilege to be a part of 'Bajirao Mastani' and to work with a living legend Director like Sanjay Leela Bhansali. I was really excited when I got a call to work on this project as I knew it was Sanjay's dream project. I was also worried how to do the sync sound for a costume period drama.

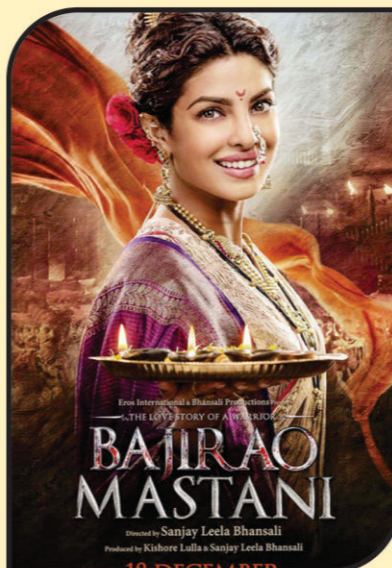
A film which is a costume drama needs a different understanding because of various layers of costume and their varied thickness, particularly use of silk, velvet, armour costume creates sound muffles and rustles which are unwanted in good sync recording.

In sync sound we normally put radio mic lapel on the body of actors which gives close perspective sound. Due to multilayered clothes the rigging of microphones and finding proper placement was a difficult task. In addition to that there was a lot of jewelry along with saree which was creating a constant rattling noise while the actors were moving around. Since the story was set in the 18th century we couldn't afford to have modern sounds like vehicles, horns, aircrafts, machinery sounds and construction noise, etc.

I had a very difficult time when we were shooting outdoors in Jaipur. We were shooting some of the scenes in real locations like palaces and old fort where acoustic of that space was adding more coloration to the dialogues and city noises was also disturbing.

To avoid that we used a lot of sound absorption materials to cut it and also put up a fabric roof to cut down the bounce from the top.

There are few scenes in the film where the actors are wearing armour costumes and lots of crowds that create a lot of rattle, foot steps, extra

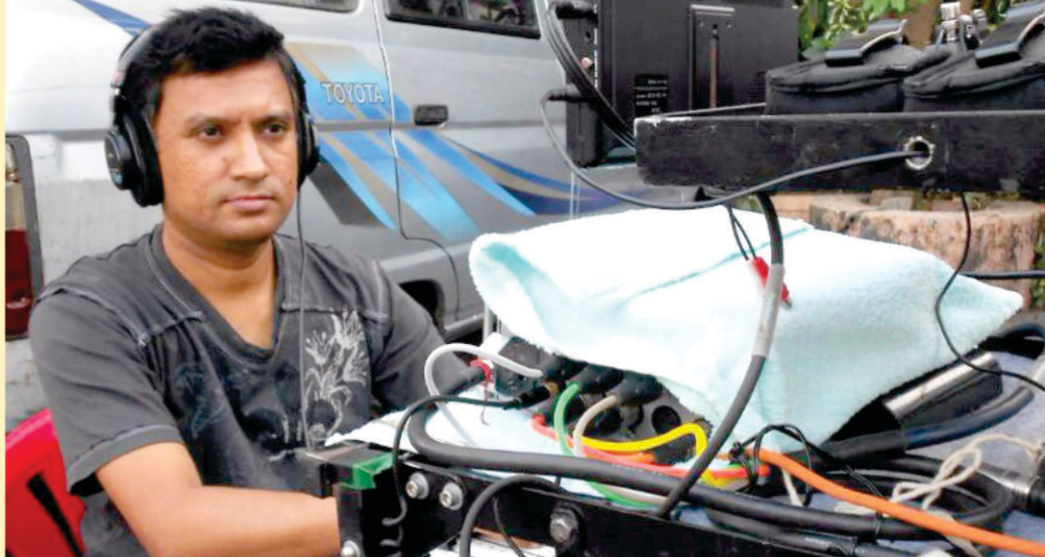


squeak and muffles. We captured all those scenes through 'Boom and multiple Mic' technique.

I remember we were shooting at the Shaniwar Wada set which was open set near the Film City gate close to the main road having regular honking of auto rickshaw and car and bike passing. Behind that set there was a residential colony where a loudspeaker was constantly playing something or the other. I request the production to cover the set completely so that outside noise will reduce. Sometimes set floor gives hollow wooden sound because of wooden planks were very noisy while there was movements of actors, so most of the times I recorded with on sound matts put up on floor.

There were scenes which were shot in the Reliance Media Work studios. While I was shooting the indoor scenes there were a number of power banks used for lighting which gave a constant hiss and humming noise. It was quite a struggle to get a proper track without that humming noise. Most of the times I put all the air conditioning off but during shooting in the month of April, May and June there was a constant fight with the unit to switch off the AC in time. So, we had to employ sync security guys who would take care of switching the AC on and off.

We were shooting during monsoon time in the month of July and August so, it was really difficult to tell the director to wait for some time till the rain noise died out completely. but lots of support from direction team to do a better job in sound. There were various scenes where



artificial Rain FX was interpreted and Lightening FX was going to happen so while recording I needed to remember that too. I took lots of wild tracks after the principal photography over.

To deliver a quality track in few scenes is not difficult but getting a consistent and clean sound track throughout the film and setting a tone for that was a real challenge as it will add to cohesive performance of various characters on the film, keeping audience engaging without any technical distraction.

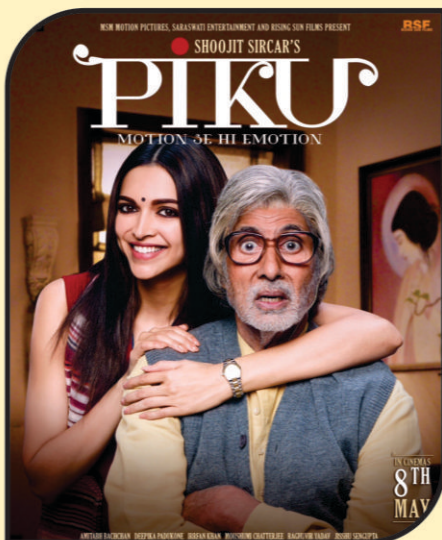
We used a multitrack recorder, Deva 5.8 recorder with the use of Lectrosonic radio mics and boom microphones like schoeps CMIT-5u, nueman-kmr81i, shenheiser mkh-50, zaxcom -mix8 remote mixer, DPA lapele microphones. During the post production we did not clean up much so that we do not lose the perspective and natural tone of each actor. We tried to match the ambience in the post production. While recording on

location I realized that most of the time actors did not have clarity in pronouncing the end of many words hence, it was sounding like eaten up words. In such a situation I needed to request them to take care of those words. Also, if you see Bajirao's dialogue delivery, Ranveer has a lot of Transient (Difference between the highest and the lowest pitch modulated signal) in his vocal modulation which is unpredictable. You never knew when he will be soft or loud during the take. Keeping all these Transient captured in proper SNR without distortion was another challenge.

In addition to that overlapping with another character's dialogues sometimes kills the clarity of both the actors. Hence, I had to be alert on that front too. In a nutshell, the overall credit for achieving such a wonderful soundtrack goes to our complete sound team.

□□□

Important Films of Nihar as Sound Recordist





Interview with

Bobbeeta Sharma

Chairperson, Assam State Film Finance & Development Corporation Ltd.

What is the current status of Assamese Cinema in terms of the productions by Film Development Corporation of Assam?

Assam has a very historic film industry and it was established around 1935. It had a very glorious history in the 70s and 80s. In the 90's it came down mainly because of television and other reasons. People were not going to cinema halls to watch Assamese films as they used to go. As a result, the number of Assamese movies being made went down. In 2005, when I was appointed as chairperson to the film finance & development corporation, we gave a proposal to the Assam government that we should also do the public funding of Assamese films.

Earlier our organisations used to give only loans with a nominal rate of interest. So, we thought why don't we produce and make our own films in Assamese language. Hence we also started with one more scheme of co-production where we would invest 60%



and the private producer will invest 40%. So that took off in 2010 and we invited Jahnu Barua to make a film called 'Baandhon' with us and it was a good start and it won various awards in film festivals. After that we made four more films & those were also co-productions. So, every year the government gives us money to produce and co-produce Assamese films.

How many films can you co-produce and how much money do you provide with this loan scheme?

For the loan scheme we have a lesser amount of money to offer. The government of Assam gives the entertainment tax refund for the Assamese film makers. 80% of this entertainment tax goes back to the producers and 20% comes to the film finance development corporation to add to the already existing corpus fund for providing the loan.

The loan has been extended in Assam since the inception of the organisation since 1974. But at that time films were cheaper but now only those kind of loans are not enough to produce films so people don't come for loans as much as they used to come earlier. Now again they have started coming back to us but we can't give loans higher than 5 lakhs for each film so it's still difficult for people to make films, as our corpus fund is not big enough.

The Assam government offers us an annual budget to co-produce films, where we propose an annual budget to the Ministry of Culture in Assam and



they give it to the finance department to sanction it.

In 2010 we made four films and each film cost us 50 lakhs and we made it on celluloid. Since we want to bring the cost down because the returns are not sure like others, we have also shifted to digital format, which is very cost effective. Even compared to Indian film making standards, our cost of production is very low, which is 30 lakhs, in which we invest 18 lakhs and the producers invest 12 lakhs.

What are the efforts from the organisation to distribute Assamese films nationally and internationally?

In Assam we have around 40 to 50 cinema halls which have UFO facilities, 3-4 theatres have Scrable system. We have been releasing our films on cinema halls too after doing proper publicity as well but that is not enough to get the money back. We are making best efforts to release films on DVD's as we want our films to be seen outside Assam. This is the main reason why I am here at Film Bazaar in Goa so that I can find new distribution networks. We are also seeking help from NFDC as they have a Video On Demand (VOD) scheme so that our films can fit in it too.

We have also requested the I&B Ministry to restart the Sunday afternoon slot of regional films and give an

opportunity to the audience that would like to watch regional films. The state government is already helping but central government also needs to build mini 'Niche Cinema Halls' to showcase films which cannot be released commercially in big cinema halls. Big multiplexes may give you one show like PVR is doing in the slot of 'Director's Cut' but that is not enough.



How many such mini halls are expected to come up in the next 5 years?

The government of Assam is planning to take it up in rural areas or semi urban areas. They are trying to convert the community halls into mini halls. It will take time but the thought process is on. They have realised the importance of having many more cinema halls for the promotion of Assamese films.

Assam has a rich literature. So, why doesn't the state government plan to develop some grants so that the Assam literature can be converted into good films?

Assamese literature definitely has good content which can be transformed into films. That is why we are tying up with NFDC for the screen writer's lab and for the producer's lab. We are so isolated from the rest of the word and India as well. Our people have talent but lack exposure. We need to have people to conduct film workshops in Assam, that is the need of the hour and we are also planning to have one very soon.

What is the one wish you have that will help in promoting Assamese cinema?

If you remember in the Delhi CII conference I mentioned that I think the major TV channels should have a time slot for regional cinema because there is a lot of good content in regional cinema. They should evolve their grading system of regional films and they can approach us and other similar film organisations and independent film makers from various parts of the country. Another alternative is that we could get our films dubbed in Hindi and other languages but I think our films need a larger audience.





Interview with

Michael Moritz

The pioneer in non verbal cinema is undisputedly Charlie Chaplin and in the sound era, he was followed by French comedian Jacques Tati and a few more. Recreating this effect in theater is more difficult because there are no retakes and reconstructions later in editing. It has to happen on the spot. "Fired by Hamlet" is one such brave attempt put together by Michael Moritz with a talented team comprising of Ashwath Bhatt, Amba Suhasini Jhala and others in a mixed style of mime, gibberish and non verbal communication. In this conversation with Michael Moritz, Naresh Sharma, Editor- Cinematography Art, tries to find out about various challenges faced by the director in this journey.

After you got the invite to do this production with Ashwath Bhatt, how did you decide the script of the play as it was not already written?

First I was here for the 'Funny Bones' workshop and then came up the idea that we could do a play with funny material but there's always a thing with funny material. I didn't want to patch up one scene, one gag or one catch to another because it's not interesting for me and in a comedy I'm always looking for tragedy. In tragedy I'm always looking for comedy. So when the comedy was there I was looking for a tragic moment for a group of people and then I wanted to make something with Brecht but that was through speech. There was too much weight on speech and I was looking for something on Shakespeare and then I found the 'Comedy Troupe' in Hamlet and I thought that it would be a nice thing playing around with the famous mouse trap. I thought I can show some slapsticks in the 'Comedy Troupe', which is going for an audition at Hamlet's court. That was the beginning. Then I thought now let's invent the troupe we have. I didn't know the actors who will be there or not and I wanted 8

people, 3 Women and 5 Men. At least I got 2 Women and 5 Men.

There are some Hindi dialogues in this production and certain references connected to the Indian film songs. How difficult was it for you to comprehend and incorporate them into the production and direct them the way you felt they should be directed?

First I watched some Bollywood films that I could find in Vienna like 'Baazigar'. Therefore, I knew a little bit about how they define comic or comedy. For me it's often too much that the stupid guy's too stupid and I thought that it cannot be that. Hamlet against this tradition was for me a good aesthetic conflict and also I as a director could say that I am on Hamlet's side. I'm also doing the speech of Hamlet. Then I thought how will an Indian actor group react on this and they want to show their culture and that's all a good thing. What they see all the time is in their culture and they think that it sells and they want to sell themselves also in front of Hamlet. And I like it, I like this Bollywood musical stuff in a certain way. I cannot watch it every day. I like the choreography and some other things. I

liked 'Baazigar' because it's a very dramatic tragic. The plot is based on revenge. It's very hard and then you have dance in between and I like the alienation effect and I'm again with Brecht. That was also very interesting for me how Brecht has snatched asian tools for his theatre and how it now works in Asia. For example the famous red curtain. I had to use it.

I think to be honest or to fail honest is a big problem here. To fail in an honest way without goofing, to feel the fiasco, "Oh! I've lost now", and to support this and to share this honestly without hiding and not doing a goofy face. That was the biggest challenge for me with them.

If you were to do the same play with European actors and they could speak Hindi on and off. How different would this production be?

Very different. It's not only that it is with European actors, every actor in this group defines how the work ends because they are a lot of improvisations also. When they walk and come out and we say that they spoke Hindi there, that was an improvisation. I only gave the

subject, 'Oh No! It's Hunger' and you can develop and if you feel to come out when they walk and come out and want to say something about that then you can. There are some elements that are not fixed. It depends on the actors.

For a comedy the audience should not anticipate what is going to happen next. What was your effort to make sure that this does not happen?

I want to entertain them, that is the first thing and by entertaining, manipulate them for being open that I can touch them. That's all.

In the production I saw that most of the time there was no background music. Was it a conscious effort or you felt that this content doesn't need background music?

I don't like background music because it covers all. For example in 'Romeo & Juliet' we have seen both the scenes at NSD and there was big film music and the music is sometimes stronger than the emotional development in the scene. If this happens the actors have no time for developing their emotions between the pause.

In our play we have only taken music once from the speakers. As quotation. I know, it's against the Indian habit. Conditioned by Bollywood, there must be music all the time. But the last words of Hamlet are "The rest is silence" and I like the silence.

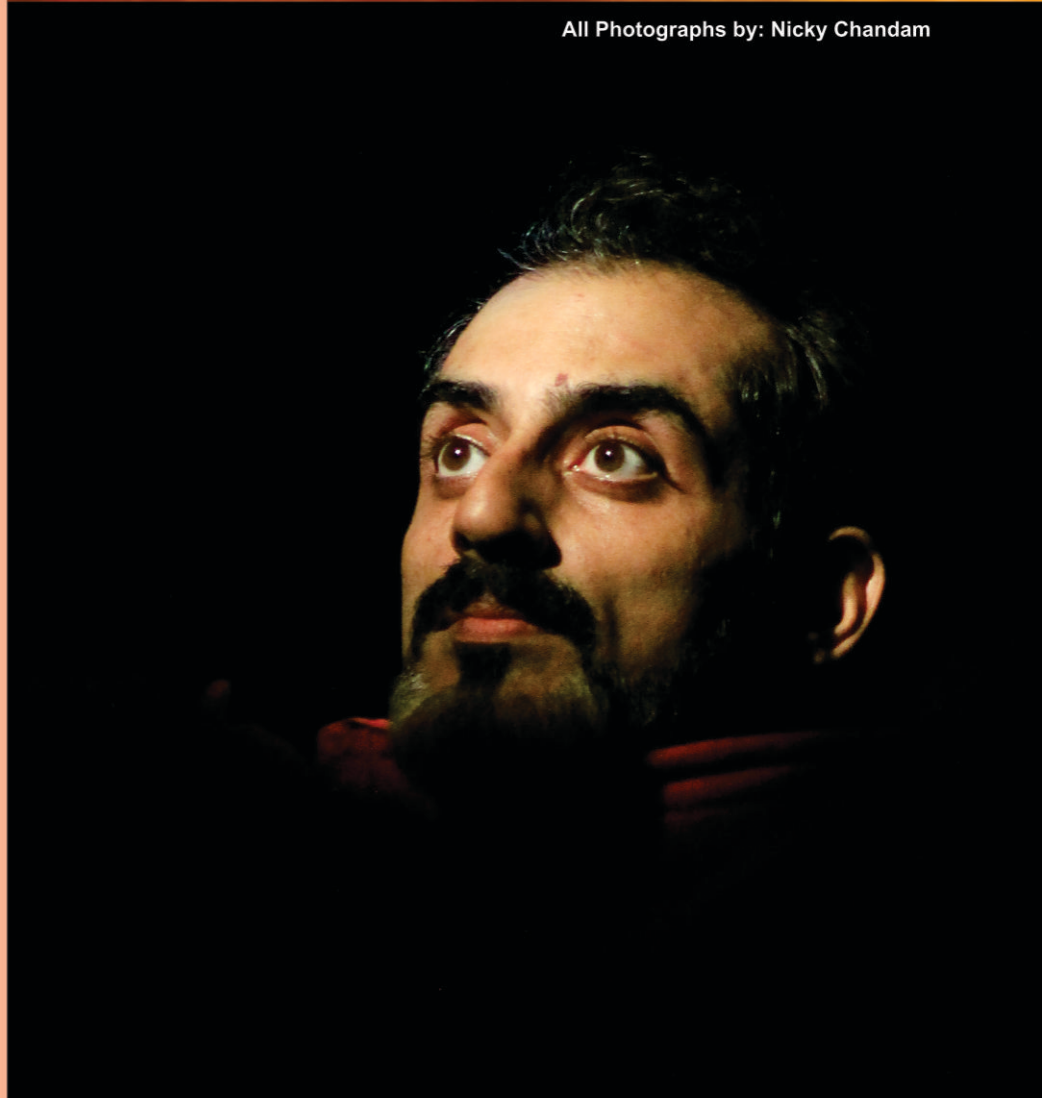
Silence is also music, like when I see lots of lights I would like to have more *ciaroscuro*, more shadows because shadow is also light, even the most important part of it. And so the silence is the most important part of the speech or like a pause in a movement. The mask for example does not tell anything when you move it. It tells you something after the movement, in the pause.

For me the music the actors produce was more fun. At the beginning we had this song that Poornima sings recorded and then we thought she should sing it once and its magic, it's another thing.

How different would this production be with the same cast and



All Photographs by: Nicky Chandam





All Photographs by: Nicky Chandam



everything else remaining the same if it happened with a larger audience in a bigger theatre?

It's easier when we have more people, when they laugh. Their laughter is bigger. Therefore in sitcoms we always have the laughing machine behind. And when there are only some people then you feel that you are an individual so you don't trust to laugh now. May I laugh or not? So I think that could help. I don't know if it was bigger would they have reached them all i.e. the last row because they performed little bit worried for me. But I think it would work and with more people it always works better.

Sometimes when the volume of laughter is not the same as expected, how do you react? And what according to you was lacking in the script, direction or the performances?

It depends. Sometimes the tension is so high. Now I say we have worked well and it's alright the audience doesn't laugh, can be that the tension is so high that they don't want to release now. That can also be for the actors.

It's hard because you've built up thinking they'll giggle here and giggle there. At the end the comedy is built up step by step so that you have a giggle here and giggle there, you have a rhythm. But when you don't have the rhythm from the beginning or it goes another way because the audience is maybe more reserved or it's strange or it could also be a tragedy what I have done and I say that's a tragedy, I cannot laugh now. I think a good comedy is built like that, that you can decide if you want to laugh or not. But you have to create the tension, you have to build it up.

It's up to the audience if they want to laugh at the big fiasco because they failed or say that's a pity. What is important is that we were able to transport emotions and as a reaction that we get emotions from them.

Do you feel the expectations of different audiences are also different? Would there be a difference if you perform the same production for children and then for people who are theatre lovers?



Yes. We performed at NSD before where there was one show and they were laughing a lot. There were also some children there and when Brighella cooks his stuff and smells it one child reacted directly making a sound similar to the one on stage, it seemed as though he could also smell it. And the students were laughing a lot, it was another context. And now people came for theatre at British Council. They watch in a different way. It's more sophisticated and they have read Hamlet. They think what has this to do with Hamlet? So

they are looking for a meaning at the beginning and maybe then it's gone. Then you're not on the track because the actors live with these reactions and the biggest mistake is that when you push it. Then as an actor you start goofing around and think I want to now get laughter. Then you make funny sounds and then you lose. That's the biggest mistake when you change the situation for a small gag and that's the challenge then for the actors.

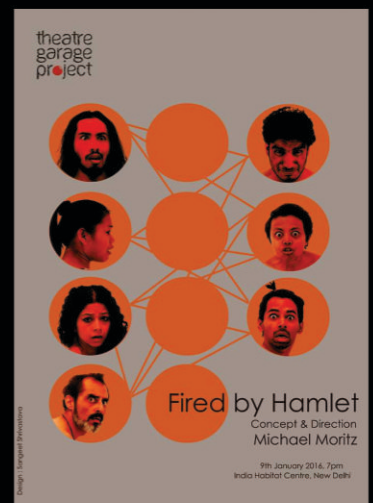
Does the performance of an actor

improve after doing a number of shows? If yes, then after how many shows?

I think you have 30 shows and then you see what works and what not, what you can add and then you rehearse again. We will develop again, throw away something or develop a new scene but after 30 shows you can see if this here is too long. I think 30 is a good number.



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January - March 2016



NSD Productions

Photo by: Thyagarajan

Many years ago I shot a feature film "Sonam" for a Guwahati based director Ahsan Muzid. During the shoot I remember asking his mountaineer wife, Archana Bhattacharya : "What do you get when you climb the mountain, as it is quite a painful process?" She simply said, "The sight of the sunset, the pure white snow that you see and the fresh breath that you get there, you can never get it anywhere else".

Perhaps the same can be said when you watch any wonderful theater performance, the feeling that you get, can never be got while one is watching a film. Perhaps this "indefinable magic" is the reason why so many people are still passionately practicing theater despite it being a low income profession.

The last season began with "Netivepeer" directed by Norway based ex-NSD graduate Kamaluddin Nilu. An

expensive production in terms of set design but perhaps attempting at more than one can chew. Despite trying to do so many things it does give you a feeling of euphoria during various scenes like the singing and dancing sequence in European ambience created through costumes and music. The marriage sequence where the groom is trying to meet his wife does create humor where his body stature helps Sikander to evoke laughter among the audiences particularly with the dialogue.... "Maa vo khol nahi rahi".

"Romeo Juliet" by Shakespeare was one of the famous productions showcased by the 2nd year NSD students. Despite brilliant enactment of Juliet by Rukmini Sircar, well supported by other characters, it still leaves the audience with a lack of fulfillment. Though It had wonderful set design, many a times one feels that the actors

are in a hurry to deliver their lines which somehow does not give the audience any breathing space.

One actor who has consistently been delivering good performances is "Chandan Kumar". One can see his talent in various plays where he has portrayed different characters like "Chor Machaye Shor", "Julius Ceaser", etc. With two neck to neck performances in a day "30 days in September" and "Where did I leave my purdah ?", Chandan again showcased his remarkable talent.

As Mala's uncle he displays his ability to modulate his voice with perfect control. During the entire play many of his suggestive gestures give a taste of erotica without crossing the boundary towards vulgarity. The dinner scene is the most memorable one among the various scenes.

"Where did I leave my purdah ? " heavily banks on the performance of the lead actress, enacted brilliantly by Medha Aich again wonderfully supported by Chander by effortlessly switching between the characters of Suhel, Dushyant and the young actress. He is not just the icing on the cake rather the backbone of "Where did I leave my purdah" ? where the audience would wait for him to come on stage.

The play reminds me of the well known erotic sequence about the use of butter in the film "Last Tango in Paris" directed by Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci. I never thought somebody could also use it in a sadistic manner. Among other scenes the most fascinating scene is the breakfast sequence where Medha and Rahil brilliantly use butter in a sadistic manner in a 'never seen before' use of butter.

Also the innovative use of selfie, dressing room lights as backdrop and painted backdrop created an interesting ambience to the whole set design for an open air style performance. The use of the space by using colorful carpet and how the play begins and ends is really engrossing and the various sub plots keep audiences engaged throughout the production.

Santanu Bose has a brilliant knack of using the existing space and converting it in the stage design. Those who have seen the "The Big Fat City" will agree with me. While watching the play it strengthened my faith in the fact that if actors are cast properly then one can create magic. Another actor who has constantly been impressing the audiences with his performance is "Chaitnya Vaman". If "The Big Fat City" will be remembered by the audiences it is because of his character. Despite a

play full of many brilliant actors from the 3rd year NSD, Chaitnya manages to steal the show. If one needs to know why Mohan Maharishi is such a great director then "Vidyottama" is the production one should see. Annu Soni is fortunate to get the role and deliver it with perfection. This role demands a skilled actor who can integrate dancing talent with the able guidance of Mohan Maharishi. Brilliantly designed costumes and supporting actors like Raju Roy playing Kanchuki make the production a "must watch affair". While I do appreciate minimalist sets, this production lacked in terms of set design as it required a certain amount of grandeur on stage for the back drop. However, "Vidyottama" was a production which left the audience with a taste of classical text interpreted differently and left the ending open to imagination. This is what I would like to call "The Theater" in drama !!!

Medha Aich

*On her experience of working in
where did I leave my purdah*





Photo by: Thyagarajan

The play "Where did I leave my Purdah?", reminds me of the very first day, when our director and Dean, Mr. Santanu Bose had called for a meeting to share and discuss about the casting. The first thing he said that he had cast me as Nazia, the protagonist who is an 80 year old actress. I was little disappointed to know that I was once again cast in an older role. But the disappointment only lasted till I read the play. The plot of the play is so sparkling that it leads to rapid chemical reactions in the laboratory of my mind while I read it. Hats off to the writer Mahesh Dattani for his imagination leading to a great recipe of words. After we finished reading the play, it was the time for me to face the challenge. Though I had played older characters, they were all very noble and kind and not as old as 80. To play a person aged 80, it is necessary to transform the body to a greater extent. Moreover the play travels from present

to past as every alternate act is a flashback (the play has VII acts). Hence, throughout the play, the body travels from one form to the other. At one point, the character's pride and ego compels her body to walk tall, at the other point, there are some physical disabilities due to old age which prohibits the body to have a free flow of movement. Well, this was a deadly combination.

For an actor, one of the biggest challenges is to play an age which we have not yet faced in life. It is very commonly seen that through an actor's observation the body can be achieved after a point of time but the next level of characterization demands the accumulation of "state of mind" or "psyche". This needs real hard work. For a character like Nazia, it is necessary to virtually go through her journey of life. She is ruthless, proud, ambitious, desperate, stubborn, sarcastic and fearless. It is the incidents which took

place throughout her life, which made her Nazia Saheba. She only has a soft corner for acting for which she puts everything at stake.

While our exploration was on with the script, we took enough liberty with respect to the mode of presentation. In fact, the last scene is the total outcome of impulse of three actors present on stage which we came up with only on the last day of rehearsal. According to me this scene was the most powerful one. I know of some audiences who came thrice to watch the play just for the sake of the last scene. There were few more scenes which were intentionally kept unblocked. Hence, in all four shows there would be four variations of the same play. Therefore, it wouldn't lose its freshness despite numerous shows being performed as we could only add more versions of it. It does sound risky but was really worth trying. It has increased confidence in me, but of course it



demands a lot of actor's involvement and intensity. Our director has also added more flesh to the script and its best outcome was the first scene, the last scene and the divorce scene.

Throughout the whole play which was two hours long, I had only one exit and my next entry was around 15 seconds after my exit. This is the first time that in a play, I have almost no exit. We actors always assume that an exit would make a chance for us to accumulate some more energy for the next scene. But what to do when you do not have a chance? Well, what I realized is that my continuous presence on stage helps me even to penetrate myself more into the character. The audience can actually witness the growth of a character in details as the character is continuously within the sight of the audience. As far as energy and stamina is concerned, I really had to prepare myself with enough energy dosage for the exhausting performance and for a role like Nazia, it was all worth it. In this journey of actor to character, I have gained a lot of experience to be cherished for a lifetime. After a month of a performance being staged, an audience member recognizes you somewhere on the street by the name of the character you played, hugs you and speaks few words of appreciation; what else does an actor want? But what is also required is to forget the applause and move on in search of another journey of a character.

- As told to Naresh Sharma



Annu Soni

On her experience of working in
Vidyottama



Photos by: Thyagarajan

Beautiful things are created by wonderful people. The things that look easy are tough to make, so was it with "Vidyottama". It was an amazing experience to work with Shri Mohan Maharishi. He is one of the finest directors of India.

He is quite concerned about his work during the practice sessions. His frame is always familiar with the audience, like towards the end of "Vidyottama" the whistling sequence shows the relation to present scenario. The last sequence of "Rangpattika" depicts protest against the evils existing towards women. The director's self workout is double than that of the actors and it's not only with the actors but with the backstage artists as well.

The time he spends with the actors and with the backstage artists is the same. The rehearsal session is for the backstage artists also. I did Othello with him in my student life and one thing that I observed was that he is focused and precise towards his process. He is cool and calm.



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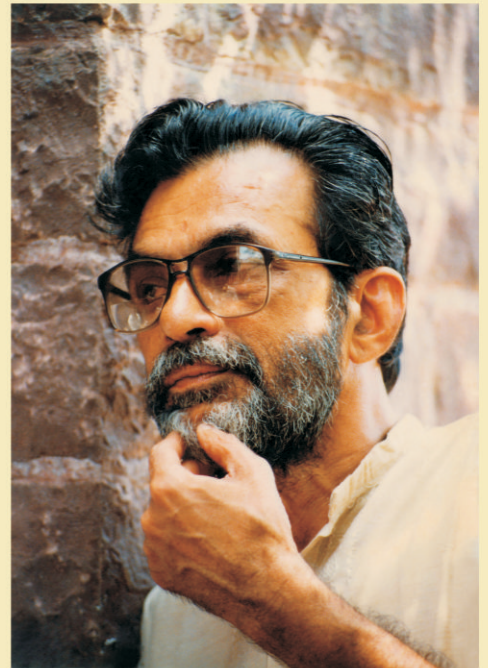




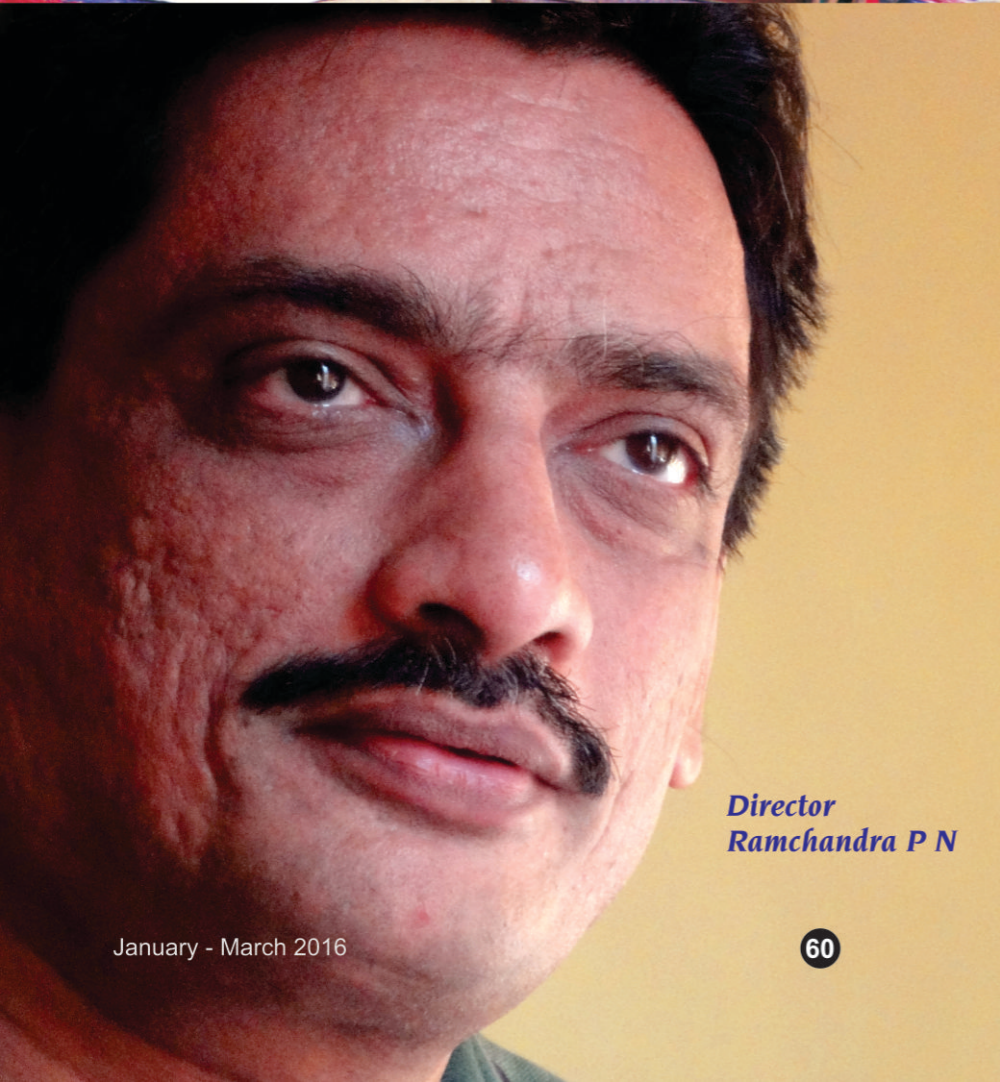
Being a NSD repertory artist, I explored a lot. Initially I and my co-actor Mr. Yatenda Bahuguna were scared of taking up this role as this role demanded intensified Mohiniattam training. Embodiments of a classical character were not my cup of tea. The roles were first performed simultaneously by Vijaylaxmi who is a trained Mohiniattam dancer and eminent actor, Mahendra Mewati. That set upon a challenge for us but, I'm extremely thankful to the repertory group and our choreographer Bharati Shivaji who excels in Mohiniattam and helped us with movements and choreography and our director Mohan Maharishi for such an opportunity.

- As told to Naresh Sharma





*Ramchandra P N is a name which has been associated with sensible cinema since the making of his diploma film at FTII, Pune in 1992. He has been consistently directing documentaries as well as fiction films which have been appreciated by cinema buffs and were rewarded in various festivals. Most recently, he directed a documentary film on one of the most respected names in the theatre world, B.V. Karanth, produced by films division. In this article, actress and documentary film maker **Taranjit Kaur** reflects upon the film.*



*Director
Ramchandra P N*

Documentary on **B.V Karanth**

Directed by
Ramchandra P N

Recently I was invited to the screening of a documentary film based on the life of Theatre director and musician B.V. Karanth. Having worked with theatre stalwart Neelam Man Singh Chowdhary, since the age of 16, I had been witness to the magical collaboration between Neelam and Karanth. Karanth had given music for all Neelam's theatre production namely Yerma, Mad Woman of Chaillot, Phaedora, Kitchen Katha, to name a few. Karanthji always had a magical way of creating music. He would use all kind of unusual instruments, which he would pick up from wherever he travelled, and use them to create different sounds. He laid stress on importance of pauses in singing. Having experienced the beautiful moments of collaboration between the two masters, I was intrigued to watch this film.

B.V. Karanth: Baba, is a feature length documentary, directed by Ramchandra P. N. The film is produced by the Films Division. The film is based on the autobiography of Karanth, named, "Here I cannot stay, there I cannot go" edited and published by Vaidehi. The title of the book connotes the man that Karanth was who could not sit at one place and was moving, meditating, creating and travelling throughout his life.

The film adopts an unusual style where the book is being read by various students and well wishers of Karanth in theatrical spaces where he had once worked. The film explores the life of Karanth from his birth in Mysore, bringing to light unknown facts like when he once stole money at his uncle's house and was sent away.

It highlights how Karanth as a

director and musician was connected with so many people in theatre and had influenced so many lives. As a traveller he would travel to different parts of India and work with various theatre groups. It explores his life from working in Gubbi theatre, to going to Kashi with the help of Gubbi Veeranna and studying Hindi and music. Karanth made a great contribution to the National School of Drama.

The film takes the viewer through the journey of the life of Karanth through the various chapters of the book, as well as, with the numerous interviews with not only the theatre professionals but also the various people connected to his life.

Even if I knew, as a theatre student that Karanth was working with various theatre companies throughout India, one is not aware that he had influenced so many lives through his work. He had joined NSD at the age of 31 and then became a teacher there. From there it takes us to his marriage with Prema who had been a great support system throughout his life, to his establishing Bharat Bhavan as a significant theatre institution where he started Rang Mandal, a professional theatre repertory.

The film takes us through his life through the interviews and memories of many of his friends and theatre contemporaries like Paramshivam, Vishnuchandra, Girishkarnad, Prasanna, Kirti Jain, Neelam Man Singh, K G Krishnamurthy and many of his students.

The film brings out the struggle that Karanth went through as an artist, his insecurities and his honesty. It also covers the Vibha episode in Bharat Bhavan where he was falsely implicated

in a case and how it made him suffer emotionally. It's indeed sad that a man like him had to go through so much suffering.

Finally when Karanth came back to Mysore to establish Rangayan, he worked hard to set up a place where the actors could live, work and also earn a livelihood. But it didn't work too well for a very long time. The film has a vast canvas in terms of interviews with so many people.

For me it was very nostalgic to watch a film of a master who had played a significant role in shaping up the history of Indian theatre. Karanthji had a charismatic personality and also a great sense of humour. The film captures his life beautifully from childhood in Mysore to his youth, from NSD to Bharat Bhavan, to Rangayan. The film is an important document of theatre history and should be screened at various theatre and film festivals throughout India.

Ramchandra P N leaves his mark through this film as being a remarkable filmmaker, as putting together such a vast life as Karanth's was not a small task.

The film has been screened at major film festivals like Signs Film Festival, Kerala; Madurai Documentary Film Festival; Prague Indian Film Festival Czech Republic; Ladakh International Film Festival; Delhi International Film Festival; Manipal International Film Festival. □□□



Taranjit Kaur is a theatre and film actress.





MPSD

(Madhya Pradesh School of Drama, Bhopal)

Photo Feature on

Film Making Workshop

If Lucknow, a city known for its rich aristocratic traditions can boast of BNA, a similar claim can be made by Bhopal since it houses MPSD (Madhya Pradesh School of Drama) where we (Atul Tiwari, Naresh Sharma) conducted a one week long film making workshop. From my own experience of last three years workshops. I can safely say that they are well-read, ready to slog from 7 am until late night. Fully realizing that in a very near future some of these students will be working in television and films too, this module gave them opportunity to understand technical things which will help them to perform better when they face the camera. Despite the paucity of good quality equipment and resources in Bhopal, they have managed to make 4 short films of 5-7 minutes duration. These films have been screened for public and press on 14th January 2016. This photo feature enables readers to have a glimpse of the shots at MPSD.

- Photo Feature By Naresh Sharma





January - March 2016

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