



ISSUE: 12, April - June 2016

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*a quarterly Magazine*

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FILMS

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**Shyam Benegal**

on Art of Cinematography

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**DOP**

**Anil Mehta**  
V K Murthy  
Memorial Lecture

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## Editor's Desk

Dear Friends,

It has been three years since we have been bringing out "Cinematography Art". We would like to thank our readers for their increased interest which has grown by leaps and bounds as our subscription has grown tremendously.

Since the past issues have exhausted and there has been a consistent demand for old issues we thought of our 12th issue being from the archives featuring the best of past interviews of masters like, Barun da, Binod Pradhan and Senthil Kumar.

We are pleased to announce that heavy weights like LEE, ALEXA and CANON have joined us to reach out to the vast database of our readers.

To make reading our magazine a more interesting experience we have decided that 75% of the magazine will be dedicated to the cinematographers and equipments which we would like to refer to as "the artist and his tools" and 25% of the magazine will be devoted to other film making departments, like direction/acting/distributors/costume/sound designers/set designers among others.

To bring more awareness about Indian cinematography aspects, we have generated the database of various cinematographers from all over the world so that a pdf copy of the magazine can be sent to them through email.

In this issue you will read the views of Anil Mehta, who delivered the 2nd V.K. Murthy Memorial lecture, an effort started by the Bangalore Film Festival and Priya Seth on 'Airlift' in the "Latest Release" section.

We are in the process of bringing out books on "Master Cinematographers" and will shortly start doing research on Late Ashok Mehta for the same.

**Cheers!!**

**Naresh Sharma**

**naresh.sharma@log2craft.org**



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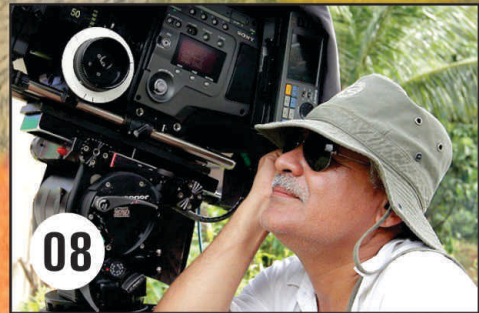
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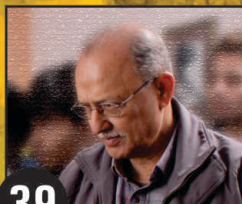
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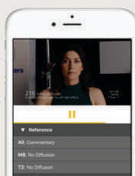
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Interview with DOP

## Priya Seth

Priya Seth is among the few cinematographers who have created a niche for themselves, be it under water cinematography, advertising films, music videos or feature films.

The DOP of the film 'Airlift', which was not only very successful at the box office but received critical acclaim as well due to its realistic portrayal of the story, Priya Seth talks to Naresh Sharma about her experience on shooting 'Airlift'.

**When you heard the script of 'Airlift', how did you prepare yourself to shoot the film, in terms of the look, research etc. for the film knowing that it is based on a real story?**

My first meeting for 'Airlift' happened with Raja at his office when he had already been prepping the film for about 6 months. I walked into the room where there wasn't an inch of blank space on the walls, all having been taken over by thousands of pictures of Kuwait in 1989-1990. That was my starting point. A very well defined idea that all our research and references would be based on reality, documented or otherwise. We didn't really refer to other films which have been based on that period or on similar subjects. I delved deep into research in terms of photojournalists who covered Operation Desert Storm, documentaries of the war, videos that

were available on the net. I spoke to people who lived there during that time. I found some coffee table books of Kuwait during the time. The only one film Raja and I discussed was 'Missing' by Costa-Gavras. This was not a reference really, but in terms of how effectively it had managed to convey the terror outside while ordinary people were struggling to survive within it. In our own subtle way, we paid a small homage to that film since it has influenced both of us tremendously.

**What were the challenges you encountered while shooting on location? Please elaborate a few.**

Shooting a film like this on location was extremely challenging since our schedule was very tight. We wrapped this film in 49 days. We were moving sometimes 2-3 locations a day. So scheduling each location in terms of sunlight was quite hard. I was



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DOP of Latest Release Film



very clear in terms of what kind of light I wanted each scene played out in. So we had very long days to maximize the light we wanted to shoot in. Also the night sequences were quite challenging as we were lighting vast areas of streets in very small periods of time.

**You have worked with Raja Menon on 'Barah Aana', how helpful was the previous experience while working again with him on 'Airlift'?**

Raja and I have a kind of 'auto-tune'. Years of working together and having the same starting points in terms of our ideas for the film really helped. We prep together intensely before the shoot. But once we're on the floor we never need to discuss the fundamentals. Which then leaves us the freedom on set to improvise and take forward our plans.

**Sometimes a DOP works with a certain set of lens and a particular camera to achieve a certain look which he/she fine tunes on DI. Did you have any specific requirements for shooting 'Airlift' and working with a particular DI set up and DI artist?**

I'm very comfortable with the Alexa system of cameras. The image to me is most cinematic compared to the other cameras available at the moment. And the low light capture, something which I depended a lot on during this film is far superior to all. I also used Cooke S4i lenses for the film. After much testing I chose those as I liked the organic quality of the image. Not too sharp and correct. There is a certain softness to the image which I found suited the look I was going for.

My colourist was the extremely talented Rob Lang from 'After Studio'. To me my relationship with my colourist is very vital. Rob and I have been working together for years and have a visual shorthand as it were. Our reference points are usually the same and we begin this process during prep. To me the DI is a completion of the cinematographic process. Hence my discussions with Rob and our visual referencing for the project began far before principal photography. I depend on him tremendously to help achieve my vision.





# THANK YOU FOR MAKING "ALEXA" OF CHOICE



**K K Senthil Kumar, ISC**  
*Baahubali: The Beginning*



**Aseem Mishra**  
*Bhajrangi Bhaijaan, Phantom*



**Sudeep Chatterjee**  
*Bajirao Mastani, Baby*



**Chirantan Das**  
*Tanu Weds Manu Returns*



**Prasad Murella**  
*S/O Satyamurthy*



**R Madhi**  
*Sriramanthudu*



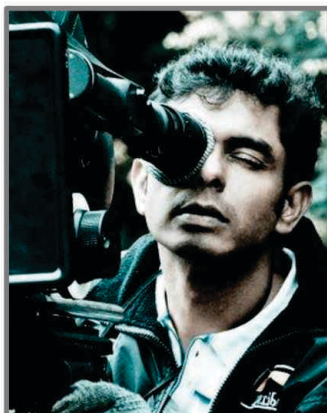
**Jomon T. John**  
*Ennu Ninte Moideen*



**Om Prakash**  
*Anegan*



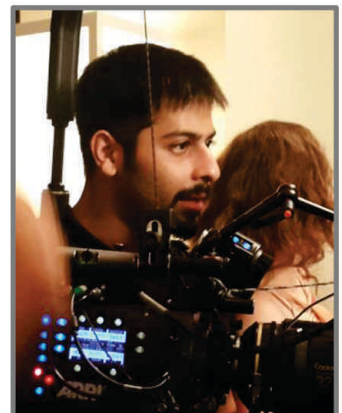
**M Sukumar**  
*Kaaki Sattai*



**Rajavel Olhivieran**  
*Kanchana 2*



**P C Sreeram**  
*O Kadhal Kanmani*



**Mitesh Mirchandani**  
*Neerja*

Indian Films shot on **ALEXA**





# Mr. V K Murthy

## Memorial Lecture by DOP Anil Mehta



The V.K. Murthy memorial lecture was started in Bangalore as part of the 7th edition of BIFFES in December 2014. The inaugural lecture was a joint venture between three cinematographers - Govind Nihalani, Sunny Joseph & Piyush Shah. Keynote address was delivered by none other than Mr. Murthy's beloved disciple Govind Nihalani. He also happened to be the chief guest who inaugurated the film festival. He delivered the first part of the lecture titled 'Evolution of Indian Cinematography'.

He took the audience through the evolution, explained the works of early masters, highlighted the works of Mr. Murthy & gave a picture of how this art form got a solid foundation because of these masters. Second part of the lecture was by Sunny Joseph, who explained how the art of cinematography evolved in South India. He emphasized on the contribution of western cinematographers who worked in early Indian cinema.

Third part of the lecture was delivered by Piyush Shah who gave a broad overview of digital cinematography. He expanded the topic of evolution of Indian cinematography by drawing examples from contemporary films & film-making approach. Overall, it was a befitting tribute to maestro Shri V.K. Murthy as three cinematographers from three different generations served the diverse audience of the film festival (mostly young) with a feast that will be remembered for long.

It was also a beginning of a new chapter in the history of Indian film festivals. Nowhere else, is there a platform to appreciate, celebrate & engage in a serious academic study & discussion about the art of cinematography.

The second edition of the V.K. Murthy memorial lecture was delivered by Anil Mehta in January 2016. The occasion was marked by a tribute to two stalwarts the world of cinema lost - Vilmos Zsigmond & Haskell Wexler. Followed by the insightful lecture by Anil Mehta. The lecture session was followed by an open house discussion which was again attended in a big number by youngsters.





Let's take a typical instance of a cinematographer at work, 'he reads a script / screenplay/ 'words', which evoke images or ideas for images and has thoughts on how to achieve them. He then meets with the director and hears him out on the 'look and feel' of the film, many more words get thrown around at this stage, 'Real-Very Real', 'Ethereal', 'Surreal', 'Gritty', 'Grungy', 'Glam', 'Edgy-Dark' this list of words is long and varied.

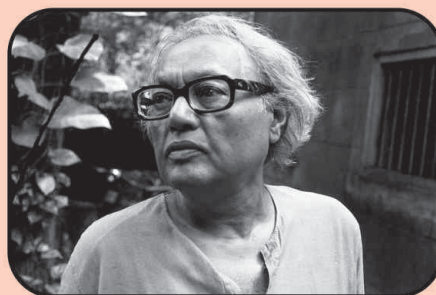
All this while what is probably going through the cinematographer's mind, is a list of numbers and processes, one stop underexposure and push process, 50% bleach-by-pass, only long lenses on this one, 40mm and above, 1/4 black promist 1/4 ctb, T 2.8 to 1.4. This is what runs through the cinematographer's mind. These words, that mean so little to everyone else, is his form of articulation, his expression, his way of translating words into images. Is this really the person we are looking for, to deliver a memorial lecture in the memory of an artist like Mr. V.K. Murthy?

Why then did I accept to be here? Well, first, because I can't say no to Bhaskar Sir, he is a senior and like a mentor to me. More importantly, because no one else wants to talk about cinematographers and cinematography. Infact, so little is said about cinematography that ironically we are compelled 'to make some noise' about it ourselves. Although everyone accepts

that cinematography is an 'Art', a 'Refined Skill', a 'Complicated Craft', and that 'every cinematographer imbues the film with his personality - yet critical writing on the subject or thought or column space is negligible.

So please bear with me in my attempt to formulate thoughts into words.

Although the paradigm, around which I am supposed to give my lecture today, is 'REALISM', I would like to approach it from my own 'Reality' as a cinematographer, my own frames of reference.



The first and most impressionable influence is Subroto Mitra. Subroto da was a cinematographer who, we as students had the privilege of interacting with on the FTII campus. The seemingly calm and composed Subroto da was a finicky perfectionist, more important he was self-taught. What struck you right away about him was that for a self taught professional, his grasp of the theoretical aspects of cinematography was crystal clear, sensitometry, emulsion

architecture, lab chemistry, optics...

The workshop with him would not start with, "let's make frames like Pather Panchali" but more like, get your Gray Cards, do an exposure wedge, plot the H&D curve, determine Gama, determine ISO, basically start with Greek so that eventually your expression is Classical. It was painstaking but the foundations were solid.

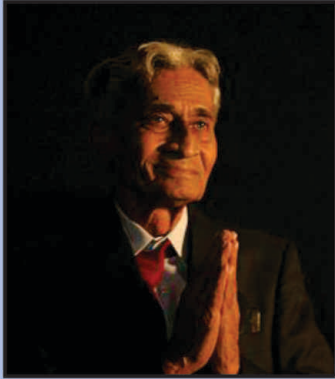
Subroto da was, in my opinion, a 'Classic Realist'. How to get the Film to behave in accordance with 'his vision' of capturing reality, that was his quest. 'Charulata' - 1964 - watching the movie as a student, summed up the role of a cinematographer for me. The film felt seamless, flowed from indoors to outdoors, set to location. It let you enjoy the movie without getting in the way by overstatement. It was subtle and articulate.

A large section of 'Charulata' was shot on an indoor set, inside a studio. It is now part of folklore that 'Bounce Lighting' was supposed to have been used on this set for the first time. The set was originally, to be constructed outdoors but when it was moved into a studio Subroto da was not very happy with the decision. He was going to have to simulate various times of day on an indoor set. A problematic situation even today (except if you're Sudeep Chatterjee shooting Bajirao). That's when Subroto da decided to cover the entire courtyard of the house with a



## V K Murthy Memorial Lecture

“



”

large white fabric and bounce lights onto it for 'Ambient Day Light'. This was only the starting point, soft light sources from windows, simulation of natural sources of light became the guiding principle. This approach was a big departure from the Classic Hollywood Style of studio lighting. He was innovating in the Calcutta of the 60s where everything other than Chai and Politics was in short supply.

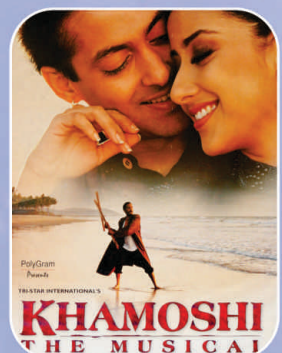
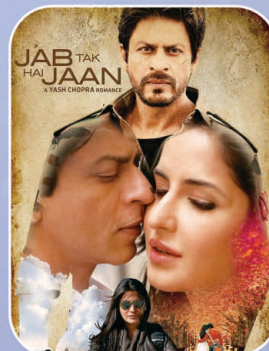
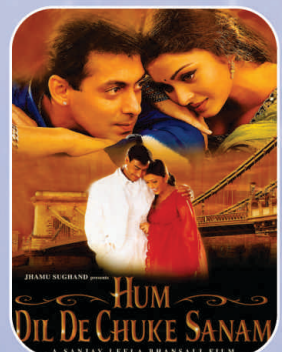
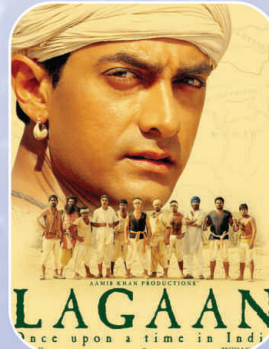
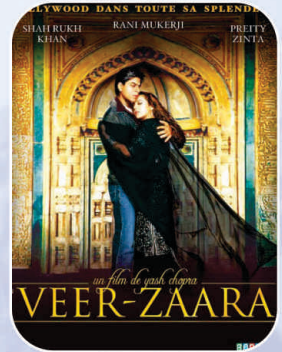
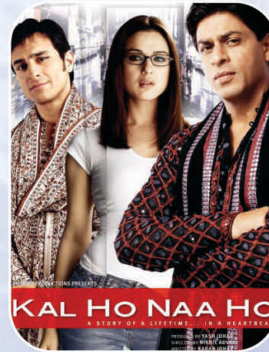
This is what contributed in a big way to the 'believability' of a Real Location or a Real House. We have 'lazy afternoons', 'evenings', 'late evening to night transition',

'stormy day break', all simulated by lighting. This layer of 'Lighting' in a movie is a narrative element that often goes unnoticed. Subroto da himself, told us a small charming incident after a rather successful screening of 'Charulata', his mother apparently called him to tell him that she really enjoyed the film and that she was particularly impressed with Bansi Chandragupt's work (the Production Designer/Art Director), of how the house looked so real, the attention to detail, the period authenticity, she went on for a bit till Subroto da interrupted her to tell her that if the set had not been 'Lit' in a naturalistic way, it may not have looked that good or so real - but I don't think she gave him much credit for the 'look and feel' of the film.

Even though Subroto da's work is in the 'Classic', 'Naturalist', 'Realist' 'Aesthetic' mode, it never lacks expressiveness, the film moves from lyrical to romantic to dramatic with deft and effective touches. The track shots change rhythms as scenes develop. This is when you realise the cinematographer is also a co-narrator. Composition, movement, lensing, lighting are his language and syntax.

There is an International context here too, that I would like to highlight.

The French New Wave, East European Cinema, Films of Ingmar Bergman from Sweden were all creating new spaces in the 60's. The New Wave was doing away with the artifice of sets and lighting. Location shoots with available light were the new mantra, Raoul Coutard would not hesitate to sit in a wheelchair to do tracking shots with a hand held camera. Sven Nykvist was beginning to work with Ingmar Bergman. 'Winter Light' was a film that came out in 1963 and this a quote from Sven Nykvist, "When Ingmar and I made 'Winter Light', which takes place in a Church on a winter day in Sweden, we decided that we should not see any shadows in it at all, because there would be no logical shadow in that setting. We sat for weeks in a Church in North Sweden looking at the light during the three hours between 11am and 2pm. We saw that it changed a lot. It helped Ingmar in writing the script because he always writes in the moods. I asked the Production Designer to build a ceiling in the church so I would not have the possibility of putting up lights or back lighting. I had to start with 'bounced light' and then after that I think I made every film with 'bounced light'. I really feel ill when I see a direct light coming onto faces with its big nose shadow."





That quote could have come from Subroto da. The same feeling for light at around the same time.

Now let's open another studio door. Quite literally in the first few shots of 'Kaagaz Ke Phool', a studio door opens. Top angle, wide long shot, harsh specular light blasts through it, a diminutive character walks in, an overlong shadow precedes, strong dark diagonal of the catwalk cuts across left of frame, cut to, an over-bright mid shot, back to camera the character continues to walk, another diagonal of a crane arm across left of frame, cut to, source of light, a shaft forms, then off, then on again, eye level long shot, dramatic shadows on studio wall, dwarfed character walks amidst towering film equipment, cut, silhouetted film crew walks into studio. Can there be a more diametrically opposed approach to cinematography. Dynamic, dramatic and assured - that's the voice of V. K. Murthy.

Subroto da and Murthy saheb are both doing the same job, taking very different paths. For me Subroto da and Murthy saheb represent an Arc under which we can still categorise the work of most Cinematographers. This is where the problem of 'Representation of Reality' takes a bend. Let's just cut to a broader framework for the sake of extending the discussion.

I feel that there is a Western way and an Oriental way of representation, quite distinct from each other.

In very broad strokes, the Western aesthetic derives from Rationality, Causality, Linear forms. Art and Literature reflect this reality. It's not as if all Western art works within the confines of this realism but it does become the reference point or a point of departure so to speak, like Cubism will self consciously deploy multiple perspective as a stated principle.

The Oriental way is probably more amorphous - deriving from Sensory, Mystical, Cyclical modes, using codes that the audience is familiar with, so not to be construed as Abstraction or Stylistics but as Reality. For example, in Indian Miniature painting although the appearance is of a flattened perspective, it actually has multiple perspectives. It is

able to carry narratives within its confines through split screens, is able to mould space according to its needs. The top of the frame in a miniature painting could be a dramatic gray cloudy night sky with lightning, the bottom of the frame could be a turbulent river with serpents and elemental fury, the body of the painting could be a Nayika bathed in a very different light, poised in an elegant manner, yet anxiously awaiting for her beloved to return.

While this form of painting was emerging in parts of Northern India, 'Renaissance' painting was the mode in Southern Europe. Renaissance painting with its near life-like representation, faithful perspective and naturalistic lighting and Indian miniatures with all their stylistic nuances. I feel that there is a very high level of sophistication in both forms, just the modes of telling are totally different.

I am not suggesting here that Subroto da was the Renaissance man and Murthy saheb the Orientalist, I am just trying to highlight that there can be very different approaches to depiction in a work of art. If we look at our Folk Theatre forms and tradition, 'Pandavani', 'Burra Katha', 'Yakshagana', 'Nautanki', all these forms have a style of narration that is totally our own, where story, song, commentary, mythology, improvisation, all overlap to make the entertainment for the evening. I feel that our mainstream cinema draws from this tradition. I might be taking on too much here, too many threads to tie up. But let me just round it off by saying that perhaps Murthy's saheb's work is more resonant with our own idioms. It tends to go more impulsively with the emotional content and has a flair which is more in sync with the drama of our movies.

I want to take the argument of 'Realism in Cinema' to another realm, again a filmmaker who was an early influence, Dziga Vertov and the name of the film is 'Man with a Movie Camera'. His work reflects upon the nature of cinema as an art, and on reality as an aesthetic choice. Dziga Vertov started as a newsreel director in early Bolshevik Russia, working on the Kino Pravda series of Agitprop films.

The Title Cards of 'Man with a Movie Camera' read like a manifesto of film making ethics.

1. Attention Viewer - This film presents an experiment in the cine communication of Visual Events.

2. Without the aid of inter titles, without the aid of scenario, without the aid of theatre sets and actors.

3. This experimental work aims at creating a truly international, absolute image of Cinema based on its total separation from the language of theatre and literature.

4. Author and Supervisor of the experiment Dziga Vertov.

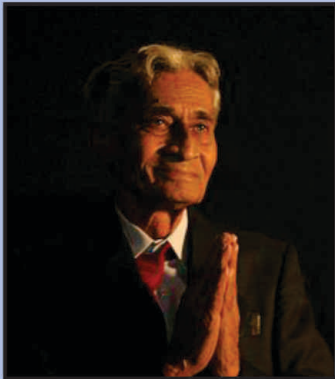
5. Chief Cameraman Mikhail Kaufman.

6. Assisting Editor E Svilova.

Dziga Vertov's preoccupations are quite clearly stated here - he wants to document reality, with no layers or artifice in between. He wants cinema to have a 'pure' expression and so works towards developing a syntax for an absolute film language - all this in 1929.







Infact what he ends up doing, is perhaps, the flip of what he has stated. He uses all the 'tricks in the box', which in this case, is the camera to interpret reality. Split screens, super impositions, reverse motion, speed variations – even the narrative opens itself to interpretation by employing the various modes of Montage. The narrative of life in the city, the critique of the socialist doctrine of the time, furthering of the aesthetic concerns of the Constructivist movement in Art. It is a really bold, self reflexive work, and so retains interest for filmmakers even today. That is probably why the film was voted as the 8th most important film ever made, in the 'Sight and Sound' poll of 2012.

But is 'Man with a Movie Camera', a realistic film? Far from it, I feel, it is highly interpretative and individualistic. Metric montage, intellectual montage, montage of attractions, all modes of editing create association and meaning that open up interpretations for the viewer. A far cry from his stated manifesto of 'Life caught unawares', 'Life as it is'. Dziga Vertov in trying to further the understanding of his film also says, "The film is only the sum of the facts recorded on film- or if you prefer, not merely the sum but the product, a higher mathematics of facts." Critics in the meantime, went on to declare that 'Man with a Movie Camera' was not life as it is but life the way they

DID NOT see it. The debate on reality on depiction of reality or interpretation of reality is as old as all art. Cinema in that sense is a late entrant. I am tempted to take another detour here in an attempt to try and locate reality.

Heisenberg's Principle of Uncertainty states that if you locate a particle's 'position', its 'momentum' becomes less accurate to determine. It's almost as if the act of observing a particle introduces uncertainty into its reality. If we are to transport this analogy to the act of filmmaking then the moment one places a camera to record a reality you have already altered its meaning and opened it up for interpretation. How then do you locate realism? While in the quantum realm, it's also tempting to touch upon the Dual Nature of Light, as both particle and wave.

A quote from Einstein, 'We are now faced with a new kind of difficulty, we have two contradictory pictures of reality, separately neither of them fully explains the phenomena of light, but together they do.' (To have the most mystical forms of energy as your constant companion is the cinematographer's privilege, to put that energy to good use, the challenge).

If for a moment, we were to use the duality of the nature of light as a metaphor, I feel it again bears down on all acts of filming, in the sense that the act of filming fixes/concretizes reality into an image and abstracts/opens it up for interpretation at the same time.

In the hands of a good practitioner both these forces come into play effectively and that's what makes the work stand the test of time. Coming back to Subroto da and Murthy saheb, it is not within my academic tutelage to analyse their work from this perspective. But when I watch their work, I do get a sense of an 'internalised understanding' of what a camera and film and light can do. Their response to a scene, how to light it, how to lens it, 'how to move the camera', is almost an intuitive impulse.

These are just some of the thoughts



that I wanted to share with you all today.

They may not have the rigour of a full academic enquiry and may not have the substance that this premise deserves but like I said at the very beginning, it's not such a good idea to have someone who's most often used words are, "thoda left, thoda right", to deliver a Memorial Lecture. Before finishing I want to risk bringing in my own two bit experience from the set of a movie I worked on, it's a risk because it's a very





banal example and yet I find it relevant to the everyday work that we do as cinematographers.

So, once upon a time, long long ago, there was a movie called 'Lagaan'. On that film everyone was on a journey of how to tell this tale in the best way possible. How to locate it? Where to locate it? How to mount it? It all went on for very long before the commencement of shoot. One day closer to the shoot, when the village set was ready, the producer called for a meeting of the core team on location. So we all travelled to Bhuj to have our final say. At one point late into the discussion, the producer and lead actor of the film turned to me and said, 'So Anil, how are you going to light this film?' I was a little taken aback because to be honest I did not have a straight answer, fact was I did not quite know yet, so I tried a clever answer like, 'Ashutosh and I have been discussing the look of the film, we will try and capture the spirit of the script.' But Aamir is smarter than that to fall for that one, so he asked again, pointedly this time, 'See there are night scenes, there is no electricity, people are poor, there are just a few lamps, so how will you light those scenes?' Basically what he was saying that - Listen I hope you are not one of those 'Source Lighting Types'. This film can't look too 'dark', its



a mainstream film that has to be seen in B and C centres. I still did not have a clear answer for him as I did not have a clear lighting plan in mind, but what I was clear about was, that the script would be my source of lighting and not necessarily the oil lamps. And that's the principle I worked with.

For example, there is a festive, celebratory song set in the village square at night, 'Radha Kaisena Jale,' there are very few joyous occasions in the film so the mood had to definitely be upbeat. I thought an overhead ambient light should suffuse the whole space. Easier thought than done, I was on an outdoor set with not even an electricity pole in sight. Anyway my gaffer and assistants pulled off an engineering feat with local resources and in the middle of nowhere I did manage a overhead rig with soft lighting.

Now it was the director's turn

to ask me, 'So Anil, where is all this light coming from?' Clearly it is not moonlight and nor is it the lamps.' I was hard pressed for an answer again, except to say that we need to create a soft, pleasing, upbeat ambience for this song and this is the best way I can think of creating it. Anyway that's how it stayed and I don't think anyone's asking, Where is that light coming from?, anymore, although now, I do have a good 'come back line' which I read in a cinematographer's interview somewhere. When his director asked him 'Where is that light supposed to be coming from?' he replied, 'Same place your background music comes from.'

That's the bottom line for me, go for the spirit of the piece, get the feeling right and hope that it will connect with someone's notion of reality.

□□□





*Interview with*

# **Bishwadeep Chatterjee**

*On Bajirao Mastani*



Bishwadeep Chatterjee, an FTII alumni, is among the few sound designers whose work has been rewarded year by year with various industry awards.

He has been working with the most respected industry directors like Rajkumar Hirani, Shoojit Sircar, Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Vidhu Vinod Chopra among others.

Like a true Master, he does not hesitate when it comes to sharing his wisdom on sound design.

Whenever he finds time from his hectic schedule, he conducts workshops at film schools where sound recording is taught as a specialized subject.

During his recent visit to CRAFT film school for doing a workshop on sound design, Naresh Sharma, interacted with him in detail to find out about the nuances of his sound design work in 'Bajirao Mastani', which won him both the highly coveted awards for sound design, The National Award and The Film Fare Award.

We bring you excerpts from this interaction.

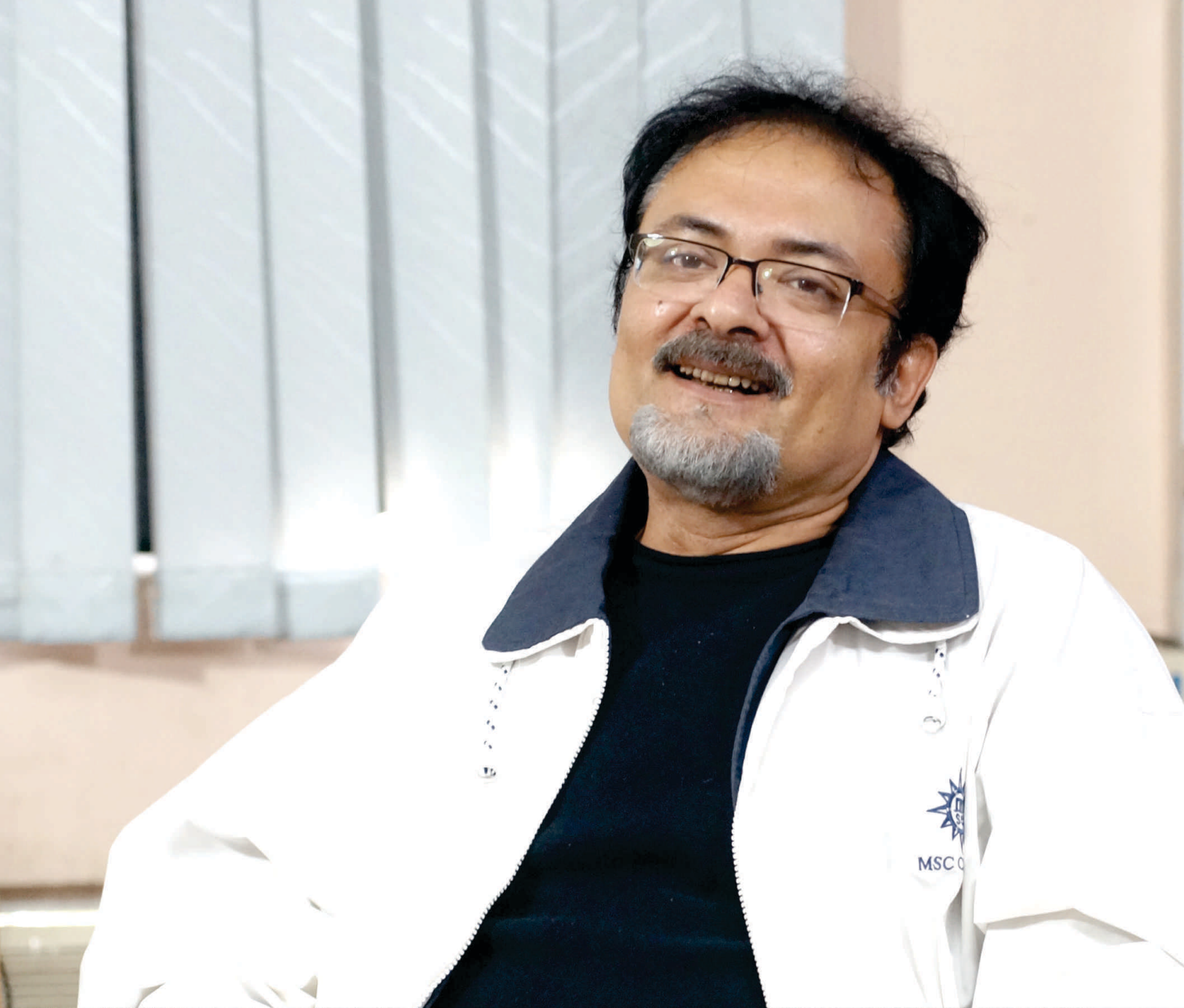
**Can you talk about your association with director Sanjay Leela Bhansali and your contribution as a sound designer in his films particularly for 'Bajirao Mastani'?**

When Sanjay approached me for 'Bajirao Mastani's' sound design it was like getting together professionally after almost 15 years. One good thing about Sanjay is that he has a lot of respect for his technicians, his actors and his crew. He is a very intense person and that translates into every department in his films equally.

There is honesty in his work, which is why every professional from his respective department wants to give his or her best shot! I have worked with him in 'Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam' and after that again in his next film 'Devdas' where I recorded the songs and the music.

But there was so much sound design in the songs and the background score, that I decided I wanted to push it a bit further and not just work on the songs and music, in future, but the entire sound design in a film. Incidentally, I mixed the dialogues, effects and music for a copy they wanted to send to the Cannes festival at the time. Which kind of became a reference mix for the actual final-mix.









**You said that there was sound design which happened through the music. Can you elaborate on that?**

When one is recording a song, the music production or arrangement and mix of that song is done purely as an audio experience because that's for the music album, where there will be no picture. Now this song is played back on location for picturisation (where the director, choreographer, dancers and actors are taking their respective cues from). Once the song is edited and sent to me for the surround mix, I find myself doing additional design work to better 'marry' the song to the visuals. The approach to this mix is more 'cinematic' than 'musical'. For example in 'Devdas', Sanjay's grand picturisation with so many dancers in the foreground suddenly made the song sound 'small'. I asked the assistant to get me at least 25kgs of ghungroos (or ankle bells that dancers wear). We made 3 musicians wear 3 different types of ghungroos all over their bodies - categorized by their sounds... high, mid and low frequencies. They moved their bodies in beat with the dance steps, producing the most

amazing sound texture which suddenly brightened up the song and complimented the scale...!! To give another example, from 'Devdas', I had layered and created a particular whip sound for the background score that eventually became a metaphor in the entire film whenever he (the protagonist) goes through a traumatic experience.

**Can you elaborate on the difference between the mix for the cinema hall and the mix for the album?**

Actually, there should be no apparent difference in the song mix. It's very important not to lose the 'essence' of the song. But what does happen is when you show a crowd singing, then



the backing or group vocals which in a music album has been otherwise kept as a soft backing vocal part, is brought to the foreground to compliment the visual. If there is a close up of a particular instrument, then prominence should be given to that particular



instrument for the duration of the shot. In an album mix this could sound 'jumpy' or uneven, but when you are watching a film, you will expect that prominence in sound. In "Bajirao Mastani", there is a victory song (Malhari) which Ranveer breaks into. In the choreography, they show warrior like dance moves, with exaggerated foot stamping of the soldiers/dancers in beat with the song. I recorded foot stamps, armour sounds, crowd chanting and placed them rhythmically in the song. Again it complimented the visuals so well, that the song was sounding and looking big in scale. This is how elements are added into the song to make it appear more like a performance which is happening in front of you. It should not sound like there's minimum or no relationship between the soundtrack and the visuals.

Then there is the background score. While the composer composes the theme or the music piece, placement is very important. In fact I make it a point to interact with the score composer as it is important for both of us to create space for each other. For example the war scenes would be loaded with sounds of swords, armour, horses neighs





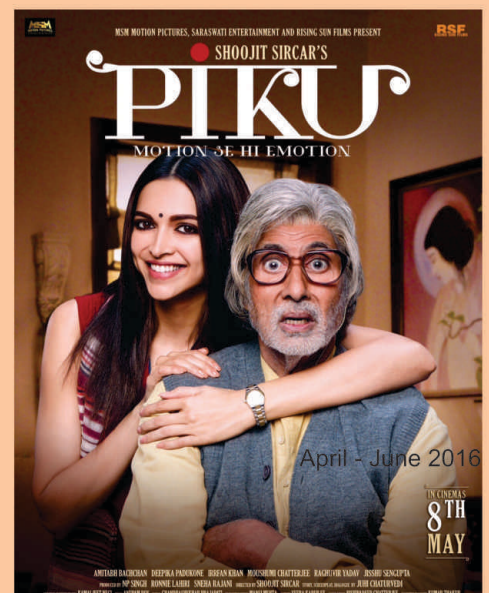
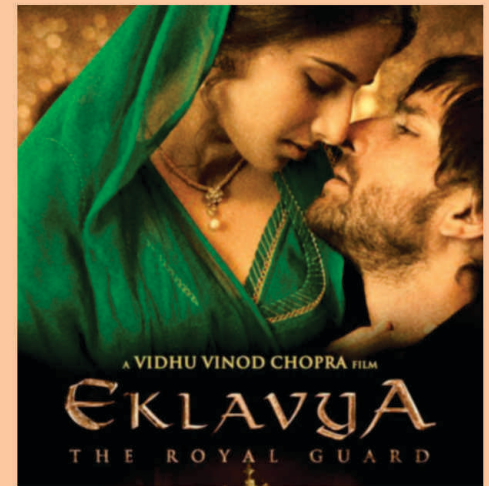
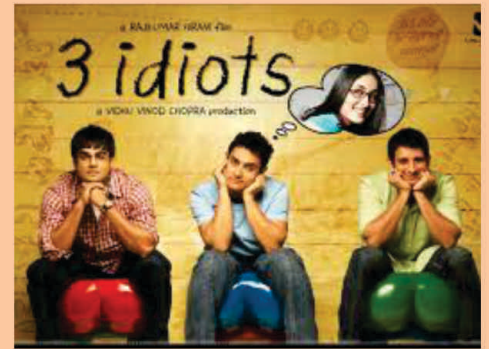
and hooves, canons, war cries etc. All these are percussive sounds and would clash with percussions in a music piece, so the composer had to create a track that would not interfere with these elements and yet enhance the drama. Many a times when Sanjay would want music in certain sequences where there isn't much happening in dialogues, but when he would hear my sound design, he would understand why I have either muted the music or made it minimalistic to create a certain moment. There is one particular scene where Bajirao is leaving for war towards the end. He gets up to say goodbye to his Mastani. He walks out and it's raining very heavily. There was an elaborate music piece over there with strings and cellos being played at the same time. I muted all violins, strings and cellos.

The shot was such that the soldiers were standing on both the sides. Bajirao is getting up on the horse and he is moving out and it's raining very heavily. The sounds of the horses and the rains are really percussive and because on these two sides there were these soldiers standing, it was almost like a guard of honor for this guy. Hence, there was just the snare and the drum over there along with the rain sound, the horse sounds and their footsteps. This was making it sound more convincing. It created much more tension than a music piece would have created in that particular moment.



## Important Films of Bishwadeep Chatterjee

I was quite excited about 'Bajirao Mastani'. For my information I read the English Version of the book on 'Bajirao Mastani'. Later, I read the whole script. From the sound designer's perspective I had to know who were Bajirao, Kashi, Mastani & Maasaheb - the strong characters in the film. This was a period film so, what would be the soundscape? One could not have traffic, or any such contemporary sounds. I was mentally constructing a soundtrack that would compliment this film. I started collecting data for myself. I discovered that every year in Wai, a place near Panchgani, Brahmins come from all over Maharashtra to chant the Vedas. The Vedic chant is something that I wanted to put in the sound track. Since the backdrop of the story was Maharashtra, the chants of these Maharashtrian Brahmins gave it a certain authenticity. There were these women who would sit and sing bhajans in the temple which I have used very subtly in various places in the film. It built up a kind of an "atmosphere". I had my atmospheric sounds like horse carriage, horse neighing, temples, soldiers camps, horses. All of it was put together. As it was a war film, soundscape was designed in such a manner that one could feel those days in the film. As Bajirao's house was located in Shaniwar Wada, a place which is still located in Pune, one needed to think, what would







be the sounds around that place in those days? There would be temples as Bajirao was also a Brahmin. There would always be pooja ceremonies, some bhajans, some religious activities etc. constantly taking place.

**As it is a war oriented film, it has different kinds of weapons which are not the standard weapons that are often seen. How did you design the sound for the rotating weapon which Bajirao uses?**

Fortunately, I have a very good sound library. All the medieval war sounds are there with me. I have the sounds of swords, spears, bows and arrows. I have all those sounds. This

particular weapon which is being mentioned by you is referred to as 'Danpatta'. I don't know whether Bajirao really used that because there was no real mention of that in whatever I read but Sanjay took that particular weapon from 'Kalaripayattu' which is a martial art that originated in Kerala. This is a flexible kind of a sword which is used in 'Kalaripayattu'. He wanted to use it. In reality, it sounds very swishy, very thin and very boring. Hence, I had to layer those things and add stuff to make it a little more dramatic to enable it to stand out. It was a whooshing sound. I reduced the pitch of this sound and the metallic sound. There was a lot of processing done for that sound to make it sound real. The brief which Sanjay

gave to me was that I had to give him a similar whip sound which I did in 'Devdas'. We worked on those things to make it sound like a typically unique, flexible kind of sound. It seemed to have worked.

**How relevant was it to use ATMOS for 'Bajirao Mastani'?**

In war, of course, it is pretty obvious because there are arrows flying over your head and the spears cutting through, there were cannon balls flying over head. Bajirao was swinging his flexible sword over his head and fighting off arrows and other missiles being hurled at him so I had his sword swishing overhead. Hence, if one is



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hearing it in an Atmos theater, one feels as if one is in the middle of the war. Inside their palace, there were small elements like the pigeons fluttering. Hence, I put those pigeons flying over the head and they were very subtle. There were all these diyas there, all these torches that were kept on top which are above view. All the rain sequences which seem like it is falling on top of you. Thus, even in a quieter sequence there are atmospheric sounds. There are certain bird sounds too which were coming from there. There were certain cricket sounds that were coming. Even for reflections the reverbs are panned too. There is a reflection not only from the walls but from the ceilings also. Thus, in my processing when I am giving the reverb, I am also sending the signal up. Hence, it is a mixed up reverb signal which is being panned in all the speakers.

When one is sitting or standing next to a river bank there is a lot of activity happening. Some frog is jumping into the river, some insect is flying around, some bird is singing somewhere, and some bird is suddenly fluttering over there. One can observe that there is a variety of stuff happening in the soundscape around. One needs to put the sounds in the right perspective, keeping the proportion correct so that it does not disturb the scene.

**In the last sequence of the film when Bajirao is mentally disturbed after the war and goes into the river, there is only the sound of water. How did you play with the sound of water for that sequence?**

I added a lot of stuff in that sequence. I added Tibetan chants because it is a state of mind. As it is not real, I had to do something which was surreal. I had to add some wild sounds also because the soldiers are imaginary. In the last sequence, there were a lot of these complex sounds. Voice as an element is very powerful. When a voice is heard, one reacts to it much more than one would react to an instrument. When I put these voices, these chants coming almost like a drone then you know it projects his state of mind and suddenly when you turn around, nothing is there as he is just imagining it. His

being in the water, the horses that are riding in the water, he is fighting in the water, he is fighting a battle in his mind. All these imaginary arrows with fire are coming and landing on him and he is thinking that he is being attacked by his own people. He died a natural death on the battlefield. He was not killed by anybody. At this point, we stretched and made the death more dramatic. After falling when he has gone into the water, I have these under water sounds around him and a mixture of a lot of other things. This whole death scene was a stylization of sorts.

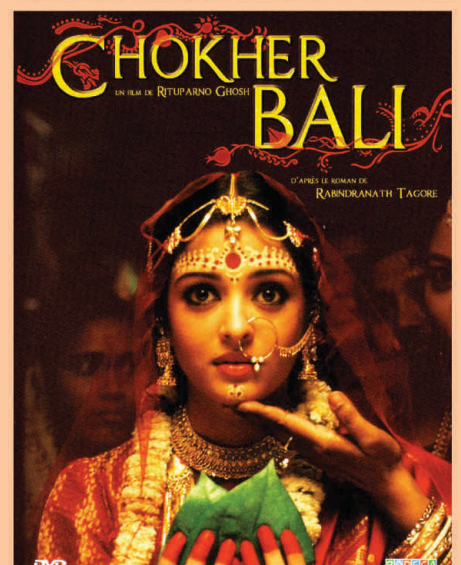
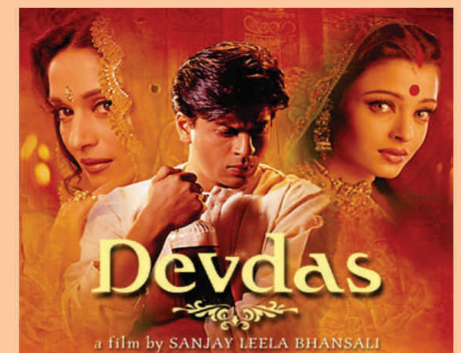
**I often ask this question to the cinematographers that how do they stylize their lighting? You did mention the stylization of sound. Can you just elaborate on this term in general and also in the context of 'Bajirao Mastani'?**

For example If I suddenly drop a very expensive China vase that is very dear to you, you will be shocked. Just the normal falling sound is very matter of fact and unglamorous. To translate this shock I would make the fall more dramatic, by adding whooshes or heartbeat sounds. May be as a DOP, one will shoot the fall in slow motion, and show that it suddenly breaks into a thousand pieces. When it's breaking, one may want to give an explosion sound over there. In reality, it will not explode but I am perceiving it as an explosion. I'm thinking that the world around me has shattered.

I will give you another example. There is a particular scene in which Bajirao is walking in slow motion. It is very unnatural to have slow motion footsteps walking when you have a slow motion shot of a warrior walking. The footsteps sound needs to be exaggerated. I have done it via soldier's armor sound being exaggerated while he is walking. A lot of reverb is given to the metal on his body.

I have been even treating and processing the sound of footfall on the sand itself. It can be a swish sound of a sword but if I put it in a different context, it will have an interesting sound. I have those kinds of sounds happening quite often in 'Bajirao Mastani'.

## Important Films of Bishwadeep Cheterjee







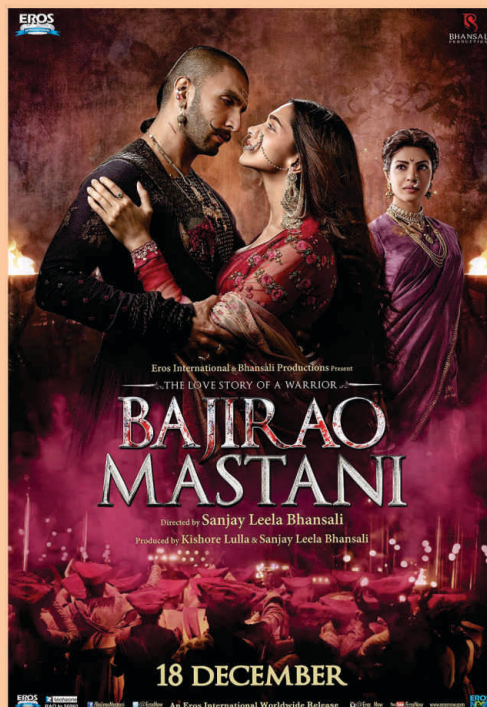
sofa or freeze out of shock. At that moment all the incidental sounds around you may not be perceived rightly by you or may be perceived in an exaggerated way. Possibly the door bell would seem too loud and repetitive, dialogues around you may become garbled and unclear, women crying or screaming would possibly add to the confusion. If I design sound for a similar situation, these would be the elements that I would incorporate.

In 'Madras Cafe', I have done that. In the last scene there was the parallel story which leads up to Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. Here is this guy who is rushing to save Rajiv Gandhi from this person who is likely to blow him to pieces. Finally, she presses the trigger and the explosion happens. I have created a complete silence over there. All the crowds and the sounds have suddenly become very wobbled because the character played by John Abraham who has rushed here is knocked out by the blast. I added a high frequency sound. How many times has it happened to you that suddenly a cracker is burst very near to you, and your ears start to ring? Our brain is a tremendous thing. It shuts off so that the ears don't get damaged. It compresses the sound so that one doesn't suffer some major injury. It's like the eyes when one is looking at the sun, the pupils become narrower. It doesn't allow that much of light otherwise the retina is going to get damaged. A similar thing happens for

Music is an easy way of creating any form of stylization but without music also it is possible to get all these stylized sounds. The stylization that one does in visuals can be complimented with processed sounds like, time stretching, lowering the pitch, rolling off or boosting high or low frequencies, adding reverbs and delays etc so that they are perceived as a deliberate distortion for a desired effect.

**If it is neither an imaginary world nor an exaggeration in a visual, do you think that stylization of sound can also be used in a natural setup where none of these things are happening?**

Yes. It can be. For example, it could be that a disastrous news has reached you, that somebody very near to you has met with an accident. You may react in various ways like, faint or drop on the





hearing as well. I have tried to create that by creating a high frequency sound which is heard throughout. I have rolled out all the other things completely till the time this guy slowly starts coming



back to his senses. He starts hearing the ambulance, the child crying after a typical bomb blast when people are recovering from the scene. This is how he comes back to reality. However, for that moment from the blast until his passing out, I wanted to create complete silence and muddle the complete sound as if one has fallen down after being hit by the blast. Then, one is recovering from all that and slowly all the news reports come in. Later, one comes back into life. This is a kind of stylization which one can create from a sort of a real situation.

**Besides being a love story 'Bajirao Mastani' is a war film. In it, horses are used in many places. How did you record a variety of sounds related to horses?**

I have a very good library of various kinds of horse sounds. Their various types of neighs, gallops, canter, trots, sneezes, snorts, hooves on various surfaces like soft or hard earth, grass, water etc. And to add to these, we recorded horses on a private stud farm near Kalyan. The reason for recording them live was also to make them walk or run or gallop at various speeds and on various surfaces with controlled time as per the timings of the visuals.

**Were there situations in the film 'Bajirao Mastani' where there was background music and you had to replace it with effects?**

It happened on many occasions. There was a scene when Mastani comes to Shaniwar Wada. Mastani was pushed to stay with prostitutes. She is staying in a brothel. There was music in the brothel. I told Sanjay to cut that and to replace it with 'thumri'. To give that Kotha atmosphere we used the 'thumri'. There are a lot of small scenes wherein we realized that either we bring in the music a little later or eliminate it completely. It sounded better without it. Before the Pinga song, there is an interaction between Kashi and Mastani in her room. In such places the music was completely out because it was disturbing the concentration and the intensity. Sometimes 'silence' works better.

**In the context of this particular film, there is location sound and later on the**



**sound is processed. How much dubbing was required in this particular film?**

Fortunately, because of Nihar Samal who is a very good location sound recordist, very little sound was dubbed. There are always situations that require dubbing like changes in dialogues or grammatical mistakes. The challenge is to balance the dubbed track with the location track. Then that particular dubbed sound is processed in such a way that it should blend with the original location track.

One has to know the parameters as a practicing sound engineer. One has to understand how many milliseconds / seconds of delay time should be there. What will be the response of this particular room etc.

**Did you make a separate International audio track of 'Bajirao Mastani' ?**

There is something called 'M & E' or 'music and effects' tracks or the International track. Suppose 'Bajirao Mastani' is sold to German Television and all the Hindi dialogues have to be replaced in German and not the music and the effects. This is done when the recording is carried out. When the mixing is done, the dialogue tracks are switched off. We have only the music and the effects.





# ***Amitabha Singh***

*Director Shortcut Safaari On  
Computer Graphics For The Film*







Young or old, any eye would light up with a spark by the mere mention of the word - 'animation'. This simple word which usually generates an uplifting emotion carries so much of complexity of the processes which produce each and every animation film that I would fall short of words to express it.

In 'Shortcut Safaari' we had decided to 'cast' a Clouded Leopard 'Jimmy' to be the 'spokesperson' representing the forces of nature. Moreover, being an endangered species itself, it would also underline the reality of innumerable species which are eventually getting lost to our world.

Many scenes in our film required 'Jimmy the Clouded Leopard' to interact with our cast of children, hence it became rather imperative that we created him using state-of-the-art 3D Animation Technologies, because finding him live was kind of tricky. Tools and techniques which are at par with the best in the world.

By creating Jimmy the clouded leopard in animation, we not only could control his emotions and expressions, we could also ensure safety on our sets at all times. Since he played a very vital narrative role in the film, the life-like quality of our animation makes the

entire cinematic experience of the film much convincing and believable. I could not have even imagined a story like this, had I not had the confidence that in my animation team at Graphiti, I am actually collaborating with the best minds and hands in our industry.

In a nut shell, The advancements in the 3D Animation technology, multiplied by the talents and skills can turn some magic around a captivating story like 'Shortcut Safaari' and help it find its expression.

**By Amitabha Singh.**



# Munjial Shroff

## *On Computer Graphics For The Film Shortcut Safaari*



the crashed van in which the children are waiting. They wait for the night fall to move in assuming there is no one there. But Jimmy the leopard has been guarding these children and when the hyenas attack he swiftly moves in and parks himself atop the van as a guardian. The children are not aware of this drama unfolding between these animals.

Another scene which takes place next morning is when Tara is in a chatty mood and talks to Jimmy about her homework issues and inquiries about Jimmy's school. The mood of this scene is very relaxed as Tara is talking to this 'cat' while her older friends are mortified that she is just a whisker away from becoming Jimmy's breakfast.

In both these sequences there are very few dialogues but all this subtext has to be conveyed by the animals body language. The preying of the hyenas who are pack hunters and Jimmy the leopard whose sheer presence is enough to make the hyenas scamper.

The animation team at Graphiti spent time studying the reference shoot by the directorial team and a lot of other videos shot by wildlife experts to study the clouded leopard and the hyenas. The clouded leopard as a animal is reclusive and usually found up in the trees resting or preying. It has amazing flexibility and it has very powerful paws with sharp claws. It uses these to climb trees with almost the ease of a monkey. This posed a very unique challenge for the character rigging team as they had to do a rig setup and animation control system which would expose the same level of dexterity for the animators to animate.

Another critical challenge was to make the animals expressive which means a complex facial rig which the animators deftly use to convey the mood and emotion of the animals. It's usually very easy to go over board with CGI creatures to exaggerate the expression

CGI today has reached a point in technological breakthrough where anything that you can imagine can be re-created for the celluloid. You can go beyond reality and you can achieve hyper-realism.

Our challenge was to create a realistic Clouded Leopard and a pack of Hyenas.

Right at the onset when Amitabha described his vision for these characters we knew that the challenge was not so much to create realistic looking animals

but to animate them and give them a persona, a persona as imagined by the director Amitabha.

The Leopard Jimmy as a character is at ease with his surroundings and suddenly his space is intruded by these children. He keeps a curious but watchful eye on them. He maintains his distance but never far away to keep them out of harms's way. The pack of three hyenas see these children as tasty morsels, easy prey.

They deftly scout the perimeter of



Finally the compositing team worked closely with the grading artist to ensure that the resulting images look balanced & seamlessly cut with the live action footage.

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SAFAARI**

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DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MRINAL DESAI SOUND DESIGN RESUL POKKUTTY EDITOR ATANU MUKHERJEE CASTING ABHINAV BANKER  
MUSIC SAMIR MAHA & ROHIT SHARMA PRODUCTION DESIGNER SUKANTA PANIGRAHY ANIMATION MUNJAL SHROFF, TILAKRAJ SHETTY & TEAM GRAPHITI  
MEDIA RELATIONS ALTAIR MEDIA ASHWANI SHUKLA MEDIA ALLIANCES MEDIA MAGIC  
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PRODUCED BY XEBEC FILMS KASHYAP A. SHAH & AMIGOS FIN-O-TAINMENT RELEASE PARTNERS CRAFT, RAO'S M&E  
JIMMY SHEIRGILL, AASHI RAWAL, STUTI DWIVEDI, DEAH TANDON, SHARVIL PATEL, HARDIL KANABAR, MANN PATEL & UGAM KHETANI  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MRINAL DESAI SOUND DESIGN RESUL POKKUTTY EDITOR ATANU MUKHERJEE CASTING ABHINAV BANKER  
MUSIC SAMIR MAHA & ROHIT SHARMA PRODUCTION DESIGNER SUKANTA PANIGRAHY ANIMATION MUNJAL SHROFF, TILAKRAJ SHETTY & TEAM GRAPHITI  
MEDIA RELATIONS ALTAIR MEDIA ASHWANI SHUKLA MEDIA ALLIANCES MEDIA MAGIC  
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Retrospective with :

# *Pawan Malhotra*

Reminiscing his film roles

My first film was 'Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro'. Salim Langde is a gunda but he's not really a gunda, there's a certain vulnerability you have to keep. If you noticed he's constantly playing with his hair, playing with his crouch. His walk is very cocky. Also he's not big so he wants to get noticed.

Before the film I had done TV serials but I was still getting used to the stop marks which are given to you to look and you have to cheat etc.

The good thing was I had a bound script and a very good director. In fact the director had more faith in me than I had in myself. Before every film I request God, 'Izzat rakh lena'.

The post production of 'Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro' was still happening when Buddhadeb Dasguptaji saw my picture on the cover of a magazine in Calcutta and he approached me for 'Bagh Bahadur'.

This character is a dancer who paints his body. I had to stand for 3 hrs depending on the mood of the painter. He would paint me from my face to back

and toes with enamel paint. Then I would sit in the sun and dry it. I learnt few pieces of Chaau for the film. 'Bagh Bahadur' is committed to the dance in the sense that he works odd job's the whole year round and this particular month he comes to this particular village where he stays with the drummer, the guy who plays the drum for him. He's in love with the drummer's daughter and wants to marry her.

When he comes into the character there's a certain softness constantly in his eyes. There's a circus that comes to his village which had a bigger set up, they have a loudspeaker, advertising department in the sense there's a man and a woman who sing Hindi film songs and they tell everyone that the show's going to start come and see the show.

Before the show they build up the whole thing for the ring master. He doesn't have all that and the village people had not seen a live tiger.

The day he's performing the village leaves his dance and they go for the show. He asks the girl he's in love with that I got you all the presents, the

bangles and the makeup but I didn't see you using that. She says she did, when she went for his show and she praises the circus man. Suddenly he realizes that, that guy took his dance away, and now he is taking his woman away.

Finally he goes and challenges him and he fights with the tiger and this was symbolic that art is dying and bigger set ups are taking over. There is also a scene where he gets drunk and tells the drummer that when I come to this village and people watch my dance and they like it, that's when I feel that 'Hum bhi zinda hain'.

'Bagh Bahadur' doesn't look pansy but there is a grace in his body language, you can see it in his walk that he's a dancer.

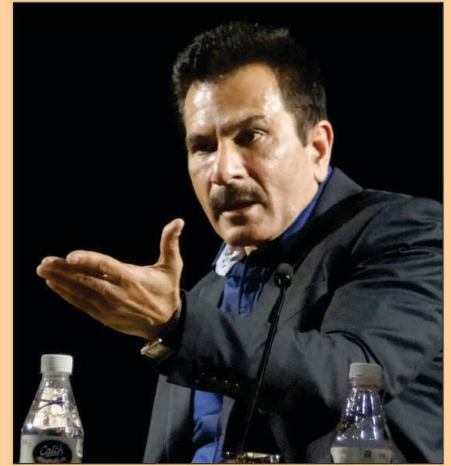
I always feel that when you're acting there is a connection between your brain and your heart and the eyes will tell everything. When you're angry, when you're smiling, when you're happy, when you're sad, when something hurts you, it'll come in your eyes and it can only happen if you feel it.

## On being part of Punjabi Cinema

My first Telegu film got me the Filmfare of South and their State award but I always felt that since I'm a Punjabi as that's my mother tongue, I should do something in Punjabi and that's how 'Punjab 1984' happened.

That film did very well in theatres





and the critics loved it. The film got the National Award in 2015. I got my PTC award for that film as a villain and The Dainik Jagran festival award. This villain was quite important in the film and if you play your role right then even as a villain you're noticed. Besides that back to back I got 'Eh Janam Tumhare Lekhe'.

I'm a Punjabi but I'm a 'Dilliwala Punjabi' so even the pronunciation of lots of Punjabi words was different, like the word 'aullad' it's spoken as 'alaad'. In Punjabi everything is in a short form. Some of the words there were still new for me. You have to think of the language and at the same time there is a certain note which Punjabi's have, once you're there you know when you see them. It's a slightly higher note. They walk with their chins up. One has to keep all that in mind and then you are working with the top star there, not that it matters to an actor, you have to perform your thing.

When they narrated me the script of 'Eh Janam Tumhare Lekhe' in Bombay my first reaction was that I can't do it because it's a huge responsibility to perform this role. But the director said no it's only you who is going to play this role. They had even made sketches of my face which matched the character. Now that was interesting because both 'Punjab 1984' and 'Eh Janam Tumhare Lekhe' are two opposite characters. So as an actor I felt very good. You are not supposed to have fixed mannerisms, body style and speech in whatever role you are playing. Your speech and my speech is different and in different situations our speech and our body language changes.

### On Jab We Met & Bhaag Milkha Bhaag

I'm very happy that I was a part of 'Jab We Met'. In a film like 'Jab We Met', everybody was positive. The character which I was playing, the heroine's uncle, he's a little aggressive but even when he's shouting people enjoy it and because I'm a Punjabi they are certain things I could add and my director left it to me. Luckily whether it was 'Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro', 'Bagh Bahadur', 'Brothers in Trouble', 'Black Friday', 'Eh Janam Tumhare Lekhe' or 'Punjab 1984', my directors allowed me to do things I wanted to. In 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag', there are many things which I've added to the character, which is actually an actor's job.

I believe that though your craft is involved but craft should never show. You should look like that character, you should look comfortable with whatever gesture you're doing. I remember that a very senior actor called me after seeing 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' and said, 'aap bilkul role mein rum gaye the'. As an actor you feel very good, it's a huge compliment and I think that's what an actor's job is.

### On Brother's in Trouble

'Brothers in Trouble' was an English film. From first scene to last scene you're there, the only plus point was that Om and me the kind of English we spoke that was the accent which was required because we all came from Pakistan in that film. There are 20 people in one house and it's a very human story that they all thought they'll work for 6





months or 1 year and then go back. That doesn't happen and they thought everything will be comfortable not realizing that they'll land up in a place where there is no light and no heating. But coming to the English, yes you have to mug it but it shouldn't look like you have mugged it. It should come from inside and you have to feel it, you have to understand what you are saying. If you don't understand what you're saying and you say it then it won't work especially for this kind of a character which is there in the whole film. The film is from his point of view and he's very inquisitive. Whenever there is a gap in anything he's trying to peep, he wants to know, he wants to look. That is with the character and if somebody notices or not, the film starts with his shoulders up, he's scared, not confident at all, lands up in a new place and the money he has spent to reach here. But slowly and slowly he gets comfortable and his shoulders start dropping and in the last scene he spreads his arms and he talks. Maybe all the audience don't notice that. But it doesn't matter. There is a collage, you just keep playing your character, even if the audience can't say 'Oh! This is what it is' or 'This is the scene'. It has to be a smooth sailing and you have to flow with the screenplay.

#### On playing such diverse characters.

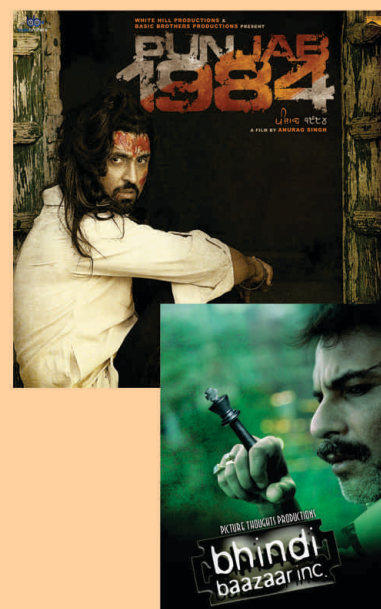
I've done 'SLPMR', 'Black Friday', 'Bhindi Bazaar', 'My Name is Anthony Gonsalves', even 'Don' which is a commercial film, these are all underworld characters but then if you watch all these films back to back, they are different. My body language is different, my speech is different. In fact for this retrospective in IIC they have compiled 17 minutes of various film scenes from different films of mine. When I saw it I realized that with each film and each character even the texture of my voice was different. I felt good as an actor that it's not only my body language and my exterior look. When you feel from inside even the voice quality will change and even from scene to scene it will change. Even in Salim Langda if you see in the beginning there is a throw in his voice and a little note of nasal because they speak in a Bambaia way but when he's talking to his sister or mother, the voice quality changes, not

that I was thinking of it at that time, it just happened. That's quite interesting. 'Road to Sangam' was the only film where I intentionally changed my voice, the way some of the Maulvi's speak in U.P. but other films I don't think I sat and intentionally worked on my voice.

Mamu of 'Bhindi Bazaar' he's in control like the 'Black Friday' guy, he's possessed when he says 'akkha Mumbai ko angar lagadega', Salim Langda is not. The only common thing when you're playing underworld is that there is violence in your body. It's like if you're playing a journalist, if you're playing a teacher you know the basic reading a person knows, the kind of education that they get. So in underworld characters there is violence in your body. A commercial film like 'Don' which I know more people have seen it but I don't think that's the best work I've done as an actor I did it to be part of that kind of film. As an actor I'm proud of whatever I did because I decided to do it, I enjoyed it and if you're enjoying it only then you can work on your character and think of things. If you see 'Don' either my hands were on the railings or I was holding a drink or if I'm walking with Don which Shahrukh played, I had my hands behind my back, I was holding my hands and walking because Narang, the character which I was playing, was in charge of this place. But there's another boss who tells them this is the job to be done. Narang delegates the work.

There is a locker scene in Don where Shahrukh chucks a floppy at me so in the rehearsal when he chucked it he said I'll throw it a little higher so that you can catch it in style. I said no that's your character, throw it wherever it goes in the take but try and throw it on my body because if I catch it awkwardly that'll make a difference because of my next line in the whole conversation is, ***He says, 'Order koi aur deta hai aur kaam main karta hun to aap kya karte ho?' to I say, 'Main bachon wali batein nahi karta'***, so whatever you say is very important, your dialogues are very important. You have to pick up your character from there. The 'Bhindi Bazaar' Mamu is different. He's in control, he knows what he's doing and even when he is sleeping with his sister in law who's younger to him and he's married to a woman who's slightly older to him, Deepti Naval played that, even when she walks in and she sees him in bed with her sister, he is ok about it. These are small things which hit you. There is a scene where he gets killed, his right hand man ditches him. He comes out on his own, alone. He's in bed and he comes out bare body and he fights with him. He's confident about himself. In 'MNIAG' Sikandar is protective about a boy, that should come through, even when he shouts at him it's out of frustration, it's like a father shouting at his son. All that should come across as an actor and it is not that I decide, it is the script which will decide.

□□□







# K. K. Senthil Kumar

Veteran Cinematographer recollects his journey

**K.K.SENTHIL KUMAR** is one of the most respected cinematographers in South Indian film industry today and is known for “detailing in lighting”. Senthil is among those who have raised the bar in cinematography to another level with his impressive work in films such as *Aithe*, *Sye*, *Yamadonga*, *Arundhati* and *Magadheera*, *Eega*.

After having graduated from FTII Pune, it took Senthil a long time to find a breakthrough in Telugu film industry. His journey as a cinematographer began with a popular TV show *Amrutham* for which he shot 13 episodes. Chandrasekhar Yeleti had directed these episodes & incidentally, Senthil was roped in as the cinematographer for Chandrasekhar Yeleti's debut film *Aithe*, which released in 2003.

So far, he has worked on more than 12 films out of which five have been S S Rajamouli's films and right now, he's onboard Rajamouli's upcoming magnum opus *Baahubali*.

In this interview, Film Critic **LALIT RAO** takes Senthil down the memory lane on various films he worked as DOP and his most talked about *Eega* on the challenges involved, and working with Rajamouli.

## Important Films of Senthil as DOP







## You tell us how you started your Career as a cinematographer in Telugu Film industry?

I was born and brought up in Hyderabad. My interest was towards civil services as a career. My entry into films is a sheer accident. may be a call of Destiny.. As a part of preparation i was writing as many competitive exams as i could, a friend of mine was applying to Pune Film Institute and asked if i would take the test as it would help in preparation for civil services exam. FTII pune had an amazing selection process. 40 people were called for the interview ,half day training, half day of G.D.s for a week. They selected eight out of 40 for admission and i was one of them.

Since I had graduated from Pune film institute, I thought that I would get a red carpet into Telugu film industry. Disappointment is all i got as i had no contacts or background in the industry back home, Hyderabad. At Prasad Labs, i met a film grader called Punnayya who asked me to assist any cinematographer before expecting an opportunity.

I joined cinematographer Sharath Sir. My first film as assistant was Premaku Velayara and worked till Jabili movie. Working as an assistant cinematographer.

I realised that people work for you in the film institute and you work for people in film industry.

Lots of people went to Mumbai and Chennai after their graduation. I came to Hyderabad because of economical reasons I could stay with my parents and try for the movies. I was lucky to get a break in hyderabad.

## How did the “Aithe” happened for you?

Chandra Sekhar Yeleti asked me to work as cameraman for his TV serial

Amrutham. Short of opportunities in films I agreed though television never interested me. I worked for 13 episodes. My television migration turned out to be my platform. Chandra Sekhar Yeleti directed Aithe and took me on as the cinematographer. This movie debut a team of actors and technicians.

We created a realistic look for Aithe. People felt that we shot the movie without lights. But lights were used and still brought the realistic tint to the movie. I was jobless for six months after Aithe though my work was acknowledged well in the industry.

## “ Rajamouli ” is big name in Hyderabad film industry. How did the association happened ?

Rajamouli called me and narrated the story of Sye. I loved it. i asked him why he had chosen me. He said he knew under what circumstances I did Aithe . He promised better time and budget. When someone like Rajamouli believes in you so much, you stop at nothing but the best.

Sye was a movie based on Rugby,Rugby is not a popular game to Indians, at that time Rugby world cup was telecast in India for the first time. I observed TV telecast of Rugby to understand the the game as wells the camera angles used as I had to recreate the live atmosphere in the climax of Sye movie. We had two months of Rugby training for the cast. We were able to pull the climax scene with realistic camera work.

In Aithe movie, we didn't have glamour angle as it was a realistic movie. But Sye was a commercial film. Hence we needed to show artists (Nitin and Genelia) glamorously without compromising on the realistic aspect of the movie. I learnt the nuances of showing stars with a realistic look with Sye.

I cannot remember who said it but I always believe that my next shot is the best shot. I am always trying to give my best to every shot within the constraints that I have.

I remember a meeting with Ganga Raju Gunnam (the producer of my first movie) while shooting the song sequence for 'Aithe'. Time was running out and we had no idea how we were going to do it. Then I told him that if he gave us some more time we would do a perfect job, he asked me in return 'what is a perfect job?' I had no answer. And then he said, 'if I give you 15 days you'll do a better job, and if I give another 15 you will better that. But that is not important. What is perfect for us is what we deliver in the time frame we need to". I always remember that.

## What were the unique experiences while shooting Chatrapati?

I strongly believe that cinematographer's work is not to make visuals look good. But to help director tell his story more efficiently. My work should be in perfect sync with the director's narration. Since Chatrapati was a harsh story, we used a good lot of brown tint. We deliberately avoided a colourful look. There are two interesting aspects from cinematographer's point of view in Chatrapati. There is a pre-interval mud fight in the movie shot in the rain. We needed constant light to cover a wide outdoor area. Balloon lights did not exist in hyd at that time. I used a 40 ft x 40 ft iron frame and stuffed it with lots of lights, diffuser and dangled it using a 100 ft industrial crane. I used very soft lights while shooting the fight which had lots of slow motion.

We had a song called 'A vachi B pai vaale'. I wanted to have a monotone-color feel to it. It was never done in recent Telugu films. The choreographer objected that monotone-color theme will not highlight his steps. The results were amazing.

Chatrapati was my first step towards visual effects. We canned a shark fight sequence in the movie where we did major blue-mat work for it.

## Ashok was shot on super 35mm camera, first to be shot in tollywood. What was your Experience on working with a Different Format

Ashok was the first movie to be shot on Super 35 and to do complete DI (digital intermediate) in Telugu films. DI is an integral part of cinematographer's job.





# మగధీర

ss raja mouli film

అల్లు అరవింద్ ఎస్.ఎన్.రాజమౌళి

ఎమ్.ఎమ్.కిరవాణి బి.వి.ఎస్.ఎస్.ప్రసాద్ వి.విజయేంద్రప్రసాద్

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sureshBJJ

There is a sequence in the movie where dead friend (Rajiv Kanakala ) of hero (NTR) appears on the screen. To show the contrast we did Rajiv Kanakala in black and white and the rest of the frame in color.

I used to like the greeting cards done by the photographer Ken Anderson in black and white except for a small thing like rose in a red color. I always wanted something like that. In a fight sequence of Ashok, I

wanted the blood to be in red color and rest of the frame in black and white. When I asked director Surender, he agreed. And the concept was well recognized in the movie. I learnt a lot about DI while doing the movie Ashok.

**What were the most challenging scenes you remembered from Rajamouli's Chatrapathi and Yamadonga from lighting point of view?**

I like the scene which begins with Shivaji (Prabhas) defying Kaatraj's (Supreeth) orders to not enter a circle and ends with Shivaji threatening a politician to not enter his area ever again. In the midst of all this, there's a mud fight which is set in the slum where Shivaji lives. Lighting was a major issue for this fight sequence since it had to cover a huge area and to get the right effect. I used 40 x 40 ft iron frame and

## Important Films of Senthil as DOP







stuffed it with lots of lights, diffusers and dangled it on top of the area using a 100 ft industrial crane. It's an intense sequence and no one could take their eyes off everything that was happening on screen.

Doing Yamadonga movie gave me immense confidence about my abilities as a cinematographer. When Rajamouli decided to build a Yamalokam set in Ramoji Film City to shoot an important part of the film, once again lighting the entire set became a huge issue for me. The Yamalokam set erected was the biggest indoor set in India. I never worked on such big sets. I was not sure of how i would light up such a massive set as I needed huge number of lights for it.

I am not a big fan of specular light,

which casts lots of shadows i don't like so many unwanted shadows in the frame. Hence I got the whole set under a huge skimmer. Soft lights so that there will be no strong shadows. When Rajamouli asked me for glittering effect on the crown and the jewellery of the artists, I took a day's extension. Then I got a huge box of household lights behind the camera and lit them up. Since these were specular lights, they give the glitter without casting shadows. We used all the available lights in Hyderabad to light up Yamalokam set. That's how we captured the grandeur of the entire set.

**Arundhanti was your first film which has amazing Visual Effects. What were the first time attempt in the film from**

**cinematography point of view.**

Arundhati was a period film with a fantasy element to it. It was like a dream come true to work with a passionate producer like Shyam Prasad Reddy. Arundhati was a big learning step towards visual effects. Working for Arundhati was an out-of-the world experience. It had mind-boggling visuals for the standard of any Indian movie.

In this movie we used motion control camera for the first time in Telugu films to can a few sequences. the Motion control camera remembers the camera movements and repeats it. Using that we could shoot glittering fort getting converted into a dilapidated fort in the same shot. That camera is not available in India. We imported it from Australia.

**Magadheera was a very large scale Production film. How did you live up the Expectations of Rajamouli?**

I am always fascinated with movies like Gladiator, Ben Hur and Brave Heart. When Rajamouli narrated the story of Magadheera, my joy knew no bounds. At that same time I was skeptical if I could pull it off. Rajamouli gave me lots of confidence, that we pulled off Yamaloka set so we can also achieve bigger things with Magadheera.

Visual effects were never used in such a large scale in Indian movies before. I had to co-ordinate with VFX team even before the shooting started as visual effects are to be seamlessly integrated into my work.

The film which made Ram Charan a big star is a result of great team work. The mind boggling visuals from the flashback sequence, the onscreen chemistry between Ram Charan and Kajal, especially in Panchadara Bomma song and the overall epic nature of the film have to be seen to be believed.

One of the best scenes in the film is the chariot race episode which was shot in a salt land near Dholavira, Gujarat. Scouting for locations was fun. We were looking for dry, open lands for the chariot race scene. We went to Gujarat to look for it. Out there Some passersby told us that there are white lands around 200 km away. We were thrilled to find salt lands in Dholavira. The vastness of the salt land perfectly complements the azure skies and in the midst of all that we see two warriors chasing a chariot.

#### Important Films of Senthil as DOP







We doubted whether horses could run on salt. While shooting, we needed a light weight vehicle to follow the horses. So we bought a Maruti van and cut off the top part and used it to mount the camera along with jimmy jib to shoot the race. We shot a part of Dheera Dheera song in Dholavira salt land. I wanted a dry tree in the backdrop and the art director got one from nowhere.

Rajamouli conceived 100 warriors episode first. We had to make the hero kill 100 warriors, but it had to look convincing. It would be believable if the hero fought with 4-5 people at a time. It struck us that we could use a passage to restrict the number of fighters. Then the conception of a bridge, a cliff and bhairava kona came into existence.

We created the kingdom of Uday Ghad on computer graphics but Developing it was a tedious process. We don't have the culture of arena fights in Indian history as it belongs to roman culture. Conceiving and shooting in that arena set was one of most cumbersome and satisfying experience.

There is a specialty in Panchadara Bomma song. Hero and heroine shouldn't touch each other, but the romance should be strong between them. It is one of the best songs we ever shot. We explored Golkonda in Sye and Yamadonga before. It only got bigger and better in Magadheera.

**Eega was the most audacious and experimental Telugu film in a long time and it's also a major triumph in cinematography. What were the Challenges in shooting Eega?**

Immediately after Magadheera, Rajamouli said we would do an

experimental film--a digital movie on a small scale. We started the testing of digital cameras, but the idea was then put to rest. I got busy with another film. Rajamouli started the film with a foreign director of photography but they parted ways on account of creative differences. Then he called me and told me about the film.

Shooting a film with an imaginary fly is easier said than done. It was one of the toughest films I've shot. Later, when we began shooting, we felt the story had universal appeal and had the potential to become bigger. Not wanting to waste the idea, we developed it into its present form.

Eega is my fifth film with Rajamouli. He is a task master who will not settle for anything but the best. I feel honored to have worked on such good projects with him. We understand and respect each other's strengths and limitations.

In films such as Magadheera and Arundathi films, actors were in the foreground and the CG effects in the background. Here, it was the reverse. It's easy to visualize a shot where the fly moves from one point to another but difficult to shoot. It was as though we started digging a mine not knowing what to expect. If a fly is on a table, however much you focus a lens on it, the lens is a mammoth object compared to the fly. So you require special lenses that can get as close to the fly as possible.

Arri, Canon 5D and Go-Pro cameras were used with probe lenses and macro lenses capable of extreme close-up shots. "Go-Pro is the smallest possible camera that offers close to professional resolution. A probe lens is tubular and needs to be

handled carefully. A small jerk in my hand would result in a huge camera shake. Precision of shooting was put to the test," he says. Phantom cameras were used to capture extreme slow motion sequences. For Eega/Naan Ee, we shot certain sequences at more than 2000 frames/second.

The film was a learning curve that involved both pain and pleasure. In photography language wide apertures of 2.8 or 4 are ideal for low light conditions. The probe lenses used on Eega had a minimum aperture of 8 or more, which called for more lighting especially for slow motion scenes. We had to light up an entire room with high intensity lights, which emitted a lot of heat.

Dummy houseflies were used in some scenes. But mostly I had to deal with vacant space since the fly was inserted later using computer graphics. Sudeep is one of the finest actors today. If Sudeep moved in a certain angle reacting to an imaginary fly, I had to follow his movements with my camera. It was crazy at first. For me A Bug's Life and Bee Movie were reference points, but Naan Ee was a new experiment for me. The pre-climax scene was particularly challenging. Apart from the two imaginary birds that were chasing an imaginary Ee, the sequence had to be shot in low light.

The graphics team was on the sets working alongside for each shot.

We researched on house flies.

We captured flies and photographed them using macro lenses so that the graphics team can design an appealing Eega/Ee. ■■■





# Binod Pradhan

Veteran Cinematographer  
Recollects his Journey

*The man known for changing cinematography into visual artistic poetry. He endeavor to deliver the best and the unique, movies that brings a splendid aesthetics to the viewers. He is known to use his camera like a paintbrush to create visuals of unmatched color and combination. His cutting-edge imagery in the much-applauded “Rang De Basanti” for which he won the IIFA Awards and Film Fare awards for Best Cinematography. He's worked with the biggest stars, raising the bar each time. He has also photographed some of the most beautiful women on the Indian screen like Madhuri Dixit in “Parinda”, Manisha Koirala in “1942...A Love Story”, Aishwarya Rai in “Devdas” making them studded with glitz and glamour. Friends like Vidhu Vinod Chopra repeated him in “Khamosh”, “Parinda”, “1942...A Love Story”, “Mission Kashmir” because of his exceptional talent and complete absence of attitude. He is a veteran cinematographer known for his movies like “Delhi 6”, “Munna Bhai MBBS”, “Tara Ra Rum Pum”, “Yamla Pagla Dewaana”, “Mausam”, “Kismat Konnection”, “Bhaag Milkha Bhaag” etc taking the art of cinematography to a completely different league. In this interview he walks you through his memorable journey.*

**H**ow did you start your journey as a cinematographer and how much helpful was the education at FTII ?

FTII, pune is one of the best institutes in India wherein we are exposed to lots of cinema techniques and styles. There we watched and studied a huge variety of films, observed things and learnt a lot. The teachers were good and the facilities were nice. I came from a very small town named Kalimpong. I was a sort of withdrawn character. I hesitated going to someone and ask for work. I and my friend Shambu Pradhan passed out from that institute in the same session though he was a graduate in editing. Since I didn't know people in Bombay, so we thought of trying to find some job in Nepal. We knew that in Nepal there was a Royal Film Corporation. So we went there, but the director of the corporation told us that there was no job for us. We came back to Bombay and it was then that Prem Sagar -- another DOP from the institute -- asked me to work under him. That's how my Bombay journey started. At that time the DOP'S from the film institute were not favorable with the people. Most of the people used to think that these people having learnt for three years at the institute tended to be smarter. I mean that this was a general tendency when we went to somebody for work as an assistant.

Nevertheless, as an assistant I worked with



Prem Sagar, A. K. Bir and Barun Mukerjee. There I learnt practical aspects of this field - how to place lights, how to talk to light-man, how to match lighting, etc. Meanwhile I started doing some independent jobs with companies like Durga Khote Production and there I did many documentaries. Ultimately I decided not to assist any more. Just then there started a youth co-operative organization and I became a part of that team. We shot a film 'Ghasiram Kotwal' -- an experimental film. After that I shot a Marathi film 'Jait Re Jait' which was directed by Jabbar Patel.

**Tell us something about your association with Kundan Shah ; how it started?**

It started with 'Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro', a comedy film. Though not a big hit, it was one of the difficult films that I shot . It involved a lot of hard work and that too for long hours. It was an NFDC produced low-budget film involving quite a large number of people and various location-shoots. I had just started shooting movies. So I couldn't say I needed this or that, whatever. I didn't ask for too many lights like the way I might do now. This was a different shoot because maybe the comedy with Kundan Shah was not very easy. He is a very serious man. In one of the scenes, I was holding the camera and I was giggling while the shot was going on. I was trying to control my laughter while taking the shot but that reflected that I was not a very experienced DOP at that time . I had to think hard about many things -- how to light up the things, how to get the correct lighting ratio , how to control the wall when there was no set . It was all a very complicated problem for me then though now I can do all these things blindfolded.

**You have been associated with Vinod Chopra for long. Please tell us something about your work with him.**

Vinod first took me along in one of the shoots and he was very happy with my work. Since then we have been working together. 'Parinda' was the first star-studded film that I had shot but we wanted to give it a different feel. So 'Parinda' was though a commercial film, still it was treated so differently that it didn't look like a commercial film.

The first thing that I said to myself was not to deal with it the way the normal Hindi commercial movies are shot. So I made every artist lighting up from front and make it as flat as possible. I mean that most of the time I did like that. I like bounce-lighting, and I think most of the people at that time didn't like or approve of

that in commercial films. So I used soft light, not necessarily always lighting actors from the front, but looking at from where the light may be coming from, say a window or a door. The effort was to seek the feel of source of light and keep shadows at time. That is the way I worked in 'Parinda'.

**When you try to do the source-lighting, it is generally believed that most actors are against it since it goes dark sometimes and the stars object to that kind of lighting. How did you negotiate with that ?**

No. You don't need to make it so dark . It doesn't happen like that. When the characters are backlit t , there are a lot of angles from where light is falling on the face unless dramatically you required darkness. I cannot think of jet black faces, there should always be a little bit of details here and there .

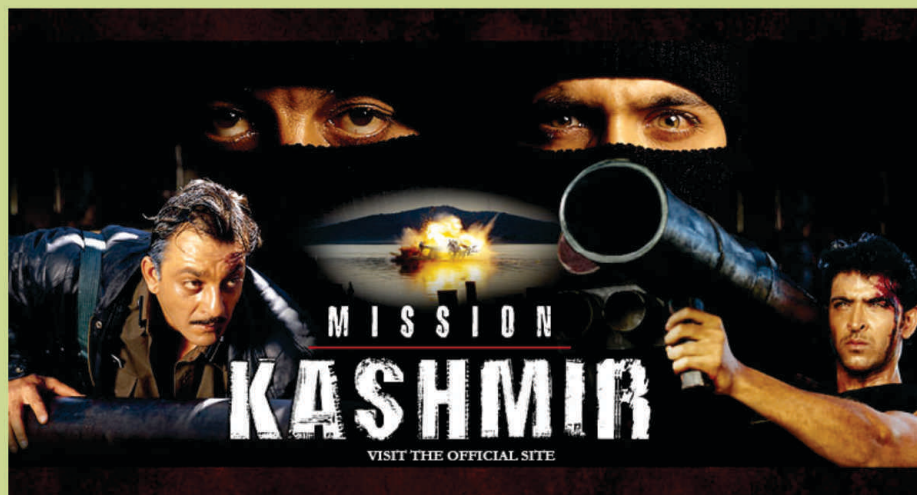
**Moving to another big project '1942' and the kind of big hype that was created around it, wasn't there a lot of expectation to live up to ? So how did you prepare yourself for that particular film ?**

See, you do not treat a film differently only because you think that it is a large scale film. I treat a film the way it is supposed to be treated. This film needed a little bit of largeness because of its big canvas. An exotic location was there, a huge crowd was there, large sets were there. But for me the prime job in this film was to try to make it look more and more beautiful because basically it was a film on romance, on love. After all, its very title was '1942- A Love Story'. So I tried to make the things look as beautiful as possible. Around that time this "promist " filter had

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come and I had never tried that earlier. Somehow I decided to use that and it worked . Manisha Koirala once said that she never looked as beautiful as she did in his film. We did a lot of reiki and discussion on the sets what the things should be like. I didn't want to give that typical period-look. I do not believe in that. Even in 'Devdas', I tried to do something which was good for the film. As per the script, this one--I mean '1942'-- needed beauty. So I tried to make it as beautiful as I could. There was no otherwise handling the film for me. If it was a period-film, then it might be because of dresses and costumes of the actors or

#### Important Films as DOP







the sets. I could have given it 'semi sepia', but I did not. Also in the studio, we had painted backdrop so the sky has to look real, the mountain has to look real. Sometimes it becomes very difficult because somehow it always looks a little artificial so I thought maybe burn out the sky a little, so that it is just doesn't look like a painted background. So my assistance were all there, lighting the sky and cutting the mountain so that the sky looks a little brighter. For the night scenes, I just gave a little blue in the sky and made the mountains a little black so it has some depth.

**Tell us about the famous four/ five camera set-up where some well-known cinematographers were called upon as the 2nd unit to shoot the crowd.**

A: That was in the climax sequence of '1942' and it was needed because there was a huge crowd -- I think around 1200 people. Now that was too big a crowd to shoot without any mirror effort for crowd multiplication. Moreover, there was a great deal of movement also involving different groups of crowd going from one point to the other and that too at different places. Now just with me and my one camera it might have taken a lot of time and a lot of money. So we thought that we should have at least four or five cameras. Ultimately five cameras and five very experienced cameramen to operate them were called. Ashok Mehta, Govind Nihalani were brought in. It was a marching sequence since when groups came from one place to the other at almost the same time, we always ensured that the cameras were there at various places. We did the shots with five cameras couple of times. Some of us would be shooting running shots while some others would be shooting something else.

**With Sanjay Leela Bhansali you worked in 'Devdas' which again is a period-film. However, when you really look at it, it looks to be a modern contemporary film. Please give your comments.**

Here also I thought I should not give this film the usual period look. In fact, I don't believe in this period look unless I feel that film really demands that. Right now I am doing the film titled 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag'. Here I have given the movie a different sort of look making it a little older and all. Generally with a normal film I would not like to do it because it has to have a lot of glamour and a polished look.

Coming to 'Devdas' again, I didn't want it to look old. Rather I wanted it to look very beautiful as it had colorful sets. So I decided to enhance the beauty of those huge sets by doing whatever I could do.

The film city was very large. So I and my assistant took round of the whole sets along the lake and all. First I didn't know what to do. Then I asked my assistant to put 100 watt bulbs in a particular tower. So that's the way we started lighting up the huge set with 100 watt bulbs though we had 5K and HMI and what not. There was some problem like how to light up a 'strain glass'. Now 'strain glass' always needs something behind it to be seen otherwise it gives a bad look. Another problem was how to light-up 'diyas' which were on the other bank. They were not 'diyas', they were actually lamps flickering like 'diyas'. So these were the problems which interestingly got solved. Also there are sequences in which you have to do the computer graphics. Aishwarya with a 'diya' in her hand is dancing; when she moves her hand this way or that way and 'diya' is full of oil, it is

risky. So we used computer graphics for such sequences. We used a small bulb, sort of LED. And there was some sort of reference which the guy handling the computer graphics was to use. He took that element and put a frame around it. We also tried effects in camera in the song "morey piya" where in the background the trees on the sea are sparkling and it all went very well.

**You have worked with Rakesh Om Prakash Mehra in commercials and feature films. What is the difference in his style of working?**

Doing a commercial with Rakesh Mehra was one thing but doing a feature film with him was a completely different experience. He wanted to have every sort of dramatic impact, not necessarily exactly the Bollywood way. Quite curiously he would like to make it look very natural and then he would also like to get drama. Now this made me try so many things. First I would let everything look dramatic and then to put things in a more naturalistic way I might not make it very glamorous.

In 'Rang de Basanti' we tried the period-technique because I thought that was needed for the film. So I tried to make everything look more black-and-whitish as if it were a black and white picture faded into a yellow color or like any black and white photograph that with time turns faded and yellowish. That was the basis for my choosing a yellowish color in the past sequences--the flashbacks in 'Rang de Basanti'.

I had done some photo painting in my studio in Kalimpong and there I used to paint photographs of customers by adding skin tone color in the face, and other colors in the background--an old black and white technique of transparent water color. So I



thought: let's try and give the feel of that very phase. It was painted like that in 'Rang de Basanti' and it is why we were successful all the time to generate that peculiar color which is flattish--not a skin color but a flesh tint. I tried to get that flesh tint coloration. So that was my basis of getting the past look and the present, of course, was like present without any manipulation of image.

In the past images, we would go closer to people and had more separate close-ups, but in the present we decided to have more of group shots--nobody was to be alone in the street. So it was what we tried in 'Range de Basanti'. We also did few experiments by changing the FPS. Some shots were as slow as 6 FPS and some only 4 FPS and stretched it to have a streak like feeling that you can find in many of the shots of the past.

What I still remember is that "day for night" scene wherein we had guys from VFX and CG and they added city lights, sky light, blue light and moon glow on the sky. We added headlights of the cars. It's not 100% thing but it is pretty good. We can't shoot in a night like that and then we could not have an artificial light falling on them as to me it would look worse than a "day for night".

"Day for Night" situation was something where I created lights through CG--city lights / moonlit sky and sky-glows. A lot of work. Just to see how lighting could be replicated later on in graphics, I had taken a group of graphic guys to the film city with me in the car, and telling them how dust gets affected by headlights, how the dust is affected by rear headlights or the back-light of the car and so on, so forth. For them also it was a little bit of experiment and as I recall I think it the best job they have done so far. However, one or two shots were pretty impressively done in comparison to other shots. When the cars are running, there was a shot wherein the tube-lights look stretched. Many people later asked me how I did that. Well, it was a simple thing of shooting at 4 fps to 6 fps!!

To talk about the current film 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' which you are doing with Om Prakash Mehra, was there any situation wherein you had to work in terms of some special type of photography?

Yeah. There were a lot of stadium-scenes where we had to create the stadium because we could not go to various stadiums involved and shoot all those places. Even if we had gone, we could not

have got the desired results as at present those stadiums look very modern and we wanted to show the times of 50's and 60's. So we shot in Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium and in some other stadiums. we shot there with four cameras as there were different types of chases. This film also has its past and present. Thus it has "Milkha" in childhood. I shot that with a very normal hue and I am still working on it. I have done another film 'Delhi 6' wherein the light was quite natural, and in terms of DI, a low contrast and less saturated look was achieved.

In 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' the races were quite exciting because there were quite a few races of 400 meters and so many other kind of races. We tried to improvise and give each race a little different treatment in terms of shot-taking or 'Lensing' to get different flavors for the running.

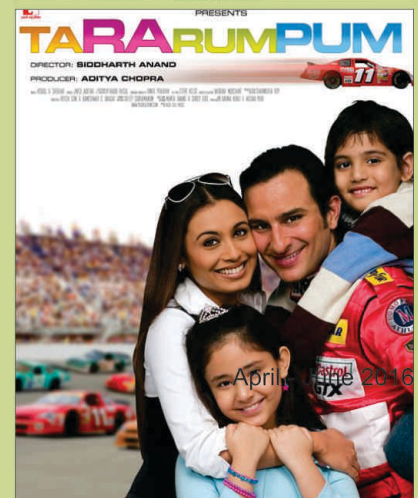
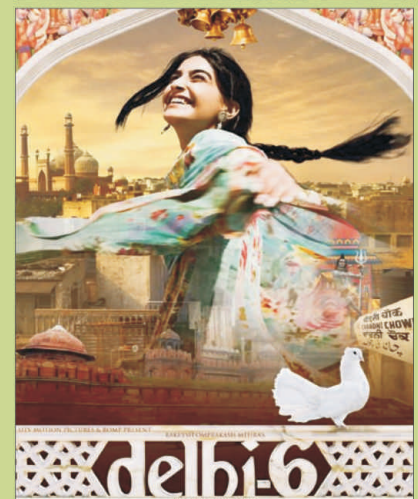
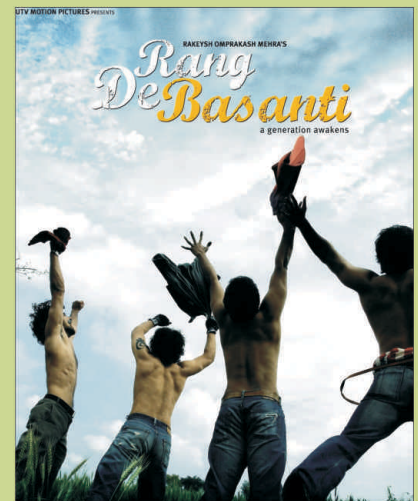
**You have worked with many ad film-makers, and advertising is a different ball game. So can you recollect some ads in which it was some trick to be employed or they really wanted something special? I mean something which makes advertising more challenging in terms of shooting?**

Yes, it's different. Advertising concentrate on products and give them generally a certain glossy look and that is the way it happens most of the times. Feature films on the other hand are more dramatic and you can take more liberties with them in terms of look. Here in ads it is little different. I remember "Iodex" film directed by Ram Madhwani because it was a table top where the train was running inside a character. It was one of the few miniature film-sets that I have shot. In advertising you learn much more while doing things for various effects. Most of the things I applied in feature films, all have their base in advertising. All originated from advertising as far as I am concerned. It was all very stylized--if you would like to call it that way.

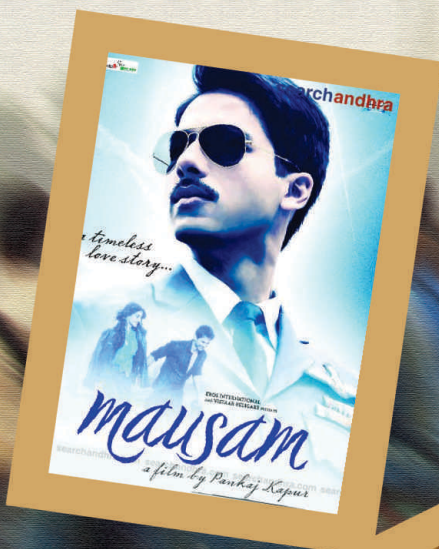
**Today many cinematographers do not bother about the key, fill, back, kicker kind of things. So do you remember any music video / ad film where you tried something very stylized in a way which does not belong to old school of thought in terms of lighting?**

Earlier, you had to do lighting in certain ways. Nowadays people are happy having the shadow and stark faces. They are not natural but they are stylized. During the song picturisation of a feature film, I had lit up a girl which is burning out.

## Important Films as DOP







Important Films as DOP

You can call it stylized or you may call it spot-lit.

I don't keep the dark faces unless there is a vision for it. In 'Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro' there was a scene in that characters could not see one another. But as a cameraman I had to show something. So I lit the faces very dimly to show them in a thinly shadowy way since that scene demanded that.

**You have worked so much with so many directors that you are sure to know too much about lighting and composition. Then one day you come across a director who begins to specifically want this or that way making you wonder and ask yourself what you are doing here. Did you ever encounter this kind of a director?**

Honestly speaking, I really like it when a director demands something special. It makes me work a little more. Sometimes they don't demand but expect a lot from you. I like Ram Madhwani. He really works a lot on his visions about various ad films. He experiments about

various things. He is one guy who really takes pain but, then, it is worth.

**You have grown with the celluloid and now everything is digital. So how do you find the shift?**

With DI you can do now lots of things which were not possible earlier. Previously what you could do was the basic correction--change the color, brightness, contrast and that's that. Now you can change the specific color in selected areas; you can change the tonal sky; you can brighten up a face; you can darken up a face and you can have the different tones, all together and much more than what you could do on celluloid. So there are lots of possibilities in DI. That does not mean that you should not work hard at the time of shooting because you cannot get everything in DI. The base-material must be good and only then you can work further.

There is lot you can do in DI--change the contrast to certain extent, increase the highlight, etc. So the pallet of the DOP has

now increased a lot more. I think that is the best part of shooting digital. Now I myself find going a little more extreme. There are much more liberties you can take all because of DI.

**Coming to the Digital intermediate process, what kind of a colorist you like to work with, someone who knows more about the console or someone who has more of aesthetic sense?**

A colorist needs to have both, because if you have someone who knows a machine very well but has no eye, then it gets very difficult because you have to tell him everything, little bit this and little bit that and only then you may get what you want. And somehow I feel if I want something, I really want that very thing. Digital is going to stay here. Since 'Mausam' I have started shooting digital. At that time the digital cameras had just come and I did some tests and I was very happy with the outcome. So in the middle of that very film we stopped shooting on celluloid and shifted to digital.

□□□



A photograph of Barun Mukherjee, an older man with glasses and a mustache, wearing a dark jacket over a plaid shirt. He is operating a professional RED PRO 5.0 camera mounted on a rig. A monitor attached to the rig displays the text 'RED PRO 5.0'. In the background, several people are blurred, suggesting a busy film set environment.

*Master Reflects:*

# **BARUN MUKHERJEE**

A man who with the luxury of his cinematographic talent, made Lux beauties like Hema Malini, Zeenat Aman, Sri Devi, Meenakshi Seshadri, Juhi Chawla, Pooja Bhatt, Raveena Tandon, Aishwarya look at their luxurious best, an eye that gave Raymond men the look of 'Complete Man', a vision that captured Reid & Taylor Amitabh Bachchan in a fabulously gorgeous format, a crusade that added to the ad world the ravishing Emami smiles of Madhuri Dixit, the lyrical Liril dimples of Preity Zinta, a cinematographic 'mantra' that catapulted the magical luster of Samita Patil, Sushmita Sen, Deepika Padukone and many others to unprecedented illustrious heights, and a magic behind the camera that cast its spell for more than sixty five years to wrought on the screen the subtle sentiments of 'Baghban'.





**B**ARUN MUKERJEE narrates about the various challenges he faced during different kinds of shoots in his long career spanning over thirty years in ad industry and feature films - the challenges which gave him a hard thinking regarding how to meet those challenges.

#### FIRST ASSIGNMENT

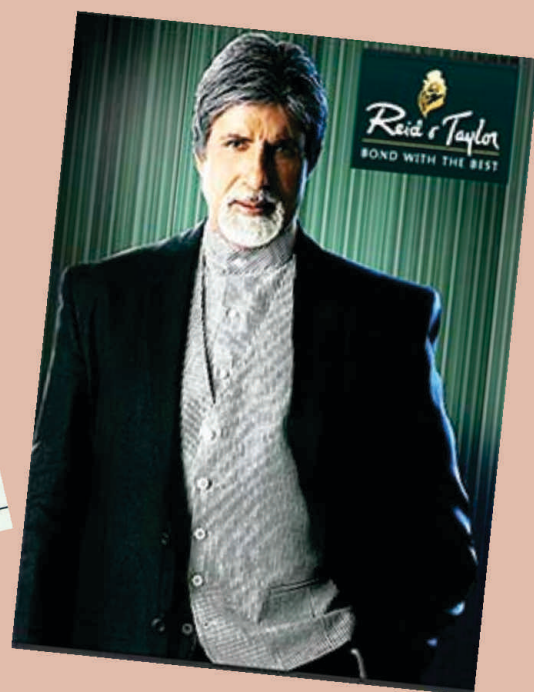
When I go down the memory lane, I find that my very first assignment was nothing but a challenge. After FTII, I have been in Bombay for more than four years struggling to get some work. All my colleagues had found something to be busy with...in the whole group I was, to be honest, the only black-sheep whose struggle had become too tortuous to be tolerated any more. So when I was about to quit, pack up and say goodbye to Bombay, I got a call for work, and that in fact was not a work but a challenge. It was a phone call from Hitendra Ghosh, a fellow acquaintance from FTII : " Hey Barun, there's a film to be shot for Shyam Benegal , Would you do it ?" When I was just thinking to tell him--'It's a joke to ask a blind man whether he needs eyes'--Ghosh threw the challenge, " Well, see, this film has been refused by many since the film has night situation, but the location they are to shoot at is available to them only during the day-time. So you'll have to create night outside the windows, and that too during the day. So think hard over the problem and only then give your reply." My mind was thinking fast : a 'no' means an end to my career even before a beginning ; a 'yes' means to agree to commit suicide even before I express my

desire to live. " O.K.," I somehow managed to say, " I just want to have a look of the location, and only then I can give you the final reply." I still remember it was Grant Road in South Bombay. I had a close look of the apartment where they intended to shoot. It was on the ground floor of a very congested area, and naturally not very sunny. Then I asked them if I could have the choice of spots for shooting. They said that I could choose any portion of that room. I was bold enough to tell them that the things would need some sort of experimentation. They had no objection to that also. So I decided to take the plunge.

And what I did was to cover the window with some five to six or even more layers of black net from outside, and then to lit up some bulbs of 500 and 1000 watts on the bamboo poles outside the window. Inside I went on with normal day-light initially, but had to later give it some boost. Glass-panes of the window were closed. It gave a foggy vision of the electric-bulb light outside and the total effect was that of a night haze. Then I shot the film which to my good luck became a hit.

#### RAJAN SILK SAREES

I remember another equally interesting episode. I have been in to ad world doing Forhans Flouride ad that sort of helped me get in to advertising market. Then I did Maharani Soap ad with Shyam Benegal and I was pretty busy .. One day Mathew Matthan called me and said : " Barun da, there is a film on Rajan Silk Sarees. Actually, the film has been shot and rejected. They want us to redo it. So it is a bounced project and therefore has to be handled very carefully and sensitively. They want to have a meeting with us." So we went there and were told that the film is simple -- a woman sitting on a 'jhoola' in pitch black darkness gets in to light from nowhere and recedes back in to the nowhere of that very pitch black darkness. The Sarees and their colors have to be focused only for that split second when the woman gets in to light. I said : " O.K. We need one day to think about it." They consented. The cameramen in those days used to do a lot of experimentation, and they never had the heart to say 'no'. So we tried out many things that day,





experimenting a great deal. In the evening when we saw the rushes, we decided to go for the project. On the third day we shot the ad which fortunately became a hit and the things really started, as they say, happening.

To be honest, agency wanted nothing but the woman, the Sarees and pitch black darkness...no paraphernalia. I adopted a very simple path...just cut the light to the position that it falls only on the woman, and the rest of it is cut. So it was just a matter how you cut the light, and for that I decided -- not to use soft lighting as the soft lighting is difficult to be cut to precision. What I mean is that before the woman enters, I had kept a chink so that the focused moment was not a sudden jerk but just like the melting of butter-- appeared...vanished. That did the magic. It was only a trick that worked with the grace of God. But it was an effort preceding the production.

#### LAKME AD

Now I tell you an episode that demanded for a post-production effort. It was a Lakme ad concerning nail enamel. Johnny Pinto was the director. He wanted to show only nails in color, rest everything in black and white -- the entire set, the woman, the hands, everything. So the set was made in black n white, most of the props were painted in black n white, and the woman was dressed in black n white...even her skin tones were all in different shades of grey. But the entire film we shot is color. Then there is a process by which you can omit and retain any of the colors out of VIBGYOR. The tricky part was to think in terms of black n white regarding set, woman, props. In color, we can get the separation easily, but in black n white it was sort of a risk. I was really scared, praying to God all the while that this trick also works. And it did, thank God. I wish I could show you the results and the effects! Any way, Lakme nail enamel with Pinto till date with me is a film that I relished the most in terms of doing a film.

#### HAMARA BAJAJ

Ha! 'Hamara Bajaj' became a popular film mainly because of its jingle, and it was a jingle composed in a way by a cinematographer -- who else but me! Lintas wanted a jingle based on some 'raga'. Sumantra Ghosal, though much younger, is extremely friendly with me. People used to say they were married to each other. He knew I used to sing a little and had had some initiation in Hindustani 'ragas'. So one day after the pack-up, we gulped some beer together, and Ghosal asked me to compose

some jingle. I tried and tried but could think of nothing. So I went home, and the whole night my mind wrestled with the jingle. I composed about six tunes out of which the Lintas liked three, and after discussing them with the Loui Band my tune based on 'raga jay-jay-wanti' was finalized and Louis Bank ultimately composed the music and that is how 'Hamara Bajaj' materialized

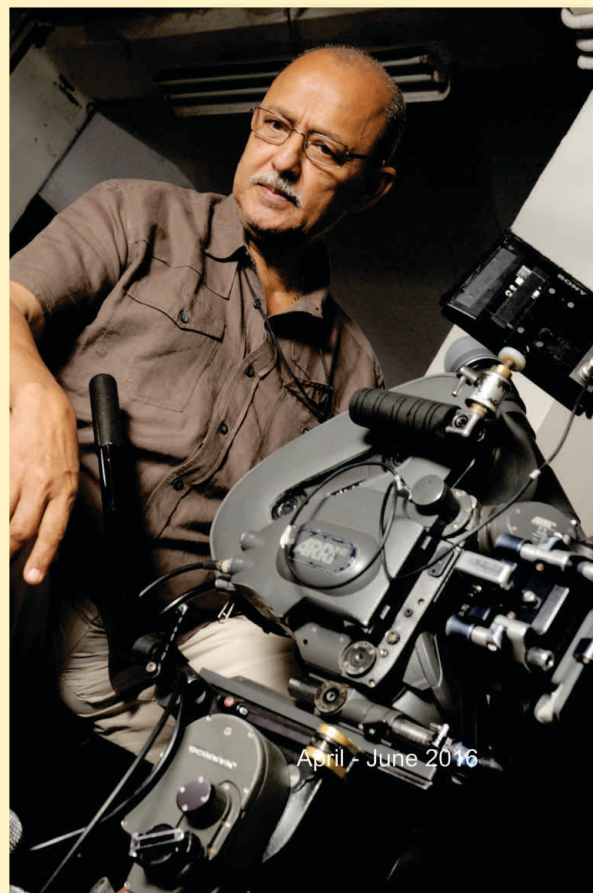
#### CHERRY BLOSSOM

'Cherry Blossom' ad happened much earlier. Sumantra Ghosal, had just started his production company. Obviously the budget used to be low, and there was little scope for post production. The requirement was the live shot of a shoe which must have a starry sparkle on it. We scratched and scratched our heads thinking hard what kind of light could reflect best from the leather. Incidentally, we were taking tea and, as it happened, the glass containing tea slipped out of the hands of some body. Its broken bits were lying on the ground where upon, fortunately for us, sunlight was falling. Suddenly I found the required sparkle being reflected from a broken piece of glass. I hit upon an idea. I got up with a jerk, picked up a very small splinter of broken glass and pasted it on a shoe placed in the area lit by sun light. Lo ! Cherry Blossom Sparkle was the outcome. The use of 'sparkle filter' was not a big effort, but that gave us the result to our full satisfaction.

So far as Charlie Chaplin part of 'Cherry Blossom' ad is concerned, we saw a lot of his films and concluded that speed was the key to it. So we selected the range of 12-16 frames after a lot of experimentation. To give it the look of antiquity, we shot it in black n white. Most of the sets were outdoors and the entire lighting was done from the top and we had to use stop exposures as well. Everything had to be done in the camera since the post production strategies were little attempted those days.

#### VIP - AD

I have done enormous work with Sumantra Ghosal. VIP-AD IS my favourite film with him. To create the look of a railway station inside the studio was quite a challenge. The shots of train and coaches were, of course, added afterwards, but the platform was created in the studio. To give the effects of the length and depth of a real platform was a tough job, but we could create the illusion by using extreme tint and the widest lens--probably was 75mm !!--







and rest with zoom lens. We did not use normal lens at all in that ad. The most memorable part was its jingle--'kal bhi aaj bhi'--which was done by me.

#### HERO HONDA

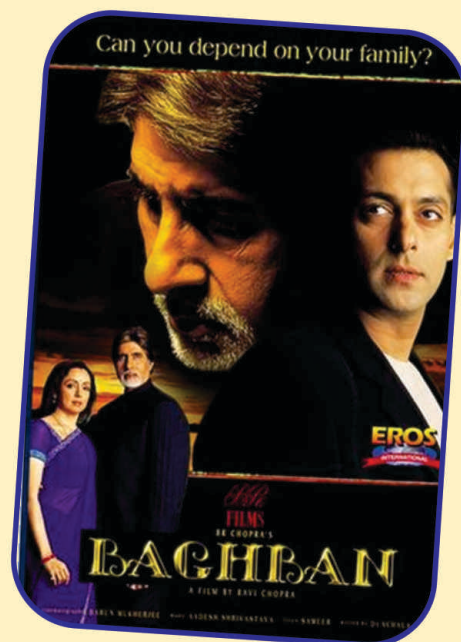
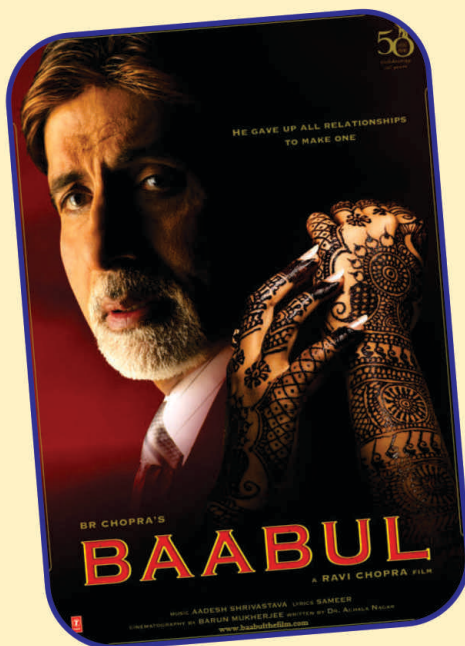
'The Hero Honda ad' --'Fill it, shut it and forget it-- was shot in Rajasthan. The temperature was 49 degree Celsius and it was shot in a desert though what is shown in the film is an oasis. Actually there was no oasis in that desert, and the oasis was artificially created. A huge pit was dug and a plastic cover was put on all the sides. About 5 to 6 tankers of water were pumped into it. Palm trees were brought from Mumbai. And the real challenge was the camel which was to see the oasis, come running towards it, drink the water and to go away. The camel literally ran towards the oasis assuming it to be real and in no time drank water and ran away. The guys said that it would come again. And really it did come again, drank the water to its fill, and shook its head. I don't know how it happened, but indeed it happened and it shaking its head became the marvel of the ad ; it was as if the camel were literally saying -- 'Fill it, shut it and forget it'. I had to be very quick in catching its movements in one go. I enjoyed that film and it was really a wonderful stuff.

#### LYRIL - AD

The 'Lyril ad' was purely a magic of

lighting. It was done with Ram Madhvani. I don't know what were the constraints, but somehow the agency wanted to do it indoor. It took almost 3 to 4 days to create an artificial jungle and the waterfall was also artificially created. The water of the tanker was used, and needless to say the water was muddy--certainly not as clear and clean as was needed to show a natural

waterfall. But Ram insisted that the waterfall, the jungle, every bit of the scene must look completely natural. Though I had the heart to say that it would be done, but fear lurked in my mind regarding how it could be done. Then I thought that the only thing that could be tried was to shoot the entire film from the top angle. But still the problem of lighting remained. It was a big







area and so I decided to do the whole thing in sections. So I asked the lighting department to prepare banks of 5k light-- two up, two down, and one behind with a little slant, and all the banks not in a straight line or even one above the other, but one here and the other there in a scattered way. The art department had put the plants and shrubs in big polythene bags. So when it was shot from the top angle, it focused only on leaves and branches. That way the jungle looked amazing. In the part where Preity Zinta is seen walking across the jungle, we used sort of back lights that were cut from the sides. When it came to water part, I put the focus on reflections rather than on water. I used a skimmer and that made the reflections move fast. Now due to moving reflections you don't get to the muddy layer of water below. The total effect was that of crystal clear water.

#### **CEAT TYRES - AD**

This ad was again with Sumantra Ghosal. It was shot in FAMOUS STUDIO in Mahalakshmi, No. 1. The set was big -- from wall to wall. Two cars were to be shown running at full speed. So I was given no space on the ground for lighting. I was almost in tears. The floor was made of some shiny surface giving wooden semblance. It reflected light so much that every where there was nothing but reflection and the car was looking horrible. The walls and all were

looking fine but the cars looked ugly, floors looked ugly and before that I had never shot a car commercial. I was almost in tears.

This is vinyl thing, it's a translucent but not acrylic, it is soft plastic material - which is used very often by art directors, its like very big thin skimmer.

First completed lighting, the I had put that-soft plastic material close to the ground and just kept it to the edge of the frame, so that softener plastic thing was just out of the frame and far away from the source of the light, that helped to cut down all the spots. In the process I learnt a lesson : further the light from the softener, softer is the effect of light. That day I realized that a cinematographer can never say that he has learnt everything.

#### **FILM VS-DIGITAL**

To shift from celluloid to digital is just like leaving a rural child midst an urban setting. It would be difficult to adjust for him initially, but slowly he shall get used to the alien setting and steadily he must adapt himself completely. All my life I had worked with celluloid and I loved it. But then new techniques are bound to come. So though I miss celluloid, I am at ease with digital now. I am working mostly with Alexa but I have done some work with Red also. It may be that I am biased, but it is a fact that I enjoyed doing work with celluloid. However,

rising prices put the logistics in favor of digital.

Similarly, in the past there was no DI. We had only RGB for color correction. However, good films were made even then. There is no DI in movies like 'Baghban', 'Babul'. At that time people were very conscious that if there be a mistake, it would get revealed. So there was a precision in the working.

People were very particular about the quality of work and would pay a lot more attention to detailing. I myself belong to that category. People would complain that I took a long time to light up, but then we got good results as well.

I have worked with both big budgeted and small budgeted films. I have done some regional cinema also in Bengal. If the subject was good and I got a good director, then money did not matter much. Once I got the basic optimum amount, I would never rundown or reject a film because of money. I rather preferred a film on the merit of its content.

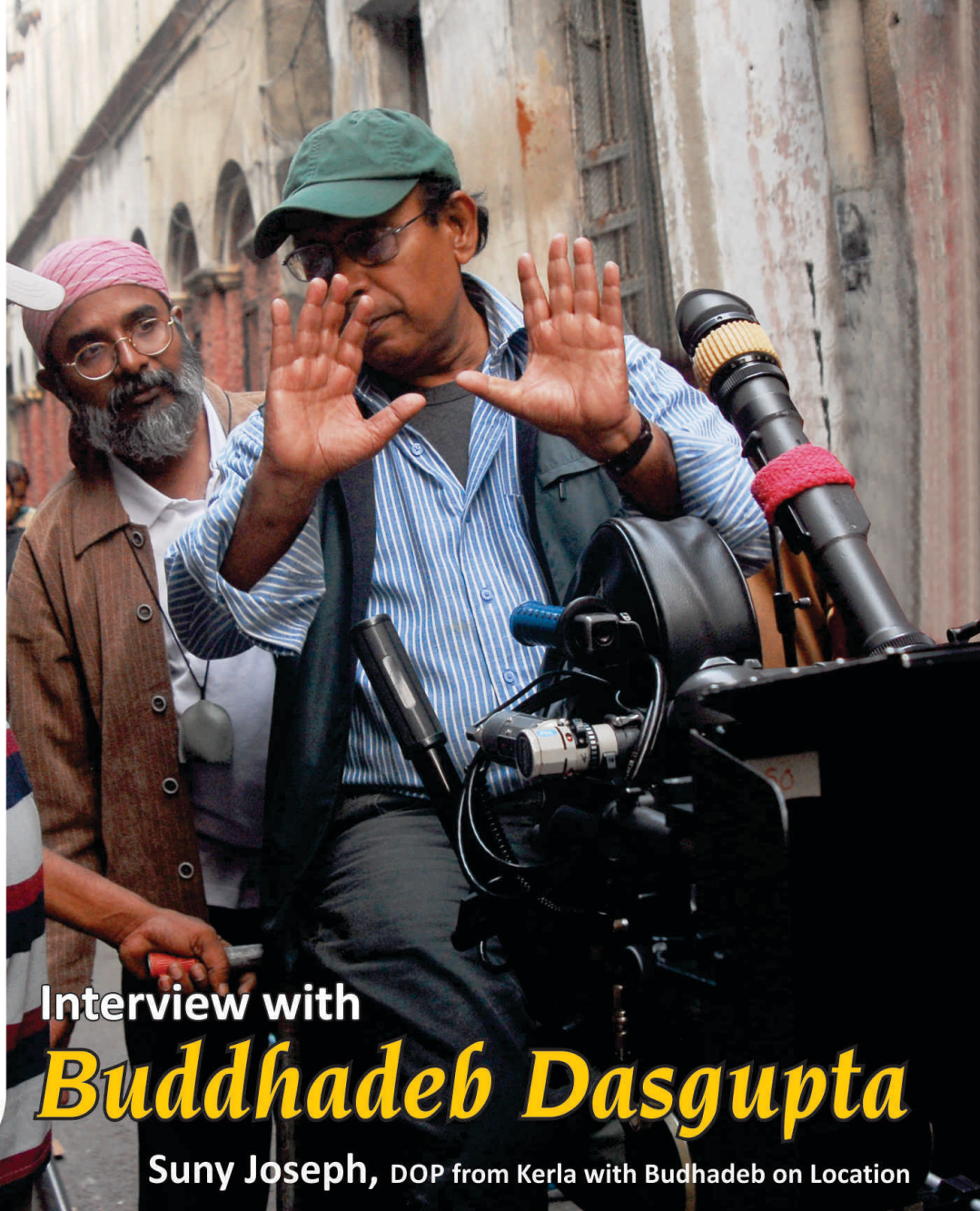
I was lucky that I got some very good and talented assistants. I am indeed proud of them- Binod Pradhan Chang, Anil Mehta, Murli, Mahesh Anne, Vijay khambati--all worked with me for some time or more.





Buddhadeb Dasgupta is a poet and prominent contemporary filmmaker, most known for films like *Bagh Bahadur*, *Tahader Katha*, *Charachar* and *Uttara*. Five of his films have won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film, *Bagh Bahadur*, *Charachar*, *Lal Darja*, *Mondo Meyer Upakhyan* and *Kaalpurush*, while *Dooratwa* and *Tahader Katha* have won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Bengali. As a director, he has won National Film Award for Best Direction twice, for *Uttara* and *Swapner Din*. Over the years he has published several works of poetry including *Govir Araley*, *Coffin Kimba Suitcase*, *Himjog*, *Chhaata Kahini*, *Roboter Gaan*, *Sreshtha Kabita*, and *Bhomboler Ascharya Kahini O Ananya Kabita*.

In this interview Arijit Seth & Robin Banerjee tries to find out about his relationship with various DOP.



## Interview with *Buddhadeb Dasgupta*

Suny Joseph, DOP from Kerla with Buddhadeb on Location

**You have worked with more than ten different cinematographers in various films, what is your general brief to a DOP and what do you expect from him to realize your vision?**

I have definitely worked with quite a number of cinematographers in my 40 years of journey with cinema. I expect two things from my DOP. One, technically he has to be very sound. I mean he must be an expert on his equipment, know all the technical details which I cannot teach him on the sets. He has to have his own vision of images and needs to be a very good observer of light and also of life. He should know the lens like his finger tips. These are the basics.

Secondly, he should be a very good human being and a tolerant person who respects his co-workers, takes care of them,

and should have the spirit to lead his own team. He should try to know my vision because finally it is my vision he has to project. As it is my vision technically, so I must decide first how to get it and this includes the things like at what time I will shoot, what my lens will be, what kind of movements of the camera I need and accordingly what the movements of the characters will be. These are the things which I always decide. The DOP is an integral part of my team, may be the most important part, but those who have been working with me know thoroughly that this is my domain and I decide everything.

I would want my DOPs to be careful listeners, sensitive human beings, someone who can adjust easily and understands my style of working. It is important that whatever may be his style of working as a

DOP, he has to know my style of film-making and should absorb that. These are my minimum expectations from my DOP.

**You have worked with different DOP's. Can you elaborate the style of working that you like the most?**

I made my first film when I was a student. There was All India competition of scripts organized by FFSI. Satyajit Ray, Vijaya Muley, Chidananda Dasgupta were in the committee. I was still studying. I just wrote a script and sent it to them because I was deeply in love with cinema. *Dooratwa* was my first feature film. Before that I had made quite a number of documentary films. Many of them I had to shoot. They are not very good films because I had to make films for others just for money sake. It was my initiation into films and they taught me a

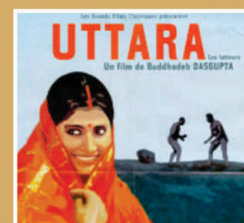




lot, especially in getting the nuances of cinematography.

It is very good if my DOP loves music, painting and literature, especially poetry. I am greatly indebted to the images that I got from literature or derived from music, poetry and painting. I am not a film school product. I did not get that chance. I studied economics and taught economics for some time. When I was a kid, my mother used to play Piano and recite poetry. She would always ask me to close my eyes and listen to her. I was not happy with that dictate but had to follow. But, then, slowly something started happening. I found that from music I have started getting some images. From some lines of the poetry some images also started coming. These are the images which have become my constant companion. Those images stayed with me. I talked with those images. I lived with those images and images started living with me. Through this you may know I write poetry and when I compose a composition, I take that composition from those very images that are imprinted in my mind. I would want my DOP to understand that.

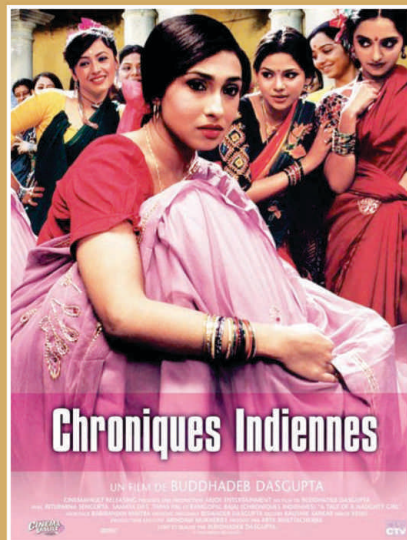
When I started making Dooratwa, I just wanted to make this film. Whatever little money I had made from documentary films, I invested everything. My mother gave me some money but that too was very little. Somehow I made Dooratwa with Ranjit Roy from FTII as the DOP. It was his first film after FTII. What I really liked about him was his confidence. I was new and he too was new and so also was my editor from FTII Pune, Mrinmoy Chakraborty. I have never heard Ranjit telling me even once that this or that was not possible. Whatever I wanted, he did that for me; whatever way I showed to him, he followed that. There was no video assist monitor to see and so you had to have full trust in the DOP. He was such a well known name after Dooratwa that he started getting more and more work. He got one film for Mrinal Sen. It was a different kind of film out and out. Satyajit discussed it many times and he also praised the cinematographer very much. What we did from day one was that we never followed the rules laid. We just invented certain things. That is exactly what I have been doing till now. That invention has extended and now become a style being talked about all over.



Important Films of Buddhadeb Das Gupta







One of the master cinematographers you have worked with is Soumendu Roy in Charachar (1994). How much was his experience useful to you in your film?

I don't rest on anyone else's experience. I just want my DOP to give correct focus. I want my DOP to handle camera rightly. I am pleased with well lit and well exposed shot. When we decided to work together he was not quite used to my style of film making but he could absorb that immediately. That may have happened because of his experience but that was very helpful. He did exactly what I said. Where you are placing the camera, what lens you are using, what kind of movements you are adding to that and where you are also positioning your characters -- all these things together make a shot complete. That is very important and you cannot ask your DOP to do that for you. You have to do it yourself.

I always like to use wide angle lenses because I want everything to look very real. In that reality what do I do? I allow the non real to come in such a way that you don't even start realizing at what point it has come in. It has been brewing slowly and finally when it has taken over the reality, at that time real and unreal remain no more two different things and become one unit. You just take in reality and at the same time you find the zone of unreal, and that is the magic. Besides reality there comes the role



of dream and there comes the role of magic. So when I compose all these three things, then unknowingly something takes place and all the three elements give their contribution in composing an integrated frame.

I have seen all my DOP's falling in love with this kind of work. This mutual respect has really helped me a lot. Be it Sudeep Chatterjee, Venu or Sunny Joseph. All of them say that dada has made us forget the conventional photography or whatever we were taught. It is because my style of cinematography is exclusively mine. You have to give your hundred percent to achieve this and if you can give that, then you can definitely achieve it.

A documentary film on me is being made by a girl called Supriya Suri. It's being produced by Films Division. They were shooting with me and wanted me to show to them how the movement of double trolley happens. When I went there, I found that these people had already laid the trolley because they learnt about that from Ashim Bose who did "Uttara" for me. These are the things that have been contributing to other films. This idea of double trolley where two trolleys move together is something that I decided long time back because I was shooting outdoor on uneven surface where you cannot put anything.

You have to somehow manage to lay the trolley and I also had to add another movement to the first movement in order to further that design. In those days it cost me 700 Rupees and when I told it to Venu on the phone he was in Trivandrum and I was calling from Calcutta. He almost started laughing at me thinking dada must have gone mad, otherwise how can two trolleys move together with one camera and if it can happen, that cannot but be magic.

When the whole thing was brought home to him at the shootings in Orissa, he immediately fell for that. So you may know that I have invented many things that came to my mind automatically and just for my own shots, but it is good that some other people started practicing it. The cinematographers have been using it for reference.

I think Venu is the most spirited person and I really love him like my brother. Now he is a family friend although we have not been working together since some time.





I will never forget the day when I was shooting in Bolpur and that was the last day and last shot. I told Venu to go to the Monitor and watch what I was doing and then just to do that for me.

Since I was also doing it for the first time, I myself was a little uncertain and all I could say to my DOP was to just to go on doing things the way I was telling him. I went on doing what I myself wanted to do.

I told Venu a few things and looked at him. He said to me, "Dada, just 10 minutes." It was because I have told him not to use any artificial lights. He just saw what I did and he did that again so well that a beautiful shot was taken. So many times Venu really helped me create the kind of images I needed for my films.

When Sudeep worked with me he was almost a newcomer. He was not very well known and was a struggling cinematographer. I called him and he started working with me. After finishing the work he also said the same thing that he had learnt so many things. I believe that a film-maker must have his unique style. When a cinematographer comes to work with that film-maker, he realizes that this is the style and from that he absorbs many things.

Sudeep had never worked with me before, but for my kind of camera-work, he can fit the bill very nicely and his lighting is very good though it takes a little more time.

To tell you very frankly I never had any problem working with any DOP. I met this Spanish DOP Diego in Madrid. There was a retrospective happening in Madrid film festival. He used to come every day and he just met me and that's all. He never told me his plan to come to India. But then one day my daughter called me and told me that this

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person was here. My daughter Alokandana is a music director. She has been working in Mumbai. Diego and my daughter were working together in a Marathi film and it was there that he started talking about me to her. Then she told him that I was her father. Then one day Diego said that he really wanted to work with me and requested me to give him a chance. And thus he came. He is really a very nice person. But he was not used to this type of situation as he had never seen this style, but we started working together. I tell all my cinematographers what exactly I want and how to achieve it. Even after that I show it to them in the monitor.

Sometime some problem would crop up and I had to scold Diego but it was almost a lesson for him and he really did the things nicely. He is a very nice person and very young. We worked together for another film and he did it so nicely that it is worth seeing. What I really expect from my DOP is correct exposure.

I always ask my DOP not to trust his meter but his eyes and his mind. Meter reading is very important but don't think the meter will always guide you correctly. Put your mind, put your experience whatever it is and put your senses in it and then only you know what the correct exposure is.

I think that if I can tell a DOP after seeing his film that here he has put this light and there he has put that light, then he has failed.

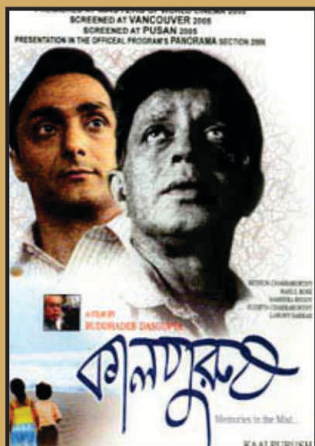
A film-maker or even a cinematographer should not be able to know exactly where the lights have been placed and that's very important. I have observed this problem many times while watching a film. Placement of lights is very

important, and the DOP should know where he should put lights and where he should not. You don't have to lit everything. You must leave some space for darkness. Darkness in cinema doesn't mean that you don't have to have any light. You have to create darkness also through light but then you must know how to create that.

I was once in Cannes with Sven Nykvist, a legendary cinematographer worshipped all over the world. Sitting in the hotel lobby we were waiting for a car to take us to some theater for seeing a film. I was just telling him that every director dreams that one day his DOP will be Sven Nykvist. He loved that and said—'But for that I have to become a Subroto Mitra.' I found that kind of respect only for Subroto and I think that India's all time great cinematographer was Subroto Mitra.

It is not important what style the cinematographer is easy with. It is because he has to realize finally what style a particular script demands. Each and every script itself tells you how to take a shot. So you cannot come with any set style and start making film with it because it doesn't

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the next day I took him to show the place and the location where we'll be shooting. It was cloudy and drizzling all the time. We had umbrellas and we went. I told him that that was the location. Venu got very upset and said, "Dada, we have to change it ; this location will not work ; forget about it. Let us find out a different place." I

Location'. A location has to be supportive to the script or a particular sequence and then the way you will show it in your film should also be supportive to your sequence. This is what exactly you are doing to that location. You can change so much of a location that someone will say this is not the same place as we saw. You have to be thoroughly knowledgeable not only about the script but also about how to achieve it.

No DOP should come to a film-maker as a rigid follower of a particular style. The Director has his own style and the DOP should absorb his style.

Cinema is so magical and so deep that you can place it in between music and poetry. Knowledge has no end and I am still discovering so many new things. These images have contributed so much in my life that I am extremely indebted to these images.

In the beginning I was not very confident while using something. I was not sure that this magical element or the dream element would be accepted. Your images should be such as can absorb the audience fully so that they start a new journey with your images. Then one after another, they start their journey to the point where the magic has started or where the dream has started or where reality has started extending to the dreams. It makes you conscious of so many aspects in our life. Your DOP can really do wonder if he can feel what kind of treatment he needs to apply with a particular Director. Images are my language and so I value my DOP a lot. I need to depend, trust and love my cinematographers. I am lucky that I have been able to do that most of times if my life.

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work. Every script is a different film as every script makes you aware of one thing that stylishly it has to be different from the film that you have just finished.

I have often seen that the directors themselves don't have any clue about cinematography and they begin to bank only upon the DOP. Now this is a dangerous thing. If you can't make yourself clear to your DOP what exactly you want or what kind of style you are going to follow or what kind of treatment a particular script demands, then you are not a director.

Finally for a good DOP it is essential to work with a good director. It is also essential that there is good script and the DOP has read the script several times and noted down the questions and has discussed them with the director again and again.

**After Venu, Sunny Joseph is another cinematographer who has worked with you in maximum films. Could you please elaborate the way Sunny worked with you?**

BD: Among all the cinematographer I have worked with, Sunny is the quietest. I have never seen him getting angry. While it is quite common to find Venu bubbling with his anger there Sunny is a very quiet person and at times that quietness also is very irritating. Sunny is a very good cinematographer, his shots are always perfect, the exact movement I want and besides that he is a 'Pundit', I mean, a very scholarly person.

He is a very good teacher and he loves to teach. I will not be surprised if one day he gives up film-making or DOP as a profession and gets fully in to teaching as he is a very good teacher.

I tell you one situation when we were shooting. It was 'Lal Darwaja' and we were in Diamond Harbor. We were to start shooting and we were waiting for Venu and he joined us after two days. After he came,

didn't say anything except telling him, "Let us go to the hotel."

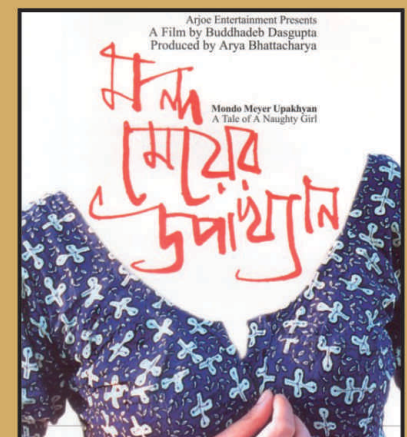
Next day it was a little better as one could notice that it was a little sunny. I again took him to the place and that time he said, "Dada, what can I do if you insist? Then I will have to shoot." After two days we started our shooting.

We went there in the morning to lay so many things. When everything was ready, I asked Venu to start shooting and we rehearsed all the shots because you only get 15 minutes to complete the entire scene at that particular light after which it gets completely dark. It was the time when Venu shouted excitedly, "Dada! It looks so brilliant!"

And that is what I mean to say. The DOP may not see what the right time is or what the right position or right lens is. When all these things happen together rightly, then the entire thing will change.

That has happened with me so many times with each and every cinematographer. They have to know what time shooting will start, from which angle, what will be the lens, where the characters will be and whether the backdrop is right. Even your background will change if you change the lens. If you use 24 mm lens, the background will be different and with 40mm or 100 mm it will be altogether different. If you use 150mm, then it is very difficult to say that it is the same location which was shot with 24mm. You can change the shape of the location. I have gone to Purulia and shot certain locations but in my film so many times I have heard people saying the same locations looked different.

There is one house where Mrinal Sen made his film with Smita Patil. In the same building I also shot a film. It is very difficult to realize for the audience that it is the same house. There is nothing called 'Great



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A Complete Film & TV Directory  
EDITOR – RAMESH MALHOTRA



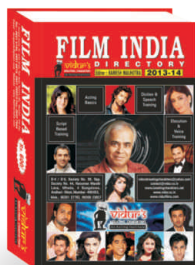
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Interview with

# Shyam Benegal

On Collaborating With Various Cinematographers

**You've worked with various cinematographers, starting with Govind Nihalani to Ashok Mehta. What is your general brief to a DOP when you decide to work with a particular one?**

I've worked with a number of cameramen, some of whom were venerable old time cameramen from the silent era with styles very much of that period.

My normal working method is to discuss the film, its characters, the style of lighting and so on with the DOP so that the way I would like the narrative interpreted is clear. It is very important for the cameraman to know what exactly you are seeking visually. And I always prefer to discuss that in some detail before we actually start shooting. So he is quite clear about what you want and the demands being made on him.

Now there are certain kinds of films where you might want to shoot - say for instance - with an 18 mm wide angle lens. This lens does a very important thing. It gets the environment to dominate the character. When you use a lens that is less wide than that, say 35mm there is a greater balance

between the environment and the character. You can interpret relative importance of objects, places and people by the lenses you use and the angles you choose to look at them, for instance by shooting from low angles to foreshorten and create dominance.

It all depends on the results you want. You can also choose to have different points-of-view; both subjective and objective. Take the famous Japanese filmmaker, Yasujiro Ozu for example. He used only 35 and 50mm lenses and hardly moved the camera. His view point was by and large from the Japanese sitting position. Your view point determines the way you look at the world. You are made an objective observer, and not a subjective participant in the story. Ozu would use a subjective point of view very sparingly at climactic positions in the narrative.

Each filmmaker has his or her own method of working. This has to be made clear to the DOP. I personally believe this is a very important aspect of a director-cameraman relationship. For instance, you may have changed your staging of a scene

that will require the cameraman to make drastic changes in his lighting. Perhaps, he may offer an alternate plan which may still be in keeping with the narrative character of the film. The narrative character of any story cannot be arbitrary. It has to be organic and all action should seem inevitable. The Cameraman and the Director, are concerned with not only the visual expression in terms of space but also with physical action, emotional and psychological development of the characters in the narrative that need articulation with the means of light, lenses and movement. It is your DOP who articulates your vision.

Starting from the very beginning I have worked with very senior cameramen. When I was making advertising films, I had cameramen like Mr. Malhotra, a very senior cameraman whose career had started with silent cinema and worked almost exclusively with B.R. Chopra as his cameraman. Then with Dharam Chopra, who was B.R. Chopra's brother. Then the self effacing but hugely accomplished Kamat Ghanekar, who was my partner as well as my cameraman. He had started his career with the famous





Prabhat Studios. And these were people who were much more orthodox in the manner in which they used lighting and in the use of lenses and camera movement. This was because there were many more technological limitations under which they had to work. Today's cameramen don't have those limitations. They had to be much more inventive in lighting, use of lenses and camera movement.

Some cameramen don't require very detailed briefing, but they sense what is required all the same. It always helps if once the cameraman knows what it is that you are looking for and how you wish to interpret it. The important thing is for the director and the cameraman to be on the same page.

**How do you approach the shot taking? Do you say it has to be shot with this lens and height or you describe the shot to the DOP and let him decide how to go about it?**

I do both, depending on the cameraman. I have worked with very accomplished cameramen like Subrata Mitra who was Satyajit Ray's cameraman.

Subrata Mitra did not like some of the methods I employed. He would say, "Don't tell me what lens I should use. Just tell me what you want". Sometimes we would have an argument and I would tell him, "But how do you know what I have in mind unless I

tell you the mechanics of how I think it can be achieved? You'll get me an excellent result but it may not be the way I want it. If you say that this is a better thing, let me look at it and decide whether it is better." When you start shooting a film, it is always like the first film you have ever made. It's the same with the cameraman. But once the cameraman gets used to working with you, things generally work out to your satisfaction.

Let me put it this way. Whatever film you're making; two things you should never forget. Cinema has a grammar that you have to follow if you don't wish your audience to get confused. Nor can you change the idiom half way. There are certain rules that you have to follow. Either you create a new grammar and a new vocabulary as when Jean-Luc Godard or others of the French nouvelle vague did or follow the narrative conventions that have evolved over a period of time.

To begin with, you must know what your cameraman's capabilities are. There are different kinds of cameramen. Subrata Mitra was very original in the manner in which he used lighting. His lighting was designed to get a naturalistic quality. He hated arbitrariness in lighting. He was very particular about the sources of light. Some cameramen are concerned largely with giving you the effect that you want. Then there are other cameramen who are combination of these two. V.K. Murthy, who shot a couple of films and the mammoth serial 'Bharat Ek Khoj' for me, blended both these techniques. He also concerned himself with source of light but he was not above giving little highlights and touches just to enhance a certain quality that you wanted, to heighten the emotional quality of the scene. He was also a great innovator (much like Subrata Mitra) in lighting and knew how to get certain kinds of light effects that were quite magical.

**Could you elaborate the term "innovative" in the case of Subrata Mitra and V. K. Murthy?**

Subrata Mitra was probably a pioneer of bounce lighting. So much of his interior







work was shadow-less as you see in real life. You don't notice shadows. The techniques he used were both economical and quite innovative.

Subrata Mitra used white sheets of cloth while V.K. Murthy preferred to use silver paper, or reflective silver foil, depending on the kind of result he wanted. Both used bounce lighting in different ways.

A lot depends on how the DOP has been trained. For instance, Govind Nihalani has been influenced quite a lot by V. K. Murthy as he had assisted him for a long time before he became an independent cameraman. His technique is a combination of what V.K. Murthy might do plus his own considerable contribution.

**You had consistently worked with Govind Nihalani for more than 10 films. What did you find unique about him?**

Empathy. With Govind Nihalani I did not have to discuss everything in great detail. On the sets we hardly discussed because he could read my mind just as much as I could understand the technique that he was employing. There never was a problem. Once you find a comfort level of that kind you don't want to change your cameraman. It was only when he became a filmmaker in his own right, did I need to go looking for another cameraman.

In between I also worked with K. K. Mahajan and we got along extremely well because he and I were similar, very restless in the manner in which we would function. And he was also very interested in getting certain kind of results as he was very fond of shadow less lighting.

I worked with Ashok Mehta on some of my most satisfying films. Ashok was constantly wanting to experiment, attempting to do new things. And because of his tireless nature I wanted to shoot 'Trikal' with him. I discussed the visual character of the film in great detail. The film



was set in Pre-liberation Goa when there was no electricity, and homes were lit with oil lamps or petromax lanterns or candles. Ashok and I discussed the best way to get the result we wanted.

I introduced a film called 'Barry Lyndon' by Stanley Kubrick to Ashok and some of it was shot like that. In European art, you find that Renaissance painters always used light and shade (chiaroscuro) that gave their work a kind of depth and character that did not exist before in paintings either in Europe or India. That is the kind of result Stanley Kubrick got in Barry Lyndon. He even used lenses that were specially ground and crafted for his cameraman to allow working in low light. Ashok Mehta mastered this technique in 'Trikal'. Ashok came up with idea of actually shooting in candle light and kerosene lamps, as sources of light for nights. This was at a time when the fastest colour negative available was only 200 ASA. To reduce the grain and yet get enough light for exposure, Ashok contacted different candle-makers and they made candles of different shapes and sizes. Constant experimentation allowed Ashok to light all the interior shots in this kind of lighting.

Ashok got the National Award for Cinematography in that film. Ashok Mehta was a very adventurous cameraman. He had first worked with me way back in 1967, when he was not yet a cameraman. He was 18 years old and had come on board as a camera hand, not even an assistant cameraman. He would carry the equipment around and set up the camera, fix lenses, change film rolls and so on. He was totally self-taught. We had gone to Bastar to shoot a documentary on the tribal communities there. By the time we reached Bastar, my cameraman fell ill with malaria. I was stuck. I had no budget provision for another cameraman. I was in a quandary. Necessity forced me to operate the camera. But I did not know enough about exposures. Ashok knew how to read an exposure meter and



set the exposures. He also functioned as a focus puller. Eventually he took over as cameraman. He used car head lights, petromax lamps and so on to light night scenes. The results we got were fabulous. Ashok had a great sense of adventure. His exposures were absolutely perfect. So when 'Trikal' happened at the beginning of 1985 he seemed the right person to shoot the film. By that time, of course, Govind was very much an independent filmmaker. After that Ashok remained with me. We shot 'Kalyug', 'Mandi', 'Making of the Mahatma' and several other short and long documentaries.

In 'Mandi' I wanted a certain kind of color palette. Also I was shooting on actual locations, but I wanted to shoot with the ease and facility of shooting in a studio. So Ashok created a catwalk on the first floor level of the house which went round the entire structure, about 25-30 ft above the ground. He had done that for me when he shot 'Junoon' for some of the battle scenes we had shot from such a trolley, high up. Those days we didn't have huge cranes and, therefore, all of this was specially created for the film. This was used both for use as a camera trolley as well as for lights when needed. This allowed the camera to move around the house, into the rooms on the first floor and so on. It was very inventive and ingenious. This is what made Ashok very special.

**Do you remember any other situation which still makes you remember Ashok Mehta?**

Another quality which I appreciated greatly in him was the fact that he did not like direct lighting on characters. He always preferred diffused light, particularly in interiors where the light was in any case diffuse. As a result, the characters came alive in a marvelous way. It was not simply for cosmetic reasons. It always helped in





creating the right atmosphere for the narrative.

During "Making of the Mahatma", we had to shoot in the old Parliament House in Pretoria. It was a large hall and was quite a challenge. The gaffer saw it and said, "We will require a large number of lights, much more than we have. What is more, it will take a couple of days to light up the entire hall. We will need an additional generator." I told Ashok that we could not afford that. He said, "Leave it to me." He decided to use both natural light and some selective artificial lighting. He surprised everybody as we finished the shooting in half a day. He started lighting from 6 to 9 am and by lunch time we had finished shooting the scene. We had only been given the location for a single day.

For "Making of the Mahatma", we had worked out an 85 days shooting schedule. We finished shooting the film in 38 days! His lighting style was to make the best use of whatever natural light he'd get and augmenting it with artificial lights to get the results we wanted. He was an absolute master at that sort of thing.

**Another DOP you have worked with for many films is Rajan Kothari. What do you find in Rajan Kothari so unique about his way of working?**

Rajan and I had excellent understanding. And we shot films primarily outdoors, like 'Samar', 'Hari Bhari' and 'Welcome to Sajjanpur'.

Rajan Kothari was always very cool, very quiet. No shouting, no screaming. Ashok Mehta was quite the opposite. So there never was any kind of tension on the sets. I haven't found any other cameraman to match that quality. Although now I think I have found another cameraman who in some ways has a similar kind of personality; Akashdeep Pandey, who shot 'Samvidhaan'.

I believe it is important for a director to understand basic principles of lighting and also the use of space, lenses, camera movement, etc. If he knows these basics, it is a great help to the cameraman.

**In between you've also switched to 2-3 people like Piyush Shah and Prasann Jain. What was your experience with them?**

Piyush is another very gifted cameraman. Again, he's a great innovator. He reminds me a lot of Ashok because of his ability to innovate. I had seen his excellent work for Mani Kaul, particularly his aerial shooting. I took him as a second unit cameraman when I made 'Bharat Ek Khoj'. He had to shoot from a helicopter all over the country. We filmed all the major rivers of India, all the major forts, historical monuments and so on. We couldn't afford expensive equipment needed for this and he had to do all this with a handheld camera. You will not notice any of the vibrations of the aircraft or the camera shaking due to those vibrations. This he



managed by shooting at high speed, just enough to eliminate the vibrations and other small jerks and shakes. He did a brilliant job. After 'Bharat Ek Khoj', Piyush shot 'Suraj Ka Satvan Ghoda.' And that was also some kind of a record because his lighting style was very simple and very effective. We had created a set, both indoor and outdoor and he shot the film at such speed that we finished the entire film with a whole week to spare. The time taken was much shorter than what we had scheduled for the film. Piyush is very quick, and very confident of his work. That's what I like in him and he's very intellectually attuned to the film being shot. He's not just a craftsman. He is imaginative, creative and wants to be intellectually and emotionally part of the complete film. An excellent cameraman!

Considering that I've been a filmmaker now for over 50 years, I can't say that I have had a difficult time with any cameraman I have worked with. All the cameramen I have worked with have been exceptional craftsman and extremely creative people. Their contribution to my films has been immense.

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*Photo exhibition of*

## ***Thyagarajan:** During BRM 2016*



April - June 2016

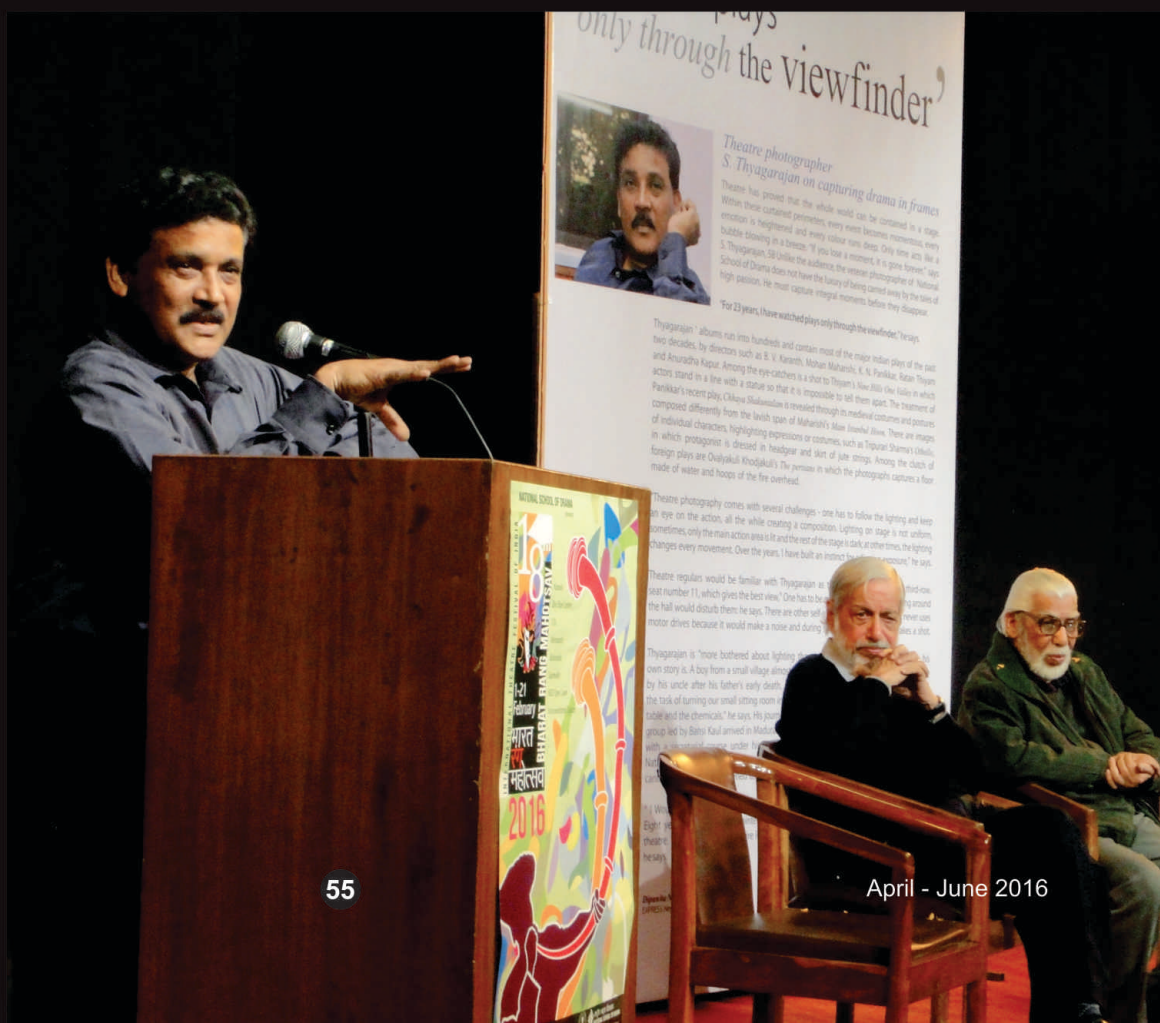


In shooting theatrical performance, biggest challenge for a photographer is to capture the emotion of an actor on stage, which is not light up from the shooting point of view but for the Audience. On stage light level is kept by the light designer from the feeling viewpoint rather than photographic exposure.

Despite this basic issue, Tyagrajan is among those rare photographers who do not rest till the time he has captured all the best moments in approximately 2-hr production of NSD. He has been shooting theatrical stage performances almost for 3 decades and became an expert in this domain. He has created a unique position in photographing stage play. Even if lighting credit goes to other light designer but when to press the button after having a proper composition needs an "inner eye" which Tyagrajan's Photographs reflects.

NSD decided to showcase his best work in BRM-2016 for theater audience and had more than 150 pictures to showcase his 3 decades journey as a photographer. The exhibition was inaugurated by two veterans, O.P Sharma and Avinash Pasricha. It was a visual pleasure for any photography fan to see the exhibition and I wish that the exhibition could travel to other parts of the country.

My last words about his photographs are - It was the sheer delight of his photographs that compelled me to include NSD student's production in a magazine more devoted to cinema. Hope government will soon recognize his contribution to "preserve the best moments in theatrical performance and will award him Padma Shri."







## Interview with *Pannaga Jois*

**Which are the elements you have used to stylize your Diploma Production, based on “The Mother of a Traitor”, and how did you integrate them so that they do not look fragmented?**

I chose the story as I was impressed with the imagery that is there in the story. Maxim Gorky has written the story in such a way that each line of the story has imagery. It is very dramatic. I could visualize the whole story which could take place on stage. It gave me hope that it can be turned into a stage performance and later how I inculcated other aspects of theatre like music and acting is based on the kind of training I've got and my inclination towards the style of theatre that I like. I like to work with body and I like textures.

**Can you elaborate on the word “Textures”, in the theatrical context?**

I like to use textures in the sense of material textures, sound textures and textures in terms of body movement. For example, let me talk about texture in the material. For the mother, even while choosing the costume, while having the body movement, she has traits of a mother. When she walks on stage with a

slow movement it shows the depth, so the silence. Texture is something that communicates the inner life of the story. So I used bricks. I didn't want a neat flat which was painted like brick, I

wanted the real texture of brick which is broken. You involve many textures and make it into an ensemble of textures.

**Was there anything specific in your mind when you decided to use bricks as part of your set design?**

Let's go one by one. If you talk about set, first I started drawing, sketching, how a stage would look like. I did not think of a stage, a performance space basically. I did not even think of audience. First I thought where would this story take place. So when I started sketching I gradually developed that into fragmented walls of bricks. After reading the story, before I started the rehearsal, I took all my actors to Purana Quila. We experienced that when we enter Purana Quila it has an ambience, it has its own atmosphere. So experiencing that atmosphere on stage is what I wanted. When I started sketching it was simple like the walls with many steps, like the elevation used in 1960's. Later it started becoming very plain with bricks here and there, something like a graveyard but then it's not graveyard. It's a city which turns into a graveyard in the story. A broken city.

**When you say a broken city, you**

**expect to see a demolished city, not a span piece of bricks laid together. Why was it broken in a stylized way, like it was new?**

It was a suggestion of that.

**Which are the other elements you picked up for stylization?**

Body movements. Actors live in the story so actors try to be the traitors. They themselves are citizens some times. They themselves are sons of their mothers at other times. They play different characters in that span of time.

**How did you distinguish that they are playing different characters, because they were wearing the same costumes?**

It's a neutral costume. Everybody is wearing the same costume. But, it's all about how they imagine. They read the story, they understand the story, they involve themselves in the story, become that character in the story and they play it. It's as simple as that.

**But how will the audience be able to distinguish that at this point they are playing this, at that point they are playing that?**

This is a performance where we do not tell audience explicitly that this person is a traitor or this person is the citizen and she is the mother. It is all about conveying the sensation of the



story and not narrating the story itself. So there is a difference. The purpose is to sense the story and convey the sensation to the audience. Initially when the drums come, they all are traitors, and then the transition is towards them becoming the sufferers because of the traitor. So a single actor becomes a traitor then becomes a citizen of the city who is affected by the traitor and then again becomes a traitor who is ruthless, becomes a son because of whom the whole city is destroyed and the relationship between the mother and son is felt by the same actor.

**Were you worried that your content will be lost in the stylization?**

No, I was not worried because of the stylization. I was not focusing on the stylizing.

**Except for conveying the mood of the war time was there any other reason to use the drums? What were the other elements you picked up and why from the ritualistic folk form of Karnataka called Dollu Kunitha?**

I picked up this form Dollu Kunitha, to use here because as I said before I'm working on conveying the sensation that I felt while reading the story more than narrating the story itself. I chose drums for the same reason. Dollu Kunitha has that rustic sound and it's a folk form played by a community called Eediga in Karnataka. When they play Dollu Kunitha

it is something like conquering somebody else's space. The sound is such that it just goes everywhere and it really hits into your heart, and that is the sensation I get when a traitor conquers a city and that's why I wanted to use this. It doesn't have any other political or any other meaning to it. It's mere sensation that I work on and if somebody else reads politics in it then I cannot say anything.

**Did you need a choreographer for the choreographic movements in the production or you worked on that yourself?**

I directed these and choreographed with the actors. I have a flair towards bodywork and I've trained in Bharatnatyam for few years in my childhood. I'm also inspired by works of Pina Bausch. This language of performance using body and the music is something that I evolved. I can say this is my way of narrating a story.

**What was the idea behind your showing an upward movement of the dagger in the stabbing scene rather than using the standard downward movement used to show killings?**

I think it's all about my imagination. What I mean to say is that because it is not a realistic play, here for the mother, killing is in her mind. It is not just killing a person, it is killing the idea of an anti-social element. It is killing an idea of

terrorism or something like that. So this killing, showing the dagger upwards, for me at least, goes beyond the mere killing of a person. It is piercing into something. That is the idea that I wanted to convey. While I was blocking it just came to my mind that a mother does not kill her son like this. It is not just killing her son, it is something else. She has to put it upwards. That's how I did it.

**In the original story the mother of the traitor fulfills two things. She kills him and she kills herself but in your production she doesn't kill herself. Why?**

I really like this question. When we came to the end part of the blockings it did not allow me as a woman or if I place myself as a mother, to see that mother killing herself. She rather walks away and it becomes open ended and I don't know what can happen to the mother. She has taken a decision to kill her son and later in my view what she would do cannot be killing herself. So I stopped there and I gave it an open ending.

**Did you change the set up between the previous production/show and this one? And was it a compulsion or some other reason you wanted to experiment with?**

No, I definitely didn't want to experiment. In the previous one the audience was sitting on the stage and it was very intimate. It is actually an intimate performance. Only when you see it from close can you understand the actors, the details of acting. In this performance, I'm really not satisfied. It became proscenium and it is huge and you cannot really see the details.

**At a particular point all the male actors were creating a sound from the mouth. So what was that exactly?**

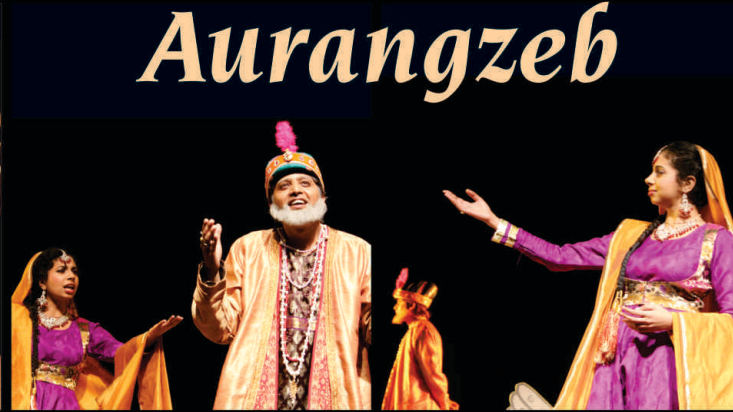
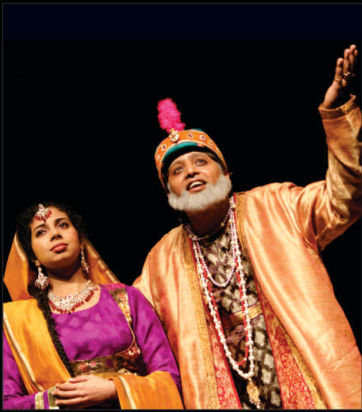
That comes soon after the son dies. It's a symbol of them going to a funeral and then the chaotic nature of the city and what the mother or the society feels soon after somebody's death. And this was evolved again. It's a kind of language through which I wanted to convey this.

□□□





# Aurangzeb



Directed by

**K S Rajendran**



April - June 2016









## Bharat Rang Mahotsav 2016

Despite all the debates and discussions which were being carried out on Facebook and during BRM about the bad quality of selection and favoritism, I was able to catch around 40 productions in Hindi, English, non verbal and occasionally regional languages.

The BRM opened with Macbeth directed by Ratan Thiyam. Ratan is one of the rare directors who has evolved his own form in theatre. Despite being in Manipuri language, it gives you a visual treat with few out of the box images which you keep relishing. As one already knows the story of a well known play like Macbeth, what is remarkable is the dressing up of his characters. The use of properties with the help of mesmerizing lighting gives the feeling of a magnum opus.

If the play 'Barrister Parvateesam' was among the few plays that could use multimedia in a very effective manner,

'Dhulia Oja' directed by the young talented actor-director Guna Moni Boruah was very minimalist. Once again it proves that despite being in regional languages theatre has its own language, which is beyond words. Set in Assam, Guna uses the folk music of Assam where 'Dhol' itself becomes a character. He integrates the story in music in such a way that one can really call it 'A MUSICAL' in Indian style, one of the best productions in BRM among regional



plays.

Among entertaining plays from Bombay, 'ILA' directed by Puja Sarup and Sheena Khalid could be voted as the best production. Thanks to Avtar Sahani, who could strongly recommend as it was part of his selection group. The play uses myth and the way it discusses the gender issues in the contemporary world of Bombay makes it marvelous. One never knows what will happen next in the entire play. The pace of the play keeps you on your toes all the time. Among non verbal productions, 'The Transparent Trap' stands out. Though it is a difficult production to conceive keeping plastic as its thread, but it keeps one engaged all the time.

'How to Skin a Giraffe' directed by talented Rajiv Krishnan, is a production for which I can walk 10 miles to see it again. Rajiv Krishnan can be called the modern 'Luis Bunuel' of Indian theatre. Inspired by the play 'Leonce and Lena' by German playwright Georg Büchner, the whole play seems like 'The Theatre of the Absurd'. It has tone of its own in surreal and unpredictable dialogues. Whether it is a set or props, one never knows how it will be used in the coming scene. It does give a lot of home work to the audience, which I as an audience am still doing, whenever I think of it.

I still don't know why a talented actor like Pankaj Kapoor performed 'Dopehri'. It was just reading without anything worthwhile. It is a black spot in his career as a theatre actor. There were people exclaiming to such an extent that had it not been for Pankaj Kapoor, they would have grabbed him on stage and taken their money back.

Among the other "Bombay Boys" who participated in BRM, 'Mera Woh Matlab Nahin Tha', 'Barff', and 'Dear Father' were worth seeing. Pankaj



Kapoor needs to see solo performances like 'Notes on Chai' by Jyoti Dogra to understand what is "solo". If last year it was 'C-SHARP C-BLUNT' among the winners in solo section, this year it was Jyoti, who hit the nail on the head. Innovative, engaging, entertaining, contemporary, one can keep adding various adjectives to her performances in the play and they still wouldn't suffice. A play which gives you the faith that you don't need lavish sets and a group of 20 people jumping left and right to come out with "THE PLAY".

Among International Productions, 'Stage directions of O'Neill' and 'Dear Children', sincerely stand out. 'Dear Children' directed by Ruwanthie de Chickera from Sri Lanka deserves a special mention. It is almost non verbal and highlights various issues in a humorous fashion. In the past few years, it was the Polish productions which we had been looking forward to. But this time 'Dear Children' took that place in the hearts of Delhi's theatre going audience.

'Azad Maulana' directed by Tripurari Sharma was the most awaited production on my list as I had not been able to see it whenever it was performed in Delhi. This well researched script highlights the days of Ahmednagar Fort Jail of Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru. Suresh Sharma as Maulana brings out the aura of Maulana Azad's persona even though occasionally he was a bit loud. Among various other characters Sadanand Patil as Sardar Patel suits the character very well and has



done justice to the role. One always associates the red rose with Nehru Ji but Sardar Patel shown taking care of small pots of red roses gives another dimension to his character. Durgesh Kumar as Dilawar Darzi lends credibility to even the lesser known mundane character by his down to earth performance. Tripurari Sharma as the director handled the cast very well. I missed out on watching Md. Sahidur Rahman's performance as Jawaharlal Nehru in the earlier productions, who is known to have performed the role very well. Among productions by theatre

heavy weights like Ram Gopal Bajaj 'Kaamiya' was worth watching just for Lawmi Rawat. Among the students productions, 'Land where life is good' directed by third year graduating student, Temjenzungba and written by Asif Ali Haider Khan was just outstanding. I watched it 2nd time for the sheer freshness the play had. I can never forget the dialogue sequence between the Naga dog and the Military dog. The innovative use of TV serial's idea, 'Jhanki' at India Gate as parody was integrated properly. Using the characters of Ramayana reminds the audiences of the 'Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro' theatre sequence in the film. One can notice subtlety in the performance of Aparajita Dey, where she moves her just head like an old style doll where just the upper head moves and rest of the body is static, while the cart on which she was standing is being pushed away. Bhumika Dubey as a police inspector leaves her mark as a versatile actor.

'The Mother of a Traitor', directed by Pannaga Jois, is another remarkable production. When you read the story, you wonder how one can adapt it for stage but Ms. Jois did the magic in stylizing everything. If one needs to understand, what is styling in theater, one should see this mesmerizing play.

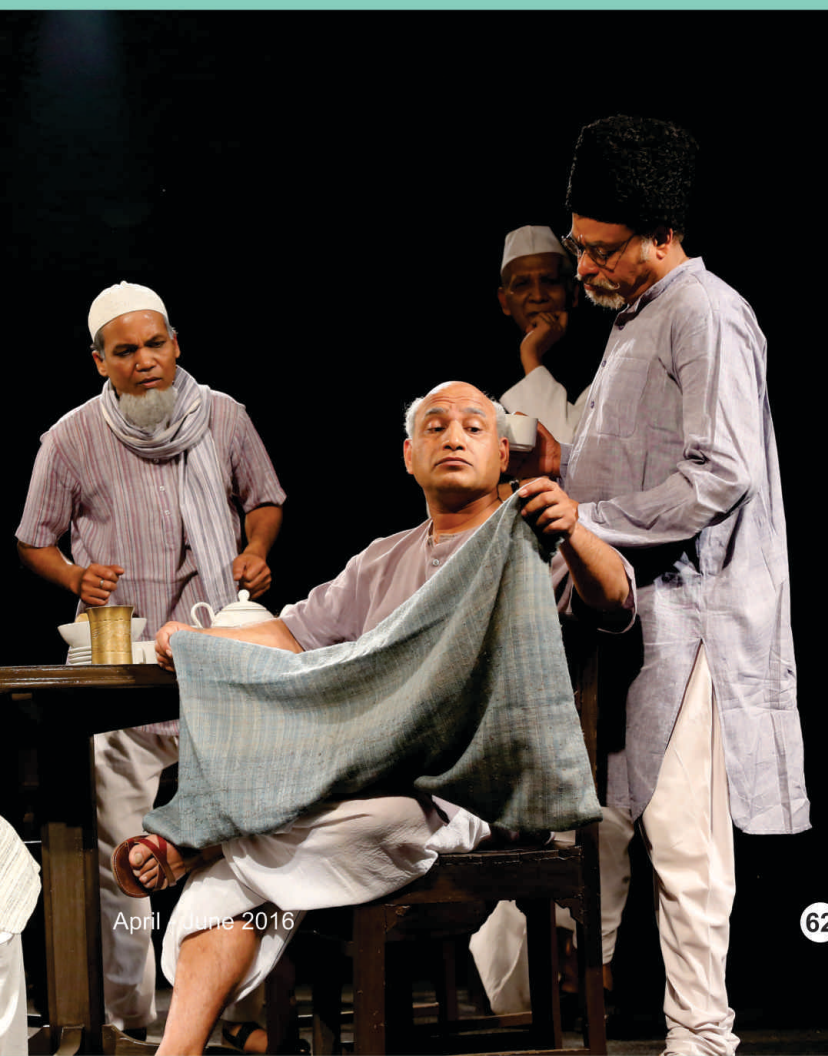
'Jal Damroo Baje' directed by Sanjay Upadhyay was another musical treat. With a new cast, he again proved his command over the music and did justice with the difficult subject dealing with the horrors of flood. It must be noted that equally hypnotizing was 'Aranya







Gatha', MPSD student production directed by faculty member Kanhaiya Lal Kaithiwas. Though many regional language plays like 'Antigone' impress in set design and narrative styles but one feels bad to have missed plays which were highly appreciated and were discussed by friends who saw them. I wish I could have seen plays like, 'Ghinua', The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Amina Sundari from Bangladesh. Last but not the least was the closing ceremony of BRM, where acclaimed authoress Manu Bhandari graced the occasion. Despite her old age, she managed to keep her promise. She spoke from her heart about 'Bina Deewaron Ke Ghar' and 'Mahabhoj' directed by two theatre heavy weights, Ram Gopal Bajaj and Amal Allana.



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# Interview with "Karan Deygan" on joint venture with Kumar Mangat

**You have been involved in film production, in terms of financing and other things but not in a full fledged way. Why this decision of getting into distribution rather than producing a feature film?**

I decided to come into distribution as there was only one clear cut agenda, that the result is very prompt. When you talk about production, you have dreams, creativity, long term policies, discussions and decisions. I was not very happy about doing all that in the longer run. Distributing films is very simple, as when the film is ready and ready to fly, we are the ones who are going to buy it and the results are going to be out and it will be on the table within the next 45 days. So I was more comfortable in buying the film and releasing it instead of making a film.

**You have tied up with a veteran in this industry, Kumar Mangat. How did this collaboration come into being?**

I actually met Kumar ji when we were in competition of buying a film called 'Mastizaade' from PNC from British

and suddenly I came to know that Kumar ji is doing it so, I just wanted him to do it because he was more professional and more reliable in terms of experience and that is how we met. When we got to know each other properly, we thought we can join hands and make something good. This is how we started our ventures.

**The first venture which you distributed was the recent Hollywood film "London Has Fallen". Why did you opt for an International Film rather than going for a traditional Bollywood film to begin with?**

There was nothing really significant or very special about it. It was just that we came across this and this film was proposed to me by Kumar ji. Buying the film was really very good because he is a very good negotiator in the market and he bought the film at a very good price. I was impressed with the figures and I was more impressed about Gerard Butler being in the film because he is one of my favorites. Also, I really wanted to get into

Hollywood. We will definitely go for something big in Bollywood. But opening a distribution account with a Hollywood movie was much more fruitful than doing a Bollywood movie.

**What is the so called Box Office report in terms of collections and in**





### terms of the overall profit?

That was fabulous, fantabulous in fact, because when the picture was launched it was launched globally, so the promotion was handled all over the world by a team. Whether it was Panorama, Millennium Pictures, Gerard Butler, Hollywood or Niche Film Farm, everyone was working in a team to promote the film, be it on social media or electronic media. This gave a very strong start to the film in India as well as in Hollywood and it was a great success once it started. I think we were almost done with the recovery in the first week and then second week was the grace of God and things really went high in terms of figures.

### Any plans for future collaborations in terms of distributing some other films with Kumar Mangat?

Kumar ji is a very experienced man and he really understands the business, he has a vision. So I would definitely like to work with him and we are planning few projects which we might do together.

### There were a couple of other films which were also releasing around the time you decided to release your film.

### What were the risks involved in terms of distributing this film?

Ans. Definitely the risk was very high because there were 2 big films with this film. Those were 'Jai Gangaajal' and the next release was 'Teraa Surroor' but we were confident about the Hollywood make and we were confident about the director who is making it. I was more confident about the brand, Gerard Butler and Morgan Freeman. He was one of the best actors we could really avail in Indian theaters and I was very happy about it and I just took a risk. I was taking a chance on trying my luck and my stars and somewhere we were very sure about what is going to happen at the Bollywood box office.

### Was your involvement a financial partnership or were you involved in finding out the distributors and negotiating with them?

To be very honest, we were hard core partners in financial terms as well as in technical terms. My people were there to support Panorama Studios in all aspects, whether it was financial, mental, practical or professional. Niche Film Farm was standing beside Panorama Studios in all aspects at the time of the launch.

### What was the advantage of tying up with a person who has an industry experience rather than going solo?

Going solo was not possible for us because we are not hardcore film makers. We are into the farming industry and suddenly we have come into film farming. It was not compatible to our present business. So obviously joining hands with an experienced studio or experienced banner was much more supportive and it gave really strong results.

### What are your future plans and would you be coming out with a public issue at some point?

Definitely, yes we will. We are looking forward to some real good pictures because earlier we were doing it unofficially but this time we have launched our own brand by the name of Niche Film Farm. We had been doing agricultural farming and stud farming but now we are into film farming. We were very successful in agricultural farming and stud farming, so, I hope we will be more successful in film farming and we will definitely go for high end Bollywood movies in the near future.



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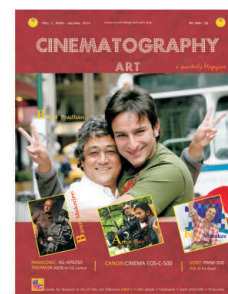
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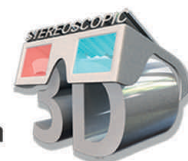
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5. Editing
6. Sound Recording & Audio Engineering
7. TV Journalism, News Reading & Anchoring
8. Creative Writing (Dialogue, Script & Copy Writing)
9. P.R. Advt & Event Management
10. Radio Jockey (3 Months Part Time)
11. Wedding Planning (1 Month)

### *Guest Faculty in the past*

- ★ Subash Saho Sound Recordist, Filmfare + National Award For Omkara
- Oscar Winning Film "Amelie" Editor Herve Schneid
- Arvind K , Cinematographer For Gangajal, Apharan
- Aseem Sinha, Editor of 60 Films Including Films For Shyam Benegal



## **CRAFT FILM SCHOOL**

272, CAR MARKET, SECTOR-7, ROHINI,  
NEW DELHI-110085

Tel: 3241-6868/ 3291-6868

### *Selection Criteria: Interview*

Session Starts : 31st Jul & 30th Jan  
application form available on website

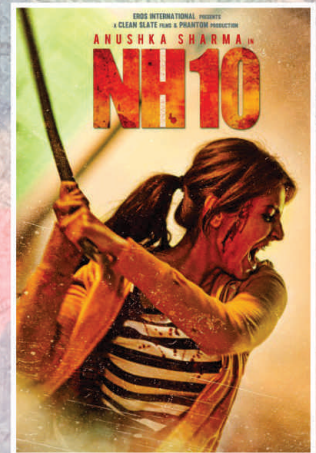
[www.log2craft.org](http://www.log2craft.org).



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