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CINEMATOGRAPHY ART

a quarterly Magazine

DOP

Neha Parti Matiyani

On Badrinath Ki Dulhania

Savita Singh on

IWCC

(Indian Women Cinematographers' Collective)

Exclusive Interview With DOP

Arvind Kumar

Vision For **NSD**

BRM 2017

Govind Nihalani

Tribute to Late
Shri Om Puri

Interview with **Neerja** Team

Ram Madhvani Director

Atul Kasbekar Producer

Mitesh Mirchandani DOP

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Monisha R Baldawa Editor

Aparna Sud Production Designer

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Editor's Desk



Dear Friends,

With this issue we prove the point that we are committed and remain true to what we promise. To satiate our readers we have exclusively interviewed the core team of award winning film "Neerja". It is an opportunity for our readers not only to understand the aesthetics and creative aspects of the film but also to learn what the technical crew have to go through for bringing an idea to screen. The interview is comprised of the Producer – Atul Kasbekar, the Director – Ram Madhvani, the DoP – Mitesh Mirchandani, the Sound Designer – Subash Sahoo, the Editor – Monisha R. Baldawa and the Production Designer – Aparna Sud of the film 'Neerja'.

Enriching it further, we have an exclusive interview of DoP Arvind Kumar whose style has been unique and inspiration to many and speaks volume for itself. The lady, Neha Parti Matiyani, the sparkle of the B-town also glitters on the canvas of our magazine. Here recent film 'Badrinath Ki Dulhania' as a DoP is appreciated widely. She has been representing the ever present section and coincidentally Savita Singh's 'Collective' represent the broader frame of 'Women DoP', which was calculatedly ignored by the majority, thus proving the point that an ever present marginal section is proving it's metal,

The sudden demise of 'Om Puri Sahab', a maverick actor, shook the fraternity. This edition carries a lecture of Shri Govind Nihalani, on his relationship with Late Shri Om Puri, delivered at Bharat Rang Mahotsava, 2017. The lecture explores and reveals the complex maze of director-actor relationship and how an actor personifies the imagination. In his lecture Shri Govind Nihalani pays a tribute to Late Shri Om Puri, whose huge body of work has left a benchmark for younger actors. As per our regular section we carry forward our vision for NSD, this time focusing on Balwant Thakur, a stalwart of theatre.

Cheers!!

Naresh Sharma

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Interview with Neerja Team

DOP, Neerja



Mitesh Mirchandani

Director, Neerja



Ram Madhvani

Producer, Neerja



Atul Kasbekar

Editor, Neerja



Monisha R Baldawa

Production Designer, Neerja



Aparna Sud

Sound Designer, Neerja

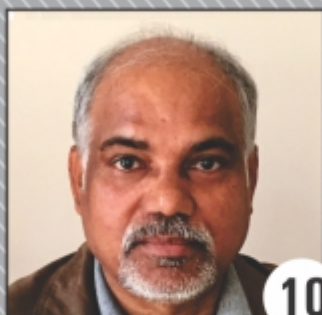


Subash Sahoo

Savita Singh, IWCC



Knowledge Series - J S Sharma



Neha Parti Matiyani, DOP



Robert D. Yeoman, DOP



Arvind Kumar, DOP



Jeetu Chawla



Govind Nihalani on Om Puri



Balwant Thakur



Vision For NSD



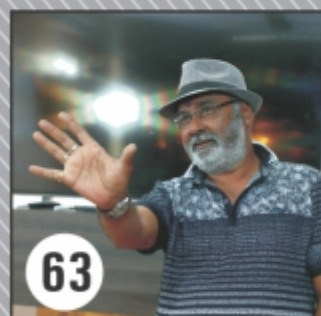
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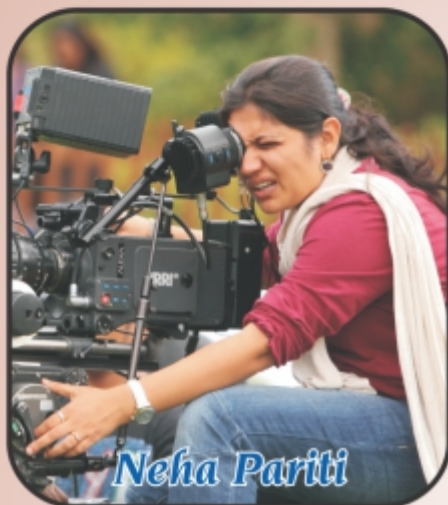
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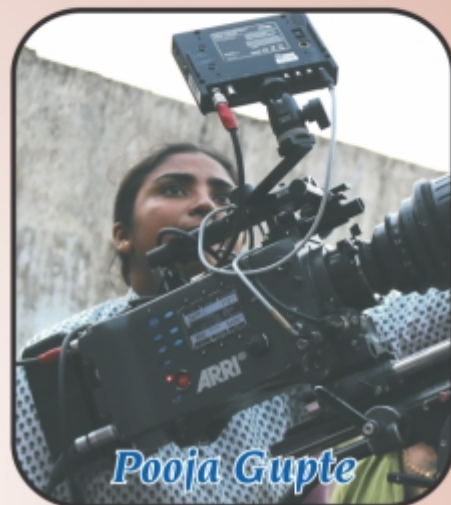
Priya Seth



Neha Pariti



Fowzia Fathima



Pooja Gupte

In which cinematographer Savita Singh talks about Myths, Weight-lifters and IWCC (Indian Women Cinematographers' Collective)!

I vividly remember, a sultry summer afternoon when the postman rang the bell of our modest Delhi apartment. I ran to the door because I was expecting a letter. I had appeared for the Cinematography exam at Film and Television Institute of India and was waiting for my results. The next thing I knew I was jumping with joy and happiness. I had secured myself a seat at the prestigious FTII. I knew I was going to live my dream of being a cinematographer.

I grew up watching subtitled regional films by the progressive filmmakers such as Govind Nihlani, Satyajit Ray, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Mrinal Sen and V Shantaram to name a few. The new wave of Indian cinema had

touched me when I was hardly 10 years old. This did not make me a popular choice with my cousins and siblings because we were constantly fighting for our channel and our favorite film to be on. They wanted to see entertaining 'masala' films and I wanted to watch the new wave cinema. I loved these films for their distinct way of storytelling, which was subtle, real, it stayed away from the conventional devices of song and dance and above all reflected the socio-political climate of the times.

One of my early impressions of 'Cinematography' is when in the film 'Pyasa' the poor, marginalized poet Gurudutt stands in the corner of a library and sings, 'Jane who kaise log the jinke pyar kopya mila' I remember feeling

a distinct emotion it evoked when I noticed the camera tracking back from Guru Dutt as he starts to become smaller in the frame. It was a really dramatic moment for me as I realized that apart from the actor, music, lyrics and direction, there is a thing that makes me feel what I feel- the camera and the person behind that. I had discovered the idea of 'movement', and how it created a sense of irony, melancholy and poetry in the song. I couldn't get that person out of my head who was behind the camera making that movement. I was thirteen at that time.

A few years later I learnt, that it was V K Murthy, the legendary cinematographer known for his images in starkly contrasted black and white. By



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this time, I was closely following the works of cinematographers like Ashok Mehta (36, Chowrangee lane, Bandit Queen and Trikaal) and Santosh Sivan (Terrorist, Dil se). I had set my heart to follow on the footsteps of these great artists.

I chose Cinematography because I loved the idea of telling stories with my camera, my choice of lens, my choice of light and movement or lack of it. The thought never even crossed my mind that I was getting into a heavily male dominated field and even if it would have it wouldn't have changed my decision at all.

My three years at the Film Institute, Pune equipped me with the technique, aesthetic, art, practice, passion and a strong desire to make my unique path as a cinematographer/artist. In these 14 years of being a cinematography student to being a professional cinematographer, I have been asked a lot of questions by fellow filmmakers, journalists, friends and relatives, "How did you think of being a woman cinematographer? Was it difficult being a woman DoP or is the camera really heavy to lift? How do you manage since it's such a tough job?"

I have come to understand that

these stereotypes arise from the myths and notions about the idea of a 'Cinematographer' and his/her role.

A cinematographer/ Director of Photography is the person responsible to translate the script into visuals with aesthetical and technical choices like lighting, camera movements and lensing. A DP creates a visual language along with the director and other Head of departments which suits the particular story and helps convey a wide array of complex emotions through light and shadow, choice of color palette, camera height, movement and finally by setting the right color tone with the help of a colorist.

Robert Bresson very poetically elaborates on a cinematographer's role in his poignant 'Notes to a Cinematographer' (a must read for every aspiring cinematographer/director). He said, "Make visible what, without you, might perhaps never have been seen."

Cinematographers have arguably the hardest job on a set. They work incredibly long hours, lead an entire department from gaffers to light men, grips to focus pullers and assistants. They have to have great intuition to read a director's mind, to decode a script in

visual grammar while simultaneously pushing through their own artistic vision. They are, in essence, the eyes of the director and bring out his/her vision on the screen.

Yes, being a cinematographer is a tough job regardless of the fact that you are a man or a woman. And a cinematographer is a lot of things but a weight lifter, body builder or a muscle man.

Being a woman, it gets tougher to break in owing to the popular perception that women are not cut out to be cinematographers. This never came in my way because I didn't make a big deal of it. Instead, I concentrated on making my expression strong as a cinematographer by pushing my limits. I didn't think about the jobs I didn't get called for but focused on doing what came my way with utmost precision and excellence. I always put it like this, I really don't know if the films I wasn't offered was because of my gender or not but I do know for a fact that the people who chose to work with me did so because of my work and talent.

I was the first woman to win the prestigious National Award for my diploma film 'Kramasha' in 2007. Within

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^In 1280 x 720 Resolution.

a year, I landed my first independent feature film: helmed by director Ram GopalVerma. By 2008, that is, only a year after graduation; I was working my way through the visceral landscape of a horror film 'Phoonk'. I went on to shoot the critically acclaimed psychological drama, '404: Error Not Found' with director Prawaal Raman. I was only 34 when I shot a magnum opus period epic called 'Hawaizaada' directed by VibhuPuri and my last film 'Ventilator' is a Marathi language comical/satirical family drama film directed by Rajesh Mapuskar.

When I started working in the industry in 2008, I already knew of cinematographers like Deepti Gupta (Honeymoon Travels Pvt Ltd), Priya Seth (Airlift, Barah Anna) and Fowzia Fatima (Mitr, my friend). I drew inspiration from these women who were doing excellent work from much before me and had carved a path already for many more to come.

There are more and more women opting to be cinematographers now. Mindsets are changing. Some 50 years back one could not imagine a woman to be a doctor/engineer and now it's almost become the rule, not quite the exception. Hopefully in a few years from now, when you say DP, one would not assume it to be a bearded muscled man only.

Last year I was shooting in a small village in Konkan, Maharashtra for my film 'Ventilator'. I was shooting handheld and to keep the actor's flow in a scene we decided to shoot all the scenes in a single shot and no cuts in between. Everyday the women from the village would walk up to me and tell me with a glint in their eyes that they felt so proud to see a woman 'cameraman'. What struck me was that these women did not approach me with any wonder, surprise or disbelief but sheer pride. It was a beautiful feeling.

It was equally endearing when a setting boy started calling me 'Camera ma'am' during the shooting of the film closest to my heart 'Hawaizaada'. It was a matter of few hours and everyone picked up the new coined term and before I knew my actors were calling me Camera ma'am. Or when I was

conducting a lighting workshop for the final year students of Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute of India (SRFTI) and the light men and gaffers would call me 'Didi' as a mark of respect. Things definitely are changing. With each passing year, I see a shift in people's perception.

But at the same time, I still meet people (from the industry) who very innocently ask me if I was the main DP for the films I have shot? I have resisted giving a sarcastic reply back to these curious minds. I have learnt to excuse them for their ignorance. They are still centuries behind in their thoughts and I wish that one day their world will be as evolved as that village in Konkan.

I recently had the great opportunity to represent India as the Guest Country this year at the Micro Salon and Carte Blanche organized by AFC, The French Society of Cinematographers. It was an honor to be a part of an esteemed delegation consisting of the accomplished cinematographers like Sunny Joseph, Ravi K Chandran and Govind Nihlani. We met some excellent French cinematographers and shared our worldviews on cinematography and our films

But the most special memory of the trip will remain to be when I met the two most prominent women cinematographers from France Natalie Durand, the current president of AFC and Caroline Champetier, a much sought after cinematographer with more than 100 films to her credit. She is known for her work on Holy Motors (2012), Of Gods and Men (2010) and The Innocents (2016). She has worked with the finest French directors: Jean-Luc Godard, André Téchiné or Leos Carax, to name but a few and was the president of the French Society of Cinematographers (AFC) between 2009 and 2012.

I could see their happiness to meet a woman cinematographer from India. The sheer joy to see your tribe grow is unparalleled. It was a mutual feeling. We were joined by our love and passion for cinema and our gender. I felt a great sense of admiration for these brilliant cinematographers and I could see the sense of pride they felt towards me.

It was a very similar sentiment when a few of us women cinematographers joined hands with Fowzia Fathima who came up with the idea of starting a Facebook group for female cinematographers about two years ago. From merely a handful on the first few days of its conception, the numbers grew slowly and steadily. We are now more than 74 in number.


The force grew and a sense of exhilaration took us over.

As we shared experiences and understood viewpoints of women practicing cinematography across the country, we realized the need to create a platform for us to further develop our skills through interactions, one to one mentorships and sharing of experiences and to draw inspiration and strength from each other.

So was born IWCC (Indian Women Cinematographer's Collective) to celebrate and showcase the presence of women cinematographers in the country and to encourage students, emerging cinematographers, gaffers, grips joining the profession, and each other.

We need more initiatives like IWCC. We need more female cinematographers because they bring their unique style, sensibility and perspective to their work. All these years we have heard and seen films through the male perspective. The time has come to hear the other version of the same stories now. For the same reason we need more female writers, directors, editors and producers.

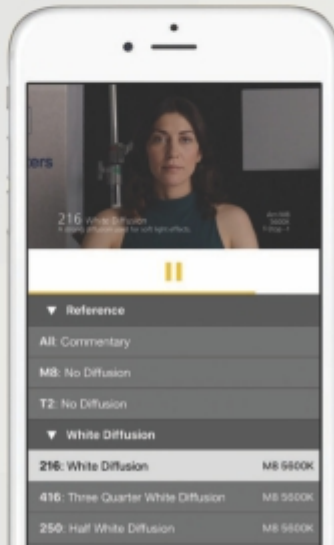
It's a glorious beginning towards a future of no myths, no stereotypes, no disparity and celebration of cinema that unites us all- men and women together. A future where the gender prefix will not be a part of my designation. In a world where I will be just a cinematographer (not a female cinematographer) on a set, doing my most favorite job of weaving a web of spell binding images through my camera. Because there is no greater feeling to have than to see the red dot blink on the camera display and to say, "Camera Rolling". It's magic; you want it to last forever.

To know more about IWCC, follow the Facebook page 'Friends of IWCC' and www.iwcc.in. 

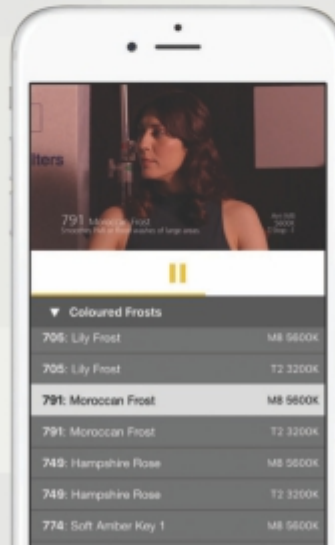


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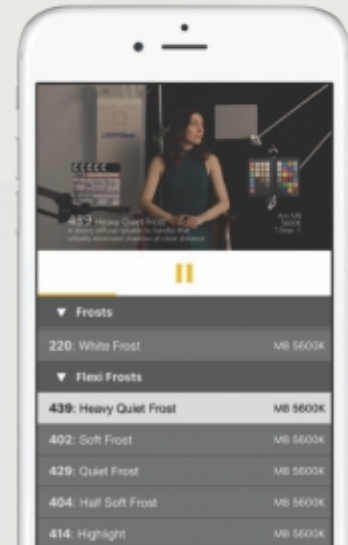
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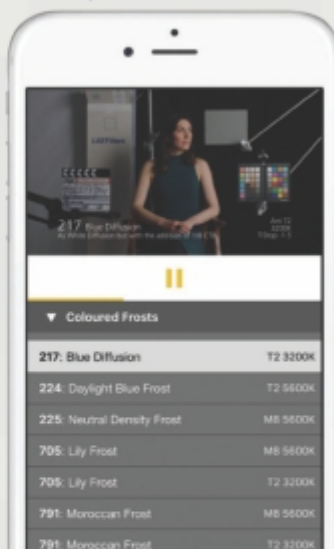
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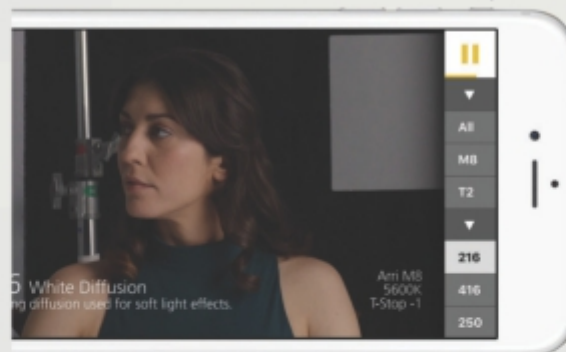
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CRI, *Unwrapped.*

A number of people ask me about the CRI (Colour Rendering Index) and Colour Temperature of LED lights. Interestingly, they never ask anything beyond that. They never ask why is the CRI only until 96% and why not 100%. What is really fascinating is that they never ask about the CRI of normal Tungsten or Metal Halide(HMI) lights? A CRI of over 90 does not assure that the light is natural enough. You might find it hard to believe that just by increasing the Red content in the spectrum you could achieve a CRI of 90-91. However, the level of Blue in the spectrum can be low. To understand this in detail, I would first like to explain CRI.

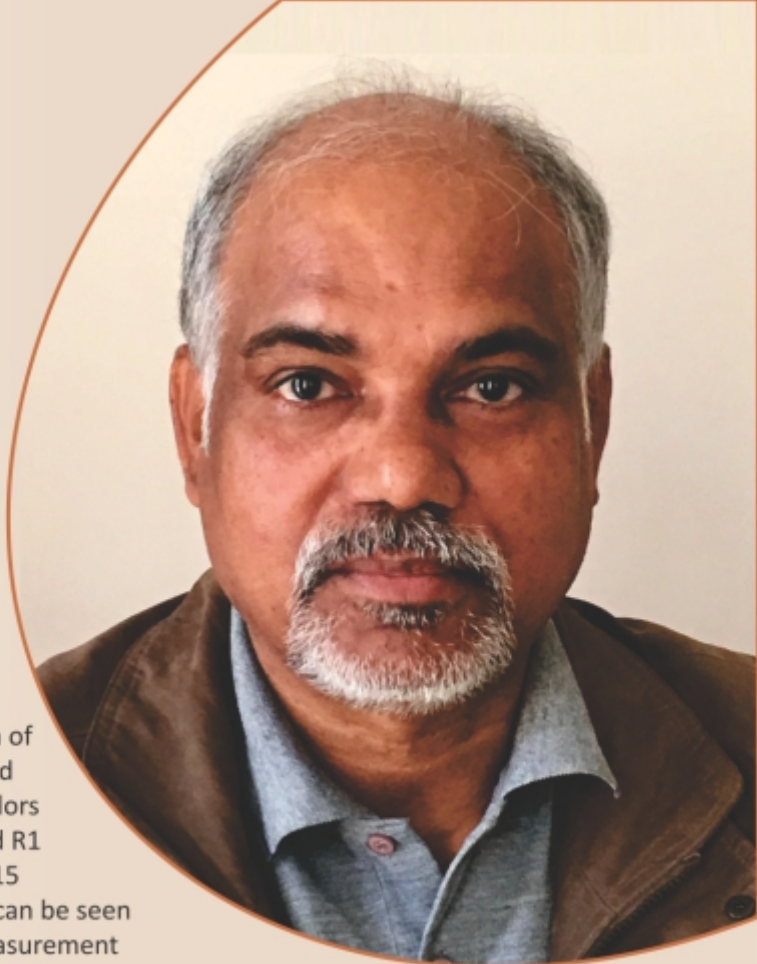
The CRI is the relative ability of a light source to replicate colors generated by a reference light source of the same color temperature. It is measured as a number between 0 and 100. This is often used to compare a light source ability to replicate the sun. In this case, the sun is the reference light source. In layman's terms, a CRI of 80 means that the LED light bulb is replicating 80% of the visible color spectrum that the sun would produce at the same color temperature. A CRI of 100%, taken at a color temperature of noonday sunlight will exactly reproduce the colors found on a sunny day at noon. A CRI of 50% taken at noonday sun will partially reproduce the colors

when compared to that of a normal noonday.

The light spectrum of an LED lamp is analysed onto eight different colors (or "R values"), termed R1 through R8. There are 15 measurements which can be seen below, but the CRI measurement only uses the first 8. The lamp receives a score from 0-100 for each color, based on how natural the color is rendered in comparison with how the color looks under a "perfect" or "reference" light source at the same color temperature as that lamp.

Now, if there are 15 measurements then why do we restrict ourselves only from R1 to R8. This is one of the main issues with CRI is that it averages 8 colors (which have a low to medium chromatic saturation) to obtain a ranking. This means that even if a lamp renders a few colors poorly, the CRI can still remain high, as long as those poorly rendered colors are not one of the 8 colors that are averaged. CRI averages a light's affect on those colors, which are equidistant around the Munsell color wheel and are very desaturated. The less saturated a color the broader its spectral response.

There is a new standard taking hold, Color Quality Scale(CQS), which shows a lot of promise. It uses



15 color samples and uses additional criteria to judge the quality of color. As a result a new measuring index was developed especially for Television known as Television Lighting Consistency Index (TLCI). The process to calculate the TLCI for a light is similar to that for CRI — a set of color samples is compared under a standardised light source and the light under test. However, rather than using a human observer, the TLCI uses software to calculate the color response that would result when using a video camera.

Feedback:

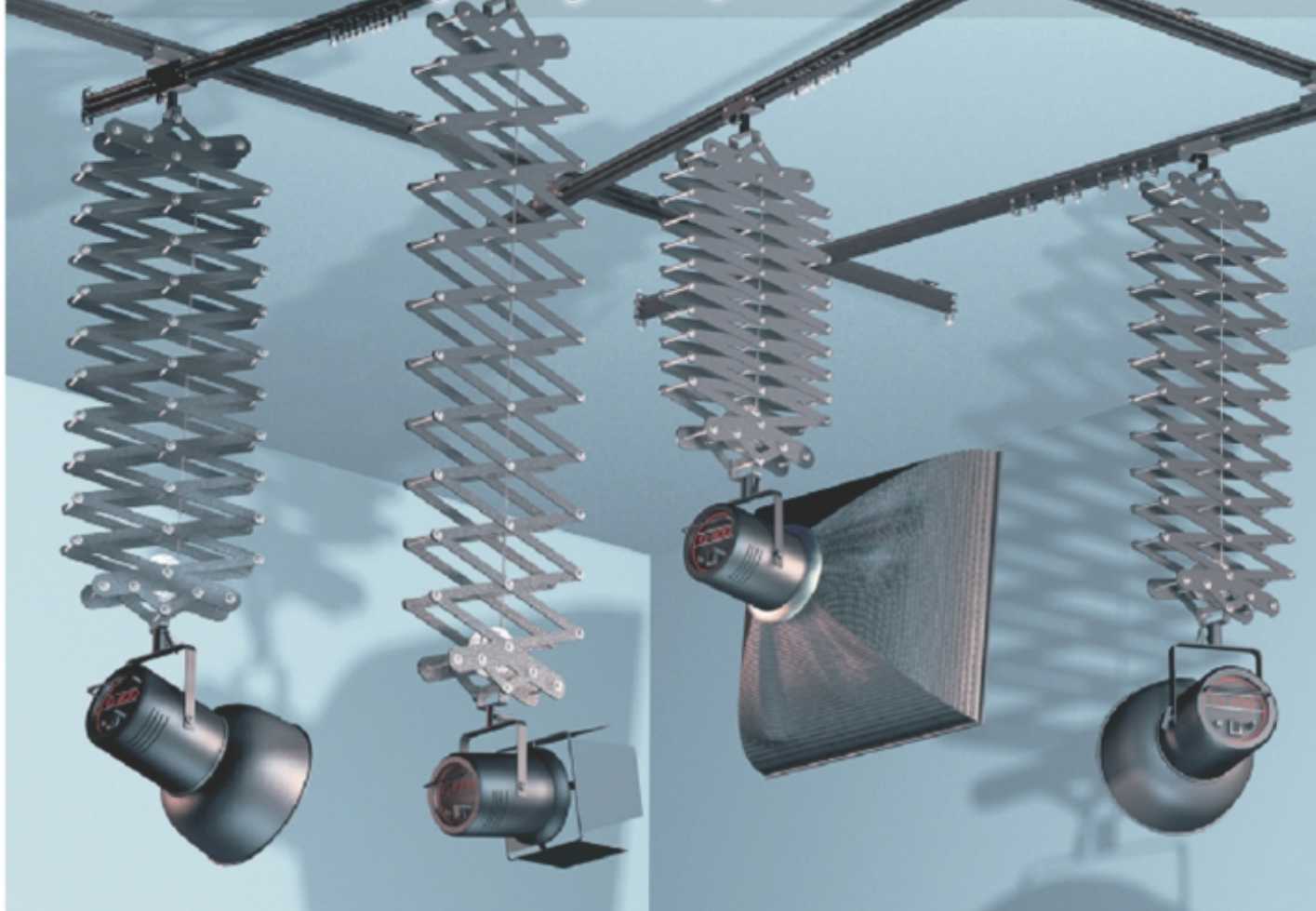
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Interview with DOP

Neha Parti Matiyani

It was her love for capturing images which compelled Neha Parti Matiyani to join FTII for a course on cinematography. Before becoming a full time DOP in 2010, she proved her mettle as an assistant cinematographer on big budget Bollywood films Anjaana Anjaani, My Name Is Khan, Ghajini, Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi, Firaaq, Saawariya, Fanaa.

In a career which began in 2004, Neha learned the basics of cinematography as an assistant to Ravi K Chandran.

Her talent as DOP reflects in films such as 'Badrinath Ki Dulhania', 'Waiting', 'Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania', 'Bewakoofiyaan', 'Yamla Pagla Deewana 2' and 'Mujhse Fraaandship Karoge'.

In this Interview with Naresh Sharma, She discusses her approach towards lighting in Badrinath Ki Dulhania.

You have worked with various directors. Once you listen to a screenplay, how do you go about choosing your lighting scheme?

Different directors have different approaches and that also affects my process and choices. I have worked with directors who had an absolutely ready visual scale, in which case I have a starting point from where I can start bringing my sensibility to the vision of the director. I have also worked with directors who like to either narrate or give me a script to read first and then hear how I see the story in terms of its visual design. Then we work on putting the things together. Hence, the process will differ depending on the director but what I usually do is that when we come to a consensus on how we want the film to look, there is a lot of visual referencing in terms of the colour palettes that we would like to use, the mood boards, the kind of light that we would like to use for different scenes. So there is no one process that I follow, it varies from film to film and story to story.

What is your primary approach towards lighting an interior space?

Well the approach to lighting any kind of space interior or exterior is the same, you observe life and the light and try to recreate as best possible given the

scenario and limitations you are presented with on the day of the shoot. There is no better teacher than observing real life around oneself and using your skill to add drama to it. Most often I go with my gut feeling and so far it has served me well.

What are your expectations from the production designer to contribute to your vision?

Art director and costume designer are both very important because what I see and recreate to a great extent depends on how good they are at their jobs. I like to involve myself in the production design and costumes of all my films. There is always a lot of back and forth going on between the



costumes design and the production design and I have realized the best way to collaborate is to always have an open mind to the ideas put forth by everyone. At the end of the day everyone needs to be on the same page and share a common vision to shape the film into its best possible version.

Coming to the film "Badrinath ki Dulhania", there is a song in the marriage. For a situation like it, what

was your thought process to light it up?

The song in question was the first interaction between the lead pair of Varun and Alia, it was also setting up the overall look in terms of colours for the first half of the film. Our intention was to project the vibrancy of north India and have our lead characters stand out against this backdrop.

There are particular sequences in





this film such as his brother is drinking alone in the night on the rooftop and Varun Dhawan joins him, I noticed a few round decoration bulbs in the backdrop. Were they already there or was it you who planted them for the shoot?

No. They were not there. I asked the production designer to give them so that there is some sort of definition. Actually, the terrace was a complicated setup to light because it was a very narrow. A lot of my lighting was coming from other vantage points. The lights in the background were added to give sense of depth and add a third dimension to the frame.

I observed that there was also similar kind of lights when the father and daughter were talking. Rather than going for a moon light situation, you opted for the practical kind of source?

Yeah, that decision was taken because the first half of the film is shot in India and we wanted to go for a warm palette for the India portion of the story.

The second half takes place in Singapore where we wanted to capture and highlight the neon lights and the skylights of the mega polis of Singapore.

There was an episode near the seashore where the camera goes in the water and water splashes on the camera. What kind of precautionary measures you had taken while filming that scene?

It was basically in a fish tank which was made to size for the camera. We

had rods to hold up the fish tank and the tank was covered from the top. The reason why we chose to do this instead of shooting with underwater equipment was that we only wanted to stay with the person on top saying the lines and yet we wanted the feel of being in the water with them.

There is "Tamma Tamma" song in a disco. What was the plan that your disco lighting should look different from others Bollywood films?

There are many disco songs and almost every film has one. There were two things, which made a difference. Firstly, I decided to not light up the actors with the agenda of highlighting them, instead we lit up the patches of the dancing areas and let Alia and Varun go in out of these light pools in a way that was organic to a disco situation in real life. The actors picked up instantly and enjoyed themselves to the fullest as they didn't have to worry about hitting lighting marks and could freely concentrate on the energy of the song.



Secondly, I consciously kept Varun and Alia in the middle crowd rather than in front of the dancers to make the entire song more inclusive and real.

Do you remember any specific part in this film which you felt was challenging to shoot in terms of lighting or shot taking or anything else?

In terms of lighting there was a scene on the rooftop after “Tamma Tamma” song. It seems like any of the rooftop but it's the helipad of a hotel so lighting from any other vantage point was not possible, nor were we able to light up the actors from outside of the helipad. We were on one flat ground and it was a very crucial scene because the whole film comes together in that scene. It was the resolution of the film and the relationship of both characters pivots in this scene. Keeping safety in mind it was a slow process of carefully rigging lights on the very floor that the actors and we were standing on. We used boom rods and rigging arms to get the mood I was looking for.

Nowadays, we have moved from halogen and HMI lights to primarily LED lights. Sometimes one doesn't get that throw which is to be found in the HMI for long distance lighting. How do you handle these kinds of situations?

I still like HMI lights for certain things. For example: sun patches. At the moment, everything is not possible with the LED lights. I did replace LED lights for a lot of tungsten lights for interior locations.

Lenses are considered very important because they capture the image first before the camera does the processing. What was your first priority regarding the lenses in this film. Why?

I shot this film with Zeiss master anamorphic lenses. I like horizontal scale in anamorphic, even if am composing a close up it allows me to show much more of the milieu that the actor is placed in. I also like the Bokeh effect which we get with the anamorphic lenses. Also I think that anamorphic makes things more dramatic and larger than life.

How much of CG was used in this movie?

There is not much CG in this film besides a few PIPs in laptops and set extensions for one song.

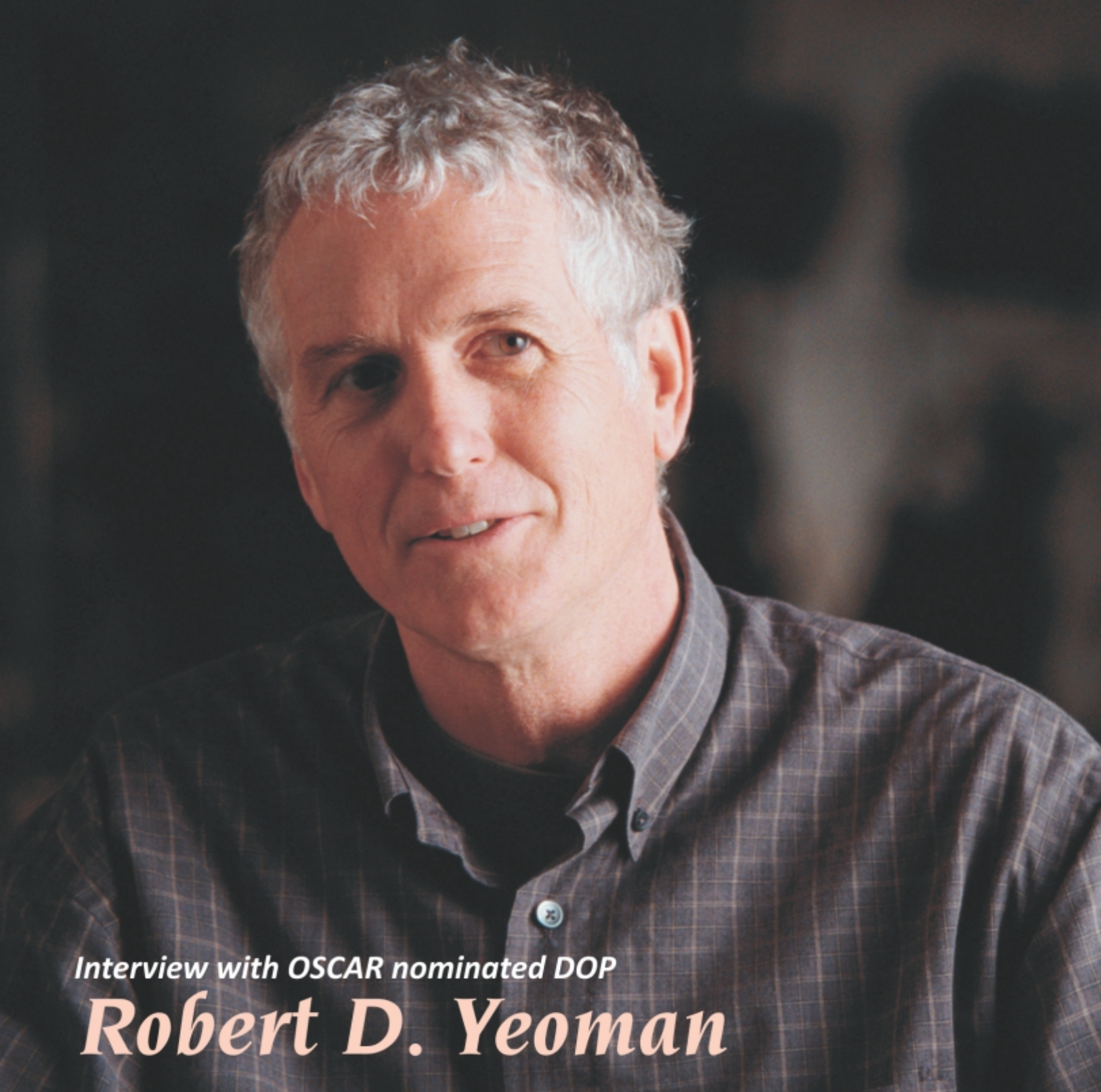
DI is now an essential part of every cinematographer's repertoire. How do you collaborate with the DI artist?

SO most films are shot over a few months and never in chronological order, as a cinematographer one always tries to maintain notes about light, colour and spatial continuity. What DI does is that it helps further smoothen out any wrinkles in this attempt. Nowadays the audience is so visually aware that it is up to the cinematographer and his team to keep up with the growing demands of giving each film a unique look that works for it's style of story telling. The DI artist is an integral part of my team and contributes greatly to translate what I shoot into the final version that the audience experiences. The way I like to



function is to have the Di artist take a first crack at the footage as they always have a fresh perspective towards the footage and then I step in and tweak things to my liking. The advantage I feel of this is that every once so often a capable Di artist will surprise you with something interesting. In this film I have had a great partnership with Tushar Desai, he understood the requirements of this film and the two diverse spaces it was shot in and was a great technician to work with. □□□





Interview with OSCAR nominated DOP

Robert D. Yeoman

While accepting any film what are your expectations from its director for that film to be visually great?

We don't really talk about camera angles, etc. in the beginning. We just talk about the script and the story and he tells me his ideas and what his feelings are about his scenes. Then we go through his breakdown of the script, scene by scene and we discuss each scene so that I can properly understand

the emotions that he is going for.

Once we have gone through the script, we go to the locations, as many as we can and we discuss and spend some time there. At times the production designer also comes with us and we just talk about what we find interesting about the locations. Sometimes I tell the production designer that I would like to have a window for the character rather than the flat wall. We discuss things like,

maybe we could stage it this way or stage it that way and then we start talking about camera angles and how we really want to shoot it. We discuss whether we want a static camera, a moving one, a dolly move, steady camera move or a crane move. Once we have found the locations that really enable me to visualize we often go back and make story boards so that the crew can anticipate how to shoot the scene. After a while we just put out all the

storyboards up on the wall and see how the whole movie is going to look visually. Later we bring the actors to block the movements and sometimes while blocking certain things that we did not anticipate come out. So, we have to make a kind of adjustment. Sometimes directors have very strong opinion, "No I really want it this way". So, my job is to try to accommodate the director's vision to visually represent the scene we are shooting.

How important is the Art Direction for you and what are your expectations from the Production Designer?

The Production Designer is very important. It's very important to discuss colour with the Production Designer. Sometimes a cinematographer wants the walls to be a little bit darker. For instance, I don't like walking in a white room, I like it light grey. Sometimes the lightning is kind of built in the set. Whether there are practical lamps on tables or if there is a window there and we can bring the light in from the window or skylights. I think it is very important for the Production Designer to be involved because this comes together in an architectural space. I spend a little time with the art department. For some movies we do a lot of testing with different colours as well, and see how they are going to be represented with human skin tones.

Sets are relatively easier to light up as they are designed with your approval but how do you go about lighting up a location?

On the location I try to perceive what is naturally there and if it's possible to adjust a little bit. Say if there is a window, I might light from outside that window. I try to respect the architecture and its space within so that it's not filled with a lot of equipments and I want the director and the actors to have a lot of space to move around without being restricted by film gear. I am always looking for ways of lighting that do not restrict anybody. Though sometimes we are put in a situation where we have to but my goal is always to keep my gear as much away as possible.

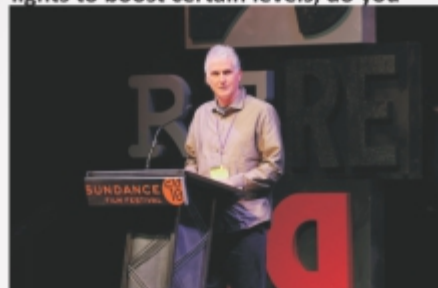
A lot has to do with the choice of the location. Very often in a movie we will have scenes in a house. We see 3 to 5 houses and we choose the one that is

best for the film. Typically I like a bigger room than a smaller room because you can always take up a big room and work in a certain part and make it look small but you just can't take up a smaller room and make it look big. After we have seen all the locations with the director, the production designer and I sit and talk about our choices and then we choose the best.

Most of your films are shot on film format so, do you depend on your eyes or the exposure meter?

Well I mainly depend on my eyes and I take an exposure reading in certain areas just to see what the exposure is, particularly at night. I have been shooting long enough and kind of depend on my experience and my eyes.

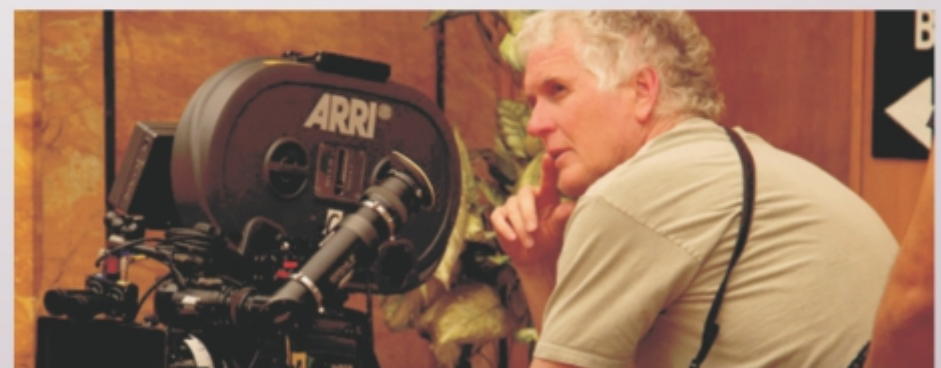
Given a location which has a huge interior for example a huge hall where there is less possibility of hiding your lights to boost certain levels, do you



still prefer to figure out how to hide your lights or do you prefer to go for a higher ASA and shoot?

Ans. I remember we were shooting for 'The Grand Budapest Hotel' and we had sky lights in some of the occasions. We were shooting in Germany in the winters where it's very dark so we put up a giant cloth and bounced a lot of HMI light into it and kind of recreated a natural look.

If I am in a situation where I need to



Important Films of Robert D. Yeoman as DOP



bring the big lights in, I will talk to the director and say, 'I need to do this. Is there a place where we could put these lights so that it won't be in your way?' Usually he accommodates and suggests a place so that we can put our lights there. It's kind of a negotiation with the director as in where I can put the gear so that it won't come in the way of shooting.

Today all these traditional lights like HMI, etc. are been taken over by the LED lights. Do you have some specific preferences for these soft lights which are available in the market?

I use a lot of kino flow, particularly over the camera. Say if I am lighting through the window for side lighting for



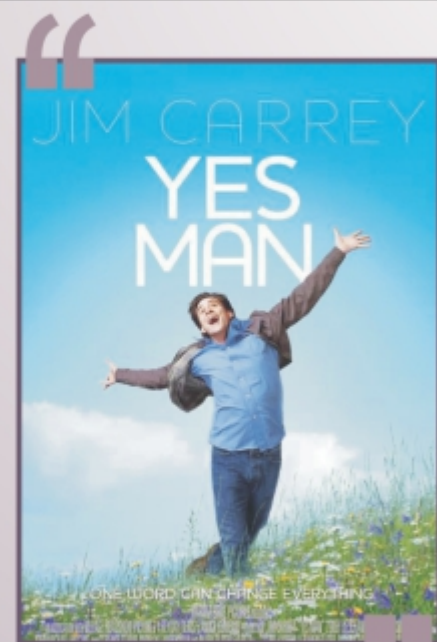
the actor and if I feel like it needed some fill I would put a kenoflow over the camera and that would give enough fill light because you can control the amount of light by the tube lights that you can turn on and off.

They are very useful inside the car, at night or in a very tight space. You can just tape them to a wall and you don't have to have a big light there anymore. Technology keeps getting better and better, with LED though they don't have the punch like the bigger HMI lights. For day light source HMI is used much more.

When you are working with diffused lights there is a variety of diffusion material by LEE ROSCO. Which is your favorite diffusion material?

I always try to carry Opal which is pretty light, then 250 which is a bit heavy, then 216 which is a little bit heavier than 215 and then usually grid cloth which is very heavy. If you really want a shadow less light I would bounce a big light onto something white and use grid cloth in front of that so it will be

Important Films of Robert D. Yeoman as DOP



very soft and very shadow less light .If you still need even more punch you can use 216 or 250 or even opal.

Though you have a lot of experience yet over the years you might have faced certain situations where you were stuck or you didn't know what to do. Can you elaborate two or three challenging situations and how did you sort them out?

Well when I worked with Wes Anderson often times he used to describe a shot to me and I used to think it's impossible but we always seemed to figure out a way and found the place just out of the frame behind which we could hide the lights. If I am in a situation where I feel it's going to be impossible, in those situations I light the deep backgrounds separately and then we will just give fill light from the camera axis say by China ball.

Now where ever the camera goes the China ball just goes with it and you can film the actors beautifully with a very soft light and the background is already lit so you don't have to worry about them.

You just have to concentrate on the actors and when the camera moves we have the gaffer standing with a pole and China ball and he will move with the camera and he can use the dimmer if less light or more light is needed. This often happens in the moving shots.

There are films in which a lot of special effects are involved. What kind of understanding do you have with the special effects team, and what kind of

input do you ask from them?

Using special effects in the movies is becoming more and more popular. So, we have to spend a lot of time with them and in America they sometimes do what they call, 'Previg'. It's like a rough cartoon of what the scene will be and then we can kind of break down what is going to be green screen and what they are going to do CG.

We have a lot of meetings over these things and we discuss it quite thoroughly and I ask them what they need from me in order to do their work in post production. It is a very close collaboration between the DOP and the visual effects people and they are usually very respectful for what the story is and what the director is trying to do and they try to make it happen. But there are certain restrictions too we would not ordinary have, for example you cannot move the camera but it would make their work so much easier.

Now films are shot digitally so what kind of safety precautions do you take so that the footage does not get lost?

Well they make three or four backups before it even leaves the set. The studio gets one, the editor gets one and then they have one in the vault or in the lab. We wait until the editor calls us and tells us that they have the backup and have no problem. That's when we erase the cards.

As an audience the face is what we scan on the screen at all times so, are they any instructions that you give to



the makeup team regarding the normal day to day shoots?

I let them do it because they know it better than me. But I like to get as many actors together as I can because they have different makeup artists and you need to shoot test before you start the film to make sure we have no problem later. This is because someone may photograph very pink and if you correct for him every one else will look green. In today's world with digital intermediate and post production you can go in and fix somebody's problem that we couldn't do before and we are often called upon to fix certain makeup issues. If someone has a period makeup we make them look old, you can fix it digitally and you can soften the edges a little bit.

You have also worked with the Indian setup where there is a lot of hard light outside how did you deal with that?

We were shooting in Rajasthan in the winter and the sun is usually lower in winters than in summers and we shot from December to February. We certainly did not have too much problem with it and certainly the director Wes Anderson was very helpful in terms of shooting. We shot one way in the morning and we shot another way in the afternoon and so he was able to schedule the things as we were shooting in the right direction at the right time which is kind of the secret for shooting in the exteriors.

For me it's always the sun as either the back lighting or the side lighting to the actors and not the front lighting so that's pretty much how we tried to shoot the film.

Which format do you prefer to record your shooting Files in Digital set up?

I prefer to shoot in Raw because it gives the most information. It's like creating a digital negative. You have more information when you shoot Raw so you would have more to play with later. For example, if there is an extreme contrast like a very hard highlight and shadow details in very dark area and if you shoot in Raw, you will have that information but if you don't then you may not have that information to

manipulate later in the post production.

We are moving towards the 6k and 8k and it is a myth at least in India to shoot in high resolution like 6k/8k and then 'down sample' it. Do you think it helps or it's just a waste of time during rendering or transferring data?

My experience is that it doesn't help. I have shot on the Alexa which is like the 3.4k. Many times the visual effects people are hoping that we would shoot at a high resolution camera. I always ask the visual effects people if they have any problems with the footage and they always say that it's fine. So, I know many times the movies are finished only in 2k.

What is the advantage of shooting in 4k when most of the time it's projected in 2k?

I don't know the answer to that. I don't think there really is much difference, like I did a test last year with Sony F65 camera and then the new Alexa 6k camera and then the regular Alexa and we projected it in the 4k projector. We could see the difference in the camera. As you said most projection is 2k so at 2k it wasn't relevant but in 4k projector you can definitely see the difference. At a certain point I just wondered as you get higher and higher resolution you start to see every pore on the actors face and every detail. Maybe we don't need that but it seems like people get hung up on this and to me it doesn't seem it's that important.

Anything specific you want to say about your work which I may not have asked?

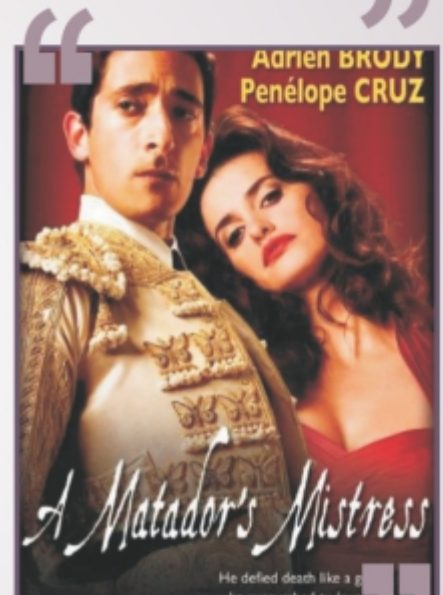
I just try to get into the head of the director whom I work with and everyone is different and has a different outlook.

I try to understand what that Director is going for, I try to take what I can do and give them the movie that they are looking to make and I think it's important not to impose my work on somebody else's movie. I obviously have my opinion and I have my style of lighting but it's really a director's movie, it's not mine to do it.

- Interviewed by Naresh Sharma,
Editor, CINEMATOGRAPHY ART .



Important Films of Robert D. Yeoman as DOP





Exclusive Interview with DOP *Arvind K.*

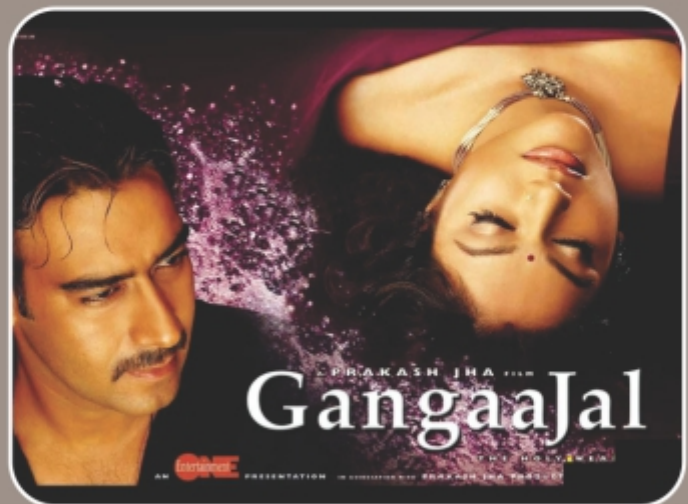
DOP Arvind K. graduated from film and television institute of India, Pune in 1994. He has an impressive track record of 16 films to his credit. His work experience encompasses films belonging to all kinds of genres namely short films, short video films and feature films. As a cinematographer, Arvind gained valuable on floor experience working with noted cinematographer Rajan Kothari on films namely Godmother and Mrityudand. As a cinematographer, Arvind's thoughts in lighting compositions are as profound yet as simple as "Zen". DOP Arvind's best work is seen on films which he shot for director Prakash Jha whom he acknowledges as a complete filmmaker. He has scored a hat trick of sorts by filming three films directed by Prakash Jha namely Rahul, Gangaajal and Aphan. These films are fine examples of his realistic lighting style. In this interview Film critics **Lalit Rao** (FIPRESCI) discusses his approach and vision about Lighting .

How has your lighting style evolved over the years?

For last few years ,a process of change is going on into my mind. I feel like to add few more dimensions to lighting, framing and

camera movements. Till now my inspiration was the nature. Natural light contains so much of variety that you can choose the kind that will best suit to your scene and enhance the emotion of the scene. Coincidentally, most of the movies I

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have shot belonged to that genre. They needed that kind of lighting treatment. It was quiet gelling with my thoughts and liking. As in any art from you grow every day with every piece of work you do, with so much of experience as a DOP, I have learned and explored a lot with this visual language, now I feel a strong urge to add few more layers to every frame, every shot without diluting and distorting the emotions. I am still into the process, and don't know how if I am going to achieve this, but the first step "thinking" is on.

This is a digital age, everyone is moving around with a camera in his hands (now you choose cell phones by the specifications of camera), visual language is gaining more prominence in every field of life. Now we communicate more with photographs than words. We keep ourselves updated on Facebook by posting latest pictures and also through other online applications. Thus, I have the perception that we are becoming more of a visual based culture. A picture says thousands words, we have started communicating words without using words

In earlier days of 18 century the moving shadow patters were enough to entertain the people, then came the black and white images, after that sound was added to enhance the experience. Now we are exploring 8k, 4k, UHD formats after a huge growth of color films as a medium. In short growth of cinema was always connected to the development of technology. Just like as our life style or anything else. Most of the times technology affect or change anything for economical reasons or comfort. With cinema or any other form of art technology have a two way link. Technology is explored to invent new ways of expressions and for marketing advantages. We have very few basic emotions, to play with, so help of technology becomes important to express those emotions creatively different every time.

What I want to say, with technology the way we tell our stories keep changing. Now our visuals must be more powerful, much more meaningful than what most of people had been experiencing till now through cinema, television or with their cameras (smart



phones) . Now people are more experienced in reading visuals. This is not limited to paintings and sculpture admirers. So we can take a chance to add more elements into a frame or shot, and can make the audience experience more than one emotion at one time.

You just said that earlier lighting

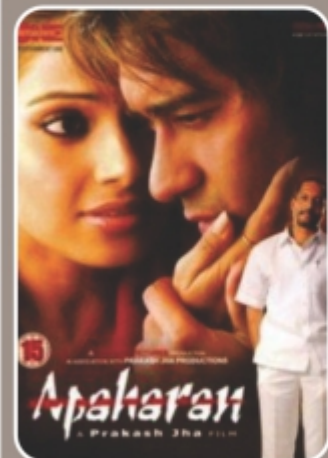
was more realistic. How different is lighting now compared to what it was earlier?

I have started thinking more like a music composer. A piece of music is consist of many tracks. Each one creating or adding some feeling or layers of emotions. The realistic approach is quiet easy. I just had to know the scene,

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Important Film of Arvind Kumar as DOP

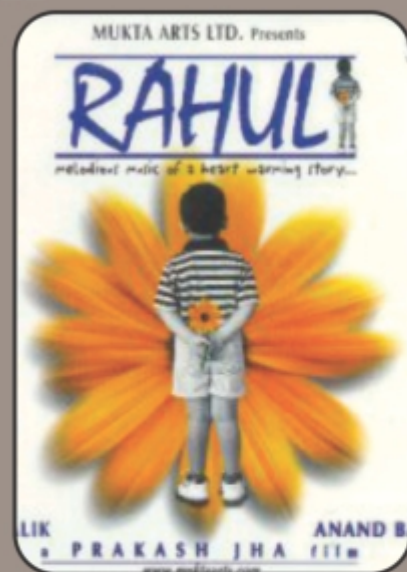


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Important Film of Arvind Kumar as DOP

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its mood and location. Approach was to visualize the location for, what kind of lighting could that location have naturally without resorting to lighting. Films like “Gangajal” and “Apaharan”, have a documentary style of presentation. In both films, one feels that most of the times there is no lighting but in actual, they were all lit artificially. If you recollect the cell sequences in “Apaharan” where Ajay Devgan and Yashpal Sharma stay, There are many extreme wide shots and many long single moving shots. Some including both areas of outside and inside the cell. The cell is decorated like a living room for them as they are powerful dons with strong political backings. Such locations become a challenge for realistic approach.

I think the main difference between both the approaches is the addition of more feeling and beauty then just telling the story or emotion of that particular scene, letting the shots stand out sometime more than for what it is there.

Could you elaborate your thoughts on what is “styling” in lighting with any examples which you have done in the past?

For me style comes intuitively, I read the script let it get processed for few days into my mind. I have tried to break the visual consistency within the film and sometimes within the scene. In few films I have played with a change of contrast, taking it towards more darker zone with progression of the story. Apaharan is one example for this. In Dil Dosti Etc, camera movements become less and less with lights going towards brighter side, as characters grow with their experiences. in Sunita Rao's music video “Abke Baras”, I was facing a challenge as there were lot of dancers. They were all in the same kind of costumes, doing the same steps. There was no contrast into their dresses or positioning. She was getting merged with other dancers. It was becoming very difficult to separate her at times. Luckily, we had mirrors. We used them to reflect sunlight so as to use it as a back light. When the album was released people took it as a style.

Apart from this example, do you remember any other instance which was bit stylized in terms of lighting not following the natural style but at the same time it was something one could

explain logically?

Recently, I shot a film called “Dhoom Dhadaka” which had an item song. Due to our budget constraints, we used a stage which was meant for some event. Set already had some lighting mostly as background and back light. Just as a trial we used one big point source of light with a black paper with random holes in it. Director liked the patterns falling on actress face and body. Finally we shot the song with this random patchy lights only keeping the rest of the set in darker side. I think it worked because it was not done with regular kind of key fill and back lighting.

I remember watching the film “Dil Dosti Etc” which has three love making scenes lit up differently. Could you elaborate on the aesthetic part of lighting of those scenes?

In “Dil Dostic Etc”, Imaaduddin Shah makes love to three girls at three stages in the film. First love making scene is with a prostitute, second scene is with his girlfriend and third scene features his friend's girlfriend. All love making scenes may look same, if we don't underline the differences. There is a class difference between these three girls. The first girl is a prostitute and in any society I think visiting to a prostitute is not accepted openly. Nobody likes to



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tell his friends or family members that he is going to a prostitute. Basically, it is a activity of darkness. The sequence was filmed in a very dark lighting with lots of contrast which looks natural also as such spots have this kind of light only. The second scene is with his girlfriend at her home. He is her tuition teacher. One day her mother is not at home, they make love. In the first scene there was no romance. It was merely the case of physical needs only but the 2nd relation is romantic. This scene happens into her bedroom which was lit very romantically with warm lighting Reflecting their mood. In the first love making scene, actress Smriti Mishra plays the role of a prostitute and she is confused about her relation to this boy. The low key lighting reflects her mood. Here this girl is just enjoying the act. Though it is a day scene but we decided to use table lamp to use as the main source of light to add the warmth and romance.

We tried to show more of her beauty. We created this difference with camera angle and choice of lenses. In the third scene, the girl belongs to high society where goals in life may be very high as she wants to be a model and such act may not affect life much. She is using this as a mean to get relax from all that tension she is going through with her boyfriend. You just don't care much

about such interaction. One can do it openly too in that society. Even parents know with whom their children are going. Hence the love making scene was shot with an open window. These three different kinds of lighting approach was adopted to reflect their social backgrounds as well as their mental status at point of time.

Could you also talk about few situations in lighting where you had to innovate few things to do justice?

Sometimes we face challenges because of resources, location, timings and if your luck is not in your favor, you get all of them together! I remember, I was shooting one corporate film with Kavita Choudhry. This was about the life sketch of Baba Ramdev. Kavita wanted a shot of Baba Ramdev and Acharya in which they are sitting and camera is moving around them on a circular track. We were shooting on real location where it was not possible to put lights. Finally, we decided to do a simple key, fill and back light setup, keeping all three lights on camera trolley.

Camera, me, focus puller and one light man and three lights, two on boom rods one on stand all this was on the trolley. Director and other people moving behind the camera while camera was moving. To give it a more natural feel we rotated the platform in reverse direction on which Baba Ramdev and Acharya Ji were sitting. It was difficult but exciting.

Today, camera and film are digital medium, even the director can decide whether the shadow details are enough or not rather than letting the cinematographer do it. Do you think the value of a DOP has diminished?

I think the value is at the same place because it is not just ratio of key fill or framing or proper camera operation. I think on the set DOP is executing the director's vision. At the same time, he is adding dimensions from his side to enhance it. If the DOP and the director are on the same wavelength, I don't think there is a possibility for a conflict but sometime we do get into a kind of argument on things like brightness or contrast or framing but that is the part of the process. I think if



a director feels or want certain kind of lighting or framing in certain way then there must be some logic or reason behind it, he should convince it. As a DOP or as an artist, we should try and understand it. I think that should be the process. It is not like diluting the value. Sometimes even a DOP too talks about the performance of the actor or the positioning of the actor. Hence, it is a two way process. When a DOP suggests something to the director about the cuts or lensing, he is not diluting the director's role.

Do you remember any instances where the set was not up to the mark and as a result you had to leave it to correct them in post production or try to hide them by lighting.

With DI you have lots of possibilities, correction on set or adding and removing something from set is very easy and common now. It is a time taking process and sometime more costly than doing it on set.

In "Ata Pata Laapta", Director/Actor Rajpal Yadav wanted to have a song reflecting corrupt practices of different government bodies and political leaders. Song was there, performance was there but we were not able to think how to present it. Finally we took the help of digital technology to create set. In the

same movie, we have used one miniature set But most of the work was done in DI. Miniature worked as a prototype only.

Coming back to digital hard disk recording, what precautionary measures do you take to ensure that the footage should be OK and nothing should go wrong?

I like to capture the maximum possible details on set, i try to treat signal very carefully monitoring it through histogram, falls, colors and whatever other signal monitoring method is available.

We play all ok shots to make sure that file is recorded well. When we are convinced that we got the shot without any problem, we took at least three backups on the same day. We check the backup also that if files are not corrupted during the transfer for simple reason if even a single file get corrupted, we are still on the location, we have a chance of re shoot. We have a data manager on set who does this in the supervision of assistant director and production assistant.

Apart from the TV serial, you have worked on three films directed by Prakash Jha as a DOP. Could you give us

some insight about his way of working as he is also a trained DOP?

Damul was the first film which made a strong impression on me. It had a very low key kind of lighting. I got introduced to Prakash Jha while working on "Mrityudand" with Rajan Kothari. I think Prakash Jha is a complete film maker. "Damul" was shot with very limited resources, the full film is having moving camera.

The movement goes so well with the scene and the mood. I think that during those days it was very rare in India to design those kind of shot taking. We shared a well tuned rapport on sets. We needed only few words to communicate what we or I wanted. I used to light up the whole scene instead of a shot. He likes to move the camera freely.

I never had any conflict on lighting or about the shot taking or lensing. Basically there was situation when we knew without asking if the shot was ok. I think that comes with experience.

Somewhere, he found my style of lighting suitable for his films which had a realistic look. He was impressed with my planning for lighting as it saved lot of time in order to complete his film on time with big stars like Ajay Devgan and Madhuri Dixit.

Do you recollect any particular episode from a film, where you have to be more innovative due to budget constraints?

During the shoot of "Jo Dooba So Paar" Directed by Praveen Kumar, he was worried about the placing the camera inside the truck. Before going on the floor we had many discussions about this. How will we take close ups and point of view shots. He had already decided that he would cut the back of the truck to keep the camera. When I was on the location for the shoot, I told him that we will not cut it in advance. We will do so only if at any point of time during the shoot we feel that we can't shoot without cutting it. In fact, we never felt the need to cut the truck for the camera. This limited space forced us to think in more creative way, resulting in beautiful and natural shots.



Is the digital technology more perfect for a cinematographer?

If we think about celluloid, 30-40 years back it was not as beautiful and perfect as it was for last twenty years. It became more fine with the development of chemical technology and science. It took time to reach to this level of perfect Quality.

In the Same way, digital too will grow and evolve with time. Digital is more suitable for creativity because it has vast range of variables with which we can play. Earlier all we could do is that flash the negative, change the standard processing and get the look in grading. All of these technique affect the whole frame evenly. But with digital you can work within the frame also.

According to you, what is "challenging " for a cinematographer?

I think to me and most of cinematographers what challenging is to light the shot which may be very simple but needs to bring out the inner feelings of the character in the scene.

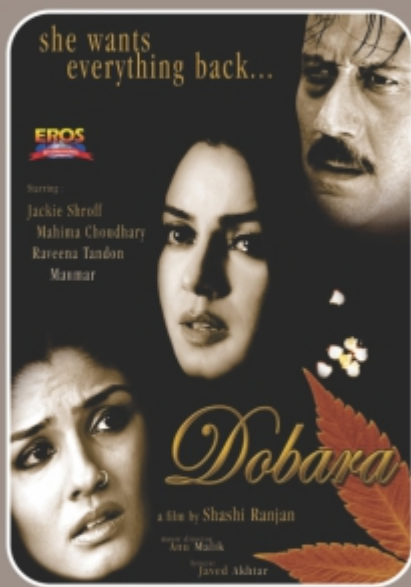
One needs to think about what is happening before and after the shot. Whenever I think about lighting it is not just that particular shot, I need to consider the whole psychology of the character, the situation on that point of time. Challenge doesn't mean complicated shot, complicated lighting, difficult location for the lighting or some constraints.

Feedback:

E-mail: dop.arvindk@gmail.com



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Interview with **Jeetu Chawla** Founder Magicam Cinetools

You are authorized dealer of many cinematography equipments in India where the taxation is high and gray market is flourishing. What is the future in the business for those who want to continue it in legitimate manner ?

For authorized dealers of any equipment company there are plenty of taxation policies one needs to follow but unfortunately in Mumbai we also have Octroi. Most of the other cities in our country don't have Octroi. Hence, people over there can have the benefit of not having to pay 5.5% but as a reseller we eventually have to charge VAT to our customers. This is where the biggest problem lies. Our customers are renting out equipment to our clients and in their invoices they are also charging service tax which is not the same as VAT. Hence the customer cannot set off service tax against the VAT paid for the

equipment. If the GST is applied he can get set service tax off against the VAT which has been charged. The government will get their tax provided it's single taxation. We have been advising our buyers that is better to do a legal deal with the duty paid invoice so that they can get their equipment insured and the warranty with the company stays. We also get feedback from our customers that the Indian insurance companies are not as mature as their counterparts abroad because they probably still don't understand these cameras. Insurance companies are very happy to insure a vehicle which is going on the road which is more prone to daily accidents compared to a camera which is not at all prone to any daily accident. It is just a fact that they have never made the initiative. They still don't have very good policies covering such cameras which are rented on a daily

basis but most of our customers keep telling us that they don't want the insurance as they never received any benefit from it when they insured in the past. This is the sector which has a lot to improve because the kind of the equipment we have right now costs millions of rupees and insurance is critical if you pay the duty and get the equipment in a legitimate manner .

How much total percentage of the actual price from the company the Indian buyer has to pay based on taxation ?

In all duty, VAT and Octroi is around 55% in Bombay, in Delhi it will be less by 5.5% over and above manufacturers cost.

What should we hope from the government so that taxpaying companies like yours can grow ?

I think the government should identify the products which are not manufactured in India especially high end camera equipment and lenses. It is then the taxation would come down on us. There can be heavy Duty taxation on those products which are manufactured in India in order to discourage import. In any manner, entertainment industry is paying 2 various taxes. If the equipment is not taxed heavily then I think that the number of equipment companies will increase and equipments needed by filmmakers would be available. As of now, we don't have top of the line, cutting-edge, state of art equipment in India. If we come under GST there will be one point taxation and users will be happy. It will also encourage users to buy legitimately but not from the grey market. The government should also encourage insurance companies to start supporting these new markets. The government should also recognize that the kind of equipment used now quickly runs out of the shelf life. In the past, equipments would become obsolete in 5 years of time but now the shelf life of these products is barely one or two years. One will not be able to find a



camera which will be preferred by the camera man after 2 years of its launch date because there is a new model over there with additional advanced features and the camera man has all the rights to use the new camera. However, if my customers namely equipment rental

houses, have not able to recoup the investment they will not be able to buy a new camera. Hence, people should be allowed 50% depreciation on such equipments in the first year rather than the existing 15%. I can't even recoup my investment in the next 6 years and my camera is absolute in just two years ! It reflects heavily on our films' content. The movies shot by us cannot match up the Hollywood movies because we don't use the same technology. I think education and vocational guidance also need a huge revamp in India. If you still get a job in the media industry it's not looked up as the best job ever. The government should start specialization courses revolving around media and entertainment and add a little more credibility.

After sales services for any kind of camera is very important. Why do you think companies like BLACK MAGIC have not set up their service centers in India ?

Taxation plays a huge role here. A lot of major companies have tried to set up over here. Heavy taxation on spare parts is something which discourages them from establishing a service center. If you are setting up a service center it means that a lot of spare parts would have to be stocked. It wouldn't make much sense if these spare parts are stored and heavy duty is paid for one year after which one realizes that they





are no longer needed. These spare parts would remain unused despite heavy custom duties being paid on them. To encourage companies to set up their service centers, spare part should not be taxed heavily. The equipment/machinery required by the service center to repair something should also not be taxed heavily as these machines are not manufactured in India and one is compelled to import from abroad. Hence don't tax such equipment heavily. If India has service repair centers, government will make more money from services tax rather than from one time heavy import duty of 30%. One also loses on the credibility that India cannot match up to an international service center.

Do you think Indian banks support via loan to such camera-light equipment companies ?

To setup a good camera equipment rental company, banks should provide loans at competitive rates. As an individual I did speak with Kotak, HDFC as well but HDFC did show a lot of interest but they are offering products called unsecured loans. For a secured loan they would charge around 10 to 12% but unsecured loan they charge 18% at least, which discourages any borrower. Any international crew that comes to India to shoot will not rent locally. They may bring all technical equipments from their own country or in a worst case scenario they would

prefer to rent it from Dubai because it has everything available. Something is launched today in Europe or USA and the very next week it is available in Dubai. They are so much in sync with the technology because their banking system supports them big time. They don't have to pull money out of their pockets every time. I am sure that there is 30 to 40% from the investors and the balance is funded by the banks. I am

confident that the process is pretty simple over there that's the reason why people over there do that and they have much better equipment. In the past, it was a small market and today it's become the hub in the middle east. The entire middle East goes to Dubai to rent and buy the equipments. The same middle east could have been attracted to India but we have lost out in that market already. We have never been able to match up to the oriental market. We should not forget that in India we have a huge market. Let's just support the Indian market but it is unfortunate that we are not even doing that. It is no surprise that people are still buying from the parallel gray market. It means that losses have incurred on duty as well and VAT. People buying from the gray market are not paying service tax. One is losing service tax, insurance, taxation. Nobody is encouraging but people are always being discouraged.

MAGICAM CINETOOLS

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APRIL - JUNE 2017



Interview with DOP **Mitesh Mirchandani** *on Shooting Neerja*

Important Film of Mitesh Mirchandani as DOP



What was director Ram Madhvani's briefing to you considering he's one of the most meticulous and passionate directors for the film?

A lot of the approach came from him because he had been thinking about a way to capture truth. The most important thing to achieve that would be to making sure the actors free. No lights, No marks for the actors, No flags cutters, thermacols next to actors, 360-degree shooting, All handheld, No

rehearsals. Just capturing the moment rather than staging it. Long takes following the actors. We call this the "Indian Eye". With a lot of clutter and chaos visual cacophony. It took me a while to sink into the method but eventually I embraced it and we succeeded.

What were the preparations done by you to tackle the problem with shooting 360 degree?

There were two major spaces. Neerja's House and the Pan Am – 73 Aircraft. I would have to pre-light everything, so instead of using actually film lights I used house hold fixtures and tube lights for the house. I used 5 - 12 banks of 1K sodium vapors lights to light up the exterior of the airplane. Inside the plane, it was fairly simple. It was tube light fixtures, spot lights on seats, different colour temperature tube lights in the galley to create a visual break. And everything was on a mixer as we had really long takes so in the climax all the lights would go off and the emergency lights would have to come on. So, it was all programed before so it was all in sync when we actually shot.

What was the color temperature of the lights you used?

I was always mixing colour temperatures in every sequence. I chose to go with a neutral look where my whites looked white and warm looked warm. For that I chose 4300K. In a film like this, it's very critical in the post production process. Thus, I knew that I had to do a lot of masking, vignette to direct the attention of the audience where I wanted them to look.

How did you build up the lighting for the house?

Initially, I was afraid. As I had taken the tough decision to not using any film light. So how do I achieve the exposure

to shoot. But Annalpe who was the production designer and who has also worked with me before. She sourced practical lights to that would actually light up characters and emit enough light for me to be happy with. I used high voltage bulbs and lamps to get my intensity. Added tube lights in the kitchen, bathroom, bulbs in places. So that yet again we could move 360 degrees.

Were there any rehearsals for the multi camera setup? How was it shot?

We had a strict rule of no rehearsals. Also, the cast was not allowed to meet each other. It was for the first time the cabin crew were meeting the passengers as they entered and the terrorists haven't met anybody. Hence, it was a new process for everyone. I had individual meetings with each group, Sonam, cabin crew and the terrorists. But I didn't meet the passengers. For this reason, it was roughly explained to them, which areas worked better for me in terms of light and where I would like them to be. But honestly, all that was thrown out of the window and we started shooting because whenever we were in the moment while taking those long takes, nobody really cared about where the lights were but they somehow still managed to be in the right spot. It worked really well in my favor. It was a good process because the actors

positioning was not depicted where the lights have been placed. I really enjoyed myself shooting it.

How did you allocate operators in a multi camera setup and to what section?

It was quite a long process. Ram and I discussed about how we didn't want the frames to be framed. We wanted it to look accidental. We wanted to feel that we had arrived at these frames and not staged it. I pretty much always had in mind who I wanted the other 3 operators to be, now it was just asking them and making sure they were up for the challenge too. Once they all agreed, it was a great collaborative effort. Each of them literally merged together so well. We had a few meetings before and explained to all of them what exactly I was looking for in this film. Ram and I, spent about two months planning out camera positions for each one of them. Where each camera needed to be, at what time as per each scene. I just pretty much allocated and told them that there is nothing like A cam, B cam or C cam. Each camera was capturing something very important. There was no segregation like that. But for the most part My camera was following Sonam Kapoor the whole time, B camera was following the terrorists, C camera was switching between terrorist and passengers and D was primarily on terrorists and passengers.



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NEERJA
DIRECTED BY RAM MADHAVANI

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Was the setup for all four cameras the same?

It was absolutely the same. We worked with the ARRI Alexa XT. We shot with Hawk C series lenses and we had two sets of them. These were very old lenses. Each of them had its own characteristic. Some of them were slightly sharper, some of them were slightly softer, some had more flares than the others. We chose them primarily for that look. We had a great system in place. We had all two

cupboards in the airplane. One for A & B camera and the other for C & D. Which had everything Lenses, extra cards, battery, extra cabled incase anything went wrong midway, charger, water, pens I can go on. So, it was easy access for everyone.

How did you arrive at the look for the film, were any DI tests done?

I did mention to Ram in which direction I was leaning towards and we shared references so see what we liked. I

wasn't able to perform DI tests as the plane wasn't ready, but as the film started I sure about where I am going to be with the look. Hence, once we got to DI, I told my colourist (Sunny Singh) to go crazy and arrive at looks for the plane, the house, the terrorist's base and few other areas. I let him explore the space himself and he arrive at very interesting looks. We further collaborated and we arrived at what we finally have as a film.

What was your understanding with

the production designer about your requirements from her for the film?

So, Aparna herself had a big task of completing the airplane in no time. I had a very clear idea about what I wanted in terms of the lighting in the aircraft. I told her any light we put in the airplane is going to be my light source and I actually want it to light the actors. We had very brief discussions at first regarding the way the plane needs to be lit. As they started building more we started elaborating more. And adding final touches to the puzzle.

What was the color temperature of the fixed lights in comparison to the tube lights in the galley?

The colour temperature of the tube lights in the entire plane were 5600k. And I added some 3000K tube lights with half CTO to make it even warmer. So, we would have some colour separation in the plane.

Did you modify the position of the lights in order to light the characters and what would it be?

I couldn't modify anything everything was Fixed and pre-lit and locked away. Once I lit it, actually nothing was in my control it was all the actors. even in the climax their guns and light in it so I would get the effect and that light of their faces.

Was there a lot of VFX involved and how did it affect your shooting style?

There was a lot of VFX. It was done by Pankaj Khandpur and his team. There were a lot of back plates. It did not affect us shooting at all they were kind enough to let us shoot the way we wanted and they would adapt to it. It's all a great colligative effort.

Is there anything specific which you would like to mention about cinematography work related to this film ?

Honest There are a lot of things. This film was one of the most challenging film I have ever been a part of. From the camera positions, to getting my operators, Harsh, Sudip and Rohan. Getting my team in place, my focus pullers Sanjeev, Nelson, Sooraj, Kishore, who were the most important people on



this set. My First Ac Shiv Karal, since I was operating one of the cameras he had to make sure that all the other cameras were in the same zone. Sticking to what we want to achieve in the film. Overlooking all the lighting of the film. I was very lucky to have this team on board. The camera department was so well organized by shiv and me sitting with everyone and letting them know what exactly we wanted. The wireless

feed that went to the director because we can't have cabled running which there are already 4 cameras on the floor. Was the genius work or Viki Vivek. To Lighting up the aircraft, getting those lights I wanted. It was just simply a beautiful ride.

**- Interviewed by Naresh Sharma,
Editor, CINEMATOGRAPHY ART .**



Director
**Ram
Madhwani**
on Making of Neerja



The screenplay took us about and year and half to write along with Saiwyn Quadras. Later, Sanyukta Shaikh Chawla came in for dialogue. I was very clear from the very beginning that this was not a hijack film. This was an emotional story between a mother and daughter and how a family can overcome the loss of its child. The reason for it is that we had met Neerja's mother who unfortunately expired a couple of weeks before the launch of this film's trailer. When we met her, we realized that she was a very spirited lady. Even I have a son who comes home late in the night after a music session, and like all parents, we are worried. Hence, I always thought how was the family able to cope up with the loss of its child? I knew that it had to be an inspirational, motivational story about how a family overcomes the loss of its child. Apart from that I always knew that this film is not about courage but it is about fear. I also felt that it was important to bring Rajesh Khanna because he is one of the actors who glorifies death and the idea that 'zindagi lambi nahi badi honi chahiye'. At a certain point those words come true for 'Neerja'.

Lastly, at the screenplay level there were two acts of terror which she faced. The first act of terror faced by her was from the person she married and she ran away from. The second act of terror faced by her was the terrorists but she decided not to run away. Coming from an advertising background, we are always clear about what one wants to say, how to say it and very importantly what should the audience feel? Hence, I knew that when the audience walked out of the cinemas, I wanted them to feel inspired and motivated. Also we hadn't really had a good tragedy for a long while

Neerja Directed by Ram Madhwani



in Hindi cinema. All these thoughts came into the script.

I am grateful to Atul and Shanti of Bling who first approached me with the idea of making a film on Neerja. Hats off to Saiwyn and Sanyuktha for making so many thoughts work emotionally in the screenplay and dialogues. We read it to the fox star. It was the easiest film on which I had a green light because of Rucha Pathak from Fox Star. I was trying to make a film for the last 14, 15 years and I had 6 films which didn't work out. I realized the emotional reaction of the people while the reading was going on. There were people who were crying during the reading. Actress Sonam Kapoor had come with us to Chandigarh to meet neerja's family. Her reaction was a green light for the screenplay. Shooting the film was the next task. There is only a certain amount of money that one has. Especially the way in which Hindi movies work is that the return of investment is based upon how much a particular actor can command. It is based on how much the last film of the actor made. Based on these factors, the budget is dictated. Of course, it is dictated by the script but it is also dictated by the amount of

money one is hoping to recover based on who the actor is. Hence, we only had a certain amount of money. Everybody thought that film would take 60 days. People said that the least it can take is 45 days. I checked the budget and said to my team, "we cannot afford more than 31 days". I had to figure out a route on how to make this kind of film in 31 days. The first thing I thought about for many months is how does one feel getting trapped inside a plane for 16 hours. Even the audience should feel suffocated as if they were in the plane. My first solution was to shoot the film in 3 takes. The first take would be 16 hours from the time the passengers enter till the time they exit with four cameras and going to shoot for 16 hours in one go. I thought of giving adult diapers to passengers and everybody. I thought that first day would be 16 hours. Then we would take a break for 2/3 days and view the rushes. Then take 2 would be for 16 hours with a break of 2/3 days and again view the rushes. Finally, third take again would be of 16 hours. We finally did not follow this plan since I narrowed it down from 16 hours. Sometimes, there were 2 hours long takes because I was shooting with 4

cameras. Finally, I ended shooting the plane in 12 days. In the end, the whole film was shot in 31 days but the actual budget was for 33 days ! We were under budget. This is not because we worked extra hours on anything but it was totally pre-planned. For the plane sequence, I had a great first ad Raj Acharya. We completed the plane sequence in 12 days which was actually budgeted for 14 days. Our system was that there were no rehearsals for the passengers who got onto the plane for the first time. The production team had all the passports and tickets ready. We organized workshops for every one. Thanks to my associate director Vinod Rawat, we did extensive workshops for Sonam, Shabana, neerja's family, terrorists and also the passengers. Kanika Berry was our casting director. It was a tough task to cast 250 people who had back stories, histories, families and happenings such as why are you going where you are with your husband and other family members etc. All the back stories were given to each passenger. But I didn't get the terrorists to rehearse or participate in any workshops with air hostesses. I didn't get the air hostesses to meet the passengers. They met for the first time



in the take. This was because it was the best way to get to truth with real feelings and emotions. This also meant that the plane had to be designed with functioning toilets and intercoms etc to make it feel real.

It was more on an emotional level that we worked on how to capture the reality. All of this was to make the audience feel it was actually happening. I like life before action and after cut. Otherwise what happens is most movies exist only between action and cut. For this reason, I had to create a life before action and after cut. Mitesh Mirchandani, our DOP took to the idea that we would be shooting in this manner and not in the standard manner like 'where is my eye line' and 'lets add a thermocol for fill light' etc out. The plane was lit for 2 days. And then we captured the moments in very long takes. The method to get to truth was very well embraced by Monisha Baldawa, our editor as she had to deal with such a huge amount of footage because we had 4 cameras to shoot. The method was embraced by the entire team especially by the actors. Every one embraced the method of dividing each sequence in the screenplay like a chapter heading with before and after per scene. For instance, there is a scene where the gun is targeted on Neerja or a co-passenger. I shot the whole scene in one shot where the passenger was killed, Neerja gets up goes to bathroom and the camera goes into the bathroom, then she comes out, till she would say, "I am doing my duty". Then, she starts serving the people. All of this would in real time would take about 45 minutes. We shot it in real time out of which we would end up keeping only 10 minutes' in the film. Through this all four cameras are capturing the passengers' reactions too. It helped the life before action after cut so that everybody present in the plane felt it.

I realize that I am in the business of capturing feelings and energy. I do have to first create an energy. To do so, I used various devices like those mentioned above. For example I requested the passengers not to interact with the terrorists at all. As the sequence got over, the terrorists had to get out of the plane. They had their own private



holding area. They all went out and were not allowed to meet the passengers. Hence, there was a certain amount of fear factor. Later, going into 7th day or 8th day the children started calling out uncle but before that I tried to maintain that feel, that sense of fear. We captured the chaos of life but in an orchestrated, formal way, in an organized way.

I believe that everyone in the team must know the kind of film we are making and how we are making it. It's important to have many HOD meetings. I also believe in an Indian way of telling coming from our cinema. There were 4 songs in the film and 5th song was for marketing and promotion. There was a love song, a heroine's introduction song, a mother's song and an inspirational song. The songs have incredibly good melody and music by Vishal Khurana with lyrics by Prasoon Joshi. Songs are part of our culture, we must have songs. In my next film, I want to try lip sync songs because I think these are things which we have to embrace. It makes our movies unique and we must not lose our culture. Of course a lot depends on how well and not crassly it's done. I am very well versed with Indian nomenclature of movie making. In fact, I would use more and more of Indian nomenclature in my movies rather than following the three act structure. Our films have a first half and second half. I feel that we need to

be embracing more of our language rather than western language. Neerja is told with an Indian soul and an Indian way of telling but with an international tone. For example when Neerja goes into the bathroom. And looks at herself in the mirror and decides to take on the terrorists, it could have been over dramatized or melodramatic. Instead it's handled with a real believable tone. The drama was already there, the script did not require over dramatization. Something I want to add and that is that the sound design of the film was incredible. Subhash Sahoo captured these long takes from the time the terrorists entered in the car, till they run in the plane, with the passengers panicking etc. We needed to mike all of this with over 30 mikes in and around the plane to capture the live sound of the passengers and what they were going through. This was a mammoth exercise. I feel that this is the first film in the world where we used sound in this way. All of this was done to get to believability and truth and to make the viewer feel that this was actually happening and that they were actually in the plane. Hats off to my entire team to execute the film in this new way.

- As told to Naresh Sharma, Editor, CINEMATOGRAPHY ART.



Interview with

Atul Kasbekar

Producer Neerja



When you first decided that it would be you producing this film, how did you settle on Ram Madhvani directing the project ?

Honestly, we first spoke to a known name in Bollywood but the gentleman declined. I was then thinking to myself that since I don't have any track record as a producer there was no reason somebody who has already made a couple of movies should take me seriously. Even though, I possessed the rights. I really needed to talk to someone who could relate to the story and to us as producers. I also thought that he should be hungry to see this as an opportunity and take it up.

I have known Ram for the past 25 years. He was the first person I then called because I believed in him. He has done some really brilliant advertising work which I thought was at another level. He knows how to handle emotion and human interaction and is technically extremely sound. I spoke to him when we met for a cup of coffee and before the coffee was done he said 'yes' !

What about bringing big production house like "Fox Star Studios" ? How did it happen ?

Actually, I relate to people and not to their designations. I know Rucha Pathak for some time. She was due to be joining Fox Star studios when I first met with her in the context of making Neerja.

Hence, when we met her with the first draft of the film, she





said that she would co-produce Neerja at Fox as her first film.

Later, when she joined Fox, this was the first phone call she would make. She did keep her promise.

When I was talking to Rucha, I wasn't talking to Fox but to a creative producer who was passionate about taking the project further.

Once you decided about the film and had your production team, you knew that most of it would be woman oriented and take place in a plane. How sure were you of its working ?

Honestly, I believe that the audience's view on what they want to see is fast changing and there are a lot of reasons for that.

I think audiences want to be stimulated when they go for entertainment in a movie theater because if they just want to watch a song or a dance movie, they can do it on a laptop, an I-pad or their phones or on TV.

I feel that the market right now is in a state of great flux.

When one goes to a movie and spends around Rs 2000/- for a family of 4 in a multiplex, there must now be a very good reason for going and spending that money and time.

As regards visual entertainment, we can get plenty of it in different ways. My confidence rests in assuming that if there is an interesting story that deserves a cinema viewing then people would surely be there.

For this reason, I did believe that there is a very powerful story here. More importantly, it's a story which stimulates everybody.

If you see every commercially successful film of 2016, the one common element they all had was that they stimulated the audience in a manner different from what would have been considered standard entertainment fare. This is just my point of view.

You come from a creative field and Ram Madhvani also belongs to a creative field. But you had another role of a producer. Were there any creative differences between both of you, if yes how did you resolve them ?

Actually, it was the most peaceful working phase I ever had. It was very much decided that when it came to movie calls, the final call would be that of Ram.

Ram was very clear and he was fully prepared of the fact that if a good suggestion came from anybody, he would accept it. We were working without any ego.

If somebody came up with some good suggestion, he was more than happy to take it up. We mutually decided that while there are lots of people offering advice we would go with our gut, and the final call would be the directors.

Once the film is made, the most important thing is the release of the



film. How did you manage the distribution of the film so that it got a fair chance?

We had a very competent co-producer in Fox Star Studios. They were just phenomenal and used their extensive network and skills to do the distribution. Basically, for this reason, all of us took a back seat and let them do their job.

People at Fox knew that this was a special film and I believe they worked a little bit harder on Neerja.

How did "Indigo" airlines came on board though there was no brand placement in the film ?

It was a very logical promotion to do. All along the making of this film, we wanted people to pay tribute to a service industry like airlines and its people who take care of passengers in the sky and on the ground.

Hence, it was a logical tie up with Indigo. As we approached them, they said "Yes" right away. Aditya Ghosh saw the potential immediately and made it happen. I believe that the branding and digital work on Neerja has been nominated at the GoaFest Ad Club Awards this year.

What is your next project which we should be looking forward to ?

By the end of April, we are going to start the shooting of a film called "Tumhari Sulu" starring Vidya Balan. It's a Hrishikesh Mukherjee type of genre which I have loved growing up.

The script is excellent and takes us through a slice of life urban comedy of a middle class housewife who chances upon the job of a Radio Jockey.

In the process she becomes famous and has to deal with the trappings of success.

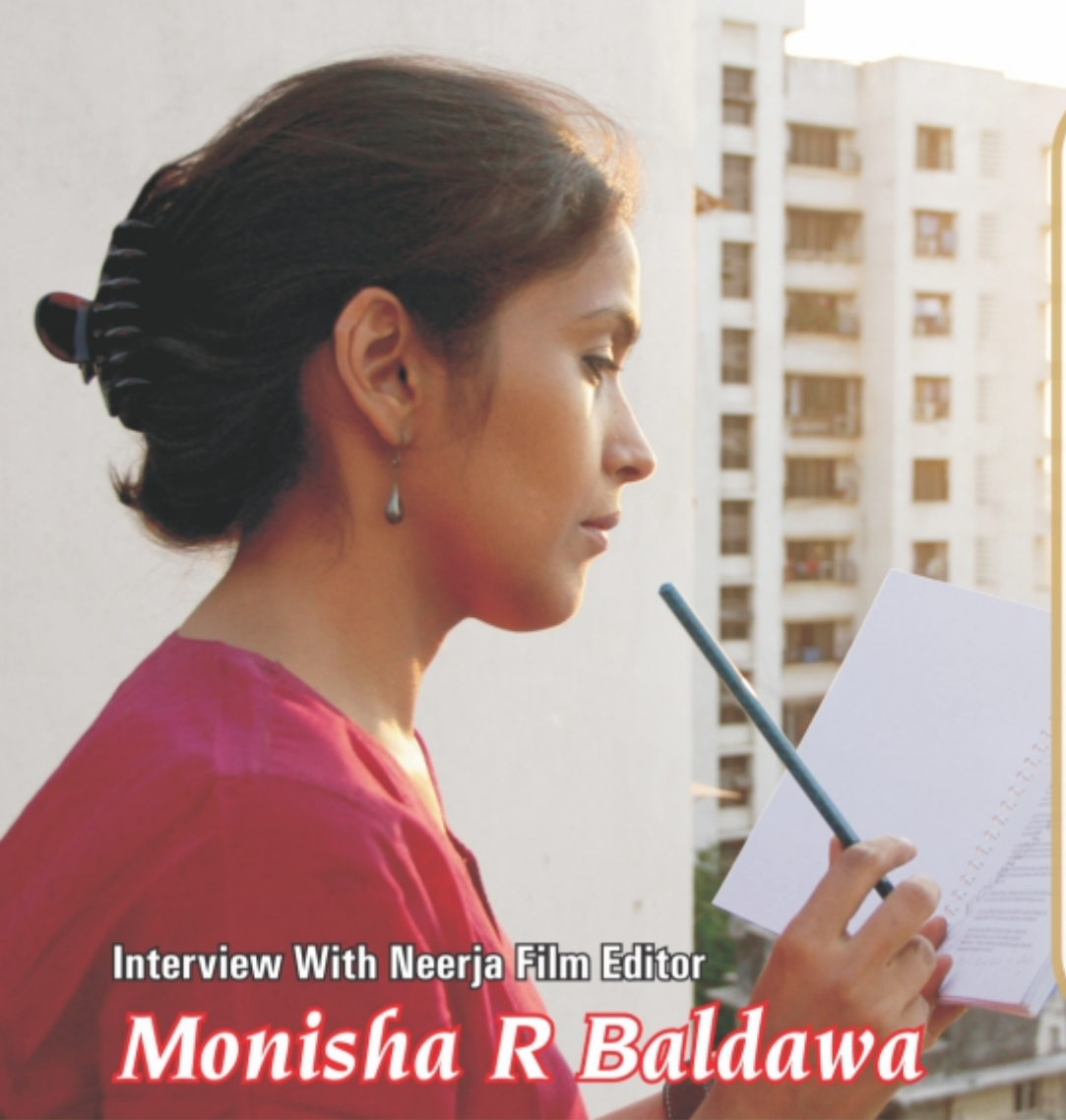
The director of the film is Suresh Triveni, who is known for the iconic TV commercials called "Mauka Mauka" which were screened during the last ICC World Cup.

When do you intend to release this film ?

We are making the film with T-Series and as of now we are looking forward to release it around 1st December.

- Interviewed by Naresh Sharma, Editor, CINEMATOGRAPHY ART .





Monisha R Baldawa is an alumnus of FTII, Pune (2004-07) with a Diploma in Film Editing. She is also a trained photographer and graphic designer. She is interested in languages and is fluent in Tamil, Marwadi, Marathi, Hindi and English. She has worked on many award-winning films across various platforms - fiction, non-fiction, ad films and art installations. She won the Filmfare and Zee Cine award for Best Editing for the film Neerja. Her forthcoming films are Begum Jaan and Mom.

Interview With Neerja Film Editor

Monisha R Baldawa

What was director Ram Madhvani's briefing to you in terms of editing?

Neerja is a tension filled hijack drama. But, Ram also saw this film as an unfolding of the mother-daughter relationship. For Ram, the emotional life and the psychological intimacy of the characters were very important. We had discussions about the edit and its emotional core through the scripting, shooting and while watching rushes. We discussed the emotional key points that the film would be grounded on and how that could be handled delicately. We had extremely powerful and moving performances from all the actors. Sonam Kapoor and Shabana Azmi's performances were very nuanced and layered.

We had to find a cinematic form, which would protect the performances.

Tell us about the editing process and workflows?

The unique thing about Neerja was that Ram had decided to shoot long takes of up to 55 minutes with multiple cameras. This was done primarily to allow actors to improvise freely. I had to devise a method to organize the huge quantum of material. Apart from the obvious problem of actors not repeating actions identically in each take, the problem of locating various milestones of the script in each take also presented unique organizational and editorial challenges. Another logistical challenge was the management of audio channels, wherein I had to manage 32 sync audio tracks simultaneously owing to the mikes

Important Films of Monisha R Baldawa as an Editor



that were placed across the aircraft. Using an extremely labor intensive methodology of time line markers and bins, I was able to get the material organized.

Exploring various creative options during the edit was both challenging and exciting. What also helped me was the fact that the actual background score was composed even before I started the rough cut and we did not use any reference music throughout the process. This enabled us to remain true to the emotional textures of the film.

What were the criteria to select the best shots?

One has to identify the emotional emphasis of the scene and look at the performances in that light. The next step is to choose the shots based on the best visual grammar for that particular scene. So, the first criterion is the performance and the next is the visual grammar within the larger dramatic purpose of the scene.

What does visual grammar mean to you?

In cinema there is no fixed visual grammar, which is the beauty of this art. Every film demands its own unique syntax.

How did you pace the film?

The pace in a film is defined by the rate of change in the narrative. I had to calibrate the changes in a way so that broadly, the changes take place at an even rate in the beginning. However, as the story progressed, the rate of change increases in tempo and peaks near the climax. At the same time we also had to give enough time for emotions to build in certain sequences to create an immersive experience. In *Neerja*, the rescue operations, the family's struggle and the hijacked plane were the primary narrative threads. These threads had to be woven together in the best possible way. The point at which we moved away from a thread and the note at which we came back to another thread was carefully designed through the editing process. The rhythm created through the movement across these simultaneous narratives was the key to our design. Rhythm is a re-scanning of



Photo Courtesy: Filmfare

metric time where the stress points are changed and expectations are belied. Since cinema performs in time, the experience of the implicit rhythm of a film narrative is one of the deep aesthetic pleasures of this art.

Did you and Ram have any differences of opinion with regards to the duration of scenes?

The process of film editing is a process of creative collaboration. When two people work together towards a

common creative goal then the activity produces synergy rather than attrition. For both director and editor, opinions do not emerge from an arbitrary space. All opinions come from the desire to explore the best cinematic possibilities of the material.

Do you think the editor of the film should cut the promo of the film or someone else should handle it?

Cutting promos and trailers is a kind



of specialized art and requires it's own time and attention. Generally the Film editors are so busy editing the film that they just don't have the time to edit promos and trailers.

Did you feel the need to provide an input on the selection of shots for the promo?

No.

Is there anything specific which I may not have asked but you wanted to mention in your interview regarding the editing of this film or anything related with editing process?

I would like to add that while editing any film, one always keeps an imaginary audience in mind. When Neerja was released and I went to see the film in the theatres, it was lovely to see the audience responding to the film in much the same way as we had imagined and more. The audience acclaim for the film was overwhelming. All in all, Neerja has been a tremendously wonderful experience for me.

- Interviewed by Lalit Rao, Film Critic (FIPRESCI)





Interview with Neerja Film Production Designer

Aparna Sud

Have you worked with Ram Madhvani before this feature film?

No. This was for the first time that I was introduced to him by Fox Studios.

What was Ram's brief to you about the majority of the film being shot in and around the plane?

I think he was very hesitant because this was the first time he was meeting me. I wasn't his first choice. I had come from the producer's side. When I met him for the first time, he wanted to make a two scale plane that was exactly as the original Boeing 747, two scale meaning there were no changes in the

dimensions of the scale, original length of the Boeing 747 is 220 feet. Ram wanted everything to be exactly the same, from exact number of chairs to the overhead cabinet openings, the seats reclining, the tap in the galley buffet working, the tap in the toilets and everything that we could think of except the cockpit and flying.

When you watch the film you don't know what the real plane looked like. Did you take any cinematic liberty to modify certain sections?

We had to modify because the cameras wouldn't fit in certain areas. For

this reason, we increased the size of the gaps between the chairs. As for the rest of the things, we stuck to the original look of the plane as per Ram's brief.

How did you plan the execution of the set build knowing that it was to be shot in parts?

Thank God ! It happened on time. I was extremely worried. I had divided people into different sections to improve efficiency. There was a fabricator, a fiber person, a carpenter section and a painting section. These sections put together everything. We had spent two months in pre-production and had

planned for it. We started making everything simultaneously and if we had made things one by one, we would have never finished. Firstly, we started with the structure of the plane and then we simultaneously started making the seats, the overhead cabinets and the cockpit section. We also started making smaller parts like fiber moulds separately and it took us around 48 days to make the entire plane and hand it to the production house, including the lighting. Around the 45th day, we got the structure painted and ready for us to move into. Within three days, we assembled the plane like a puzzle and kept refining it in between so that everything was a right fit. This is how we did it.

Understanding the requirement and the capacity of the people involved, including the actors and the crew, how did you keep intact the robustness of the plane, keeping in mind the ease of movement for the heavy cameras?

Robustness was one of the most important things to keep in mind, knowing that there could be accidents and the Indian people are not familiar with the safety gear. The plane was built 22 feet high with only two center pillars as per VFX team's request to avoid excessive clean up in the post production. This left me with an option of reinforcing from under the ground. For this reason, I built a structure with similar length under the ground for support. Basically, this made the shape, somewhat similar to the alphabet 'H', out of iron, with two vertical and horizontal lines; the pillars were really heavy. They could support the whole weight of the structure. We spoke to a structural engineer and he gave us the best possible drawing that would avoid all accidents. The worst thing was there was a lot of running around in the plane and we couldn't have had any kind of movement because that could have ruined the camera things. It had to be stable. Hence, we figured that part with the structural engineer and did a parallel structure under the ground so the pressure of the plane could be divided.

With so many people on set, how did you deal with cleaning of the floor?

I had a carpet which was cleanable.

Hence, there was no problem as such.

What did you do to control the lighting, for the set to replicate day and night as per the DOP's requirement?

DOP Mitesh was superb in this. We had planned lighting from the start. We did a lot of lighting tests on the plane and Mitesh suggested to light the plane from the outside rather than the inside by putting up Croma. It was all just a matter of switching lights on/off.

When you say Croma, whether it was day or night, was that taken care of just by the Croma itself?

Yes, on one side we had the windows where we could see the dark and we shot for night during the night and day during the day. Thus, there were no problems with the lights.

When you take a close-up shot, the camera can see everything in detail, whether it is a set or an original plane. How did you do it because it looks so original?

Yes. We did take care of that. I was very particular about detailing of things. It was very important for me. We built the walls of the plane with fiber material, which is what the original plane is also made up of (plane's body is generally made up of aluminum and titanium). We also took care of the texture and everything.

Since it's a color film, how did you decide the tones without making it look like a black and white film and at the same time have some color in it?

The original airplane had orange and blue chairs in it even Ram wanted to go with that but I didn't want the tone of the film to be compromised as it should be subtle. It should reflect the sadness of the film. If I had put bright orange seats in it, it would have made the film look very busy; this was discussed in the first and second meeting. And I chose to stick with grey and blue with no brightness. I just didn't want to see orange popping out of every single or alternate seat although Ram preferred sticking to the original look of the plane but I asked Ram to think over it. In our next meeting, he was convinced about it. I preferred the muted tones; the dull



gray white because it had to be depressing. With the costumes too we concluded to keep it very subtle with no colors popping out. It almost looked like black and white.

How difficult was it for you to find out what the actual interior of the plane looked like?

It wasn't difficult. Pan Am is an American Airline and they had a lot of pictures available online. We did our research and even got some manuals. We met a lot of pilots and had three consultants who used to come over and meet us. They helped us in making the right decisions and an aeronautical engineer helped us checking the entire cockpit. I don't think India lacks information about these things (in terms of hardcore documentary). Pan Am is an American airlines and the news became international anyways as Pakistanis were involved in it. It was not on Indian news. For this reason, thankfully there was enough research that was done.

Were there any specific instructions provided to you by VFX team for post production and what were these instructions?

I was asked not to have more than two or three pillars at the base of the structure. It is easier for VFX team to



clean it in post. Everything else was fine even detailing did not require any kind of cleanup. They gave more instructions to DOP regarding lighting.

Tell us where did you begin ? How did you end up in this profession?

I'm from Shimla. I have my elder sister working here in Mumbai for past 25 years as an animator. She used to work with Rohit Vrashta who is a big animator in India. He used to work with my boss Guruji (Guruji brothers). I had just finished my interior designing and was working with an architect. Later, I came to Mumbai and thought of joining an architectural firm. After hearing that my sister asked me if I wanted to do art direction and in Shimla I never had any kind of exposure. I said to myself : "let me go and try" and I didn't know what I wanted but I liked building things although I never studied architecture I liked it but I did study interior designing and I like getting things together or building things. The first time I went on the set, it was a film for which actors Arjun Rampal and Aishwarya Rai worked. It was shot by DOP Ashok Mehta. When I saw the set, I said to

myself "Wow, it's so beautiful, it's just amazing". Thus, I started working and that was my first film and then I worked with Ashok Mehta. That is how I started my career.

As a tenured art director, what is the most important thing to be bothered about ?

I think that your set should tell a story rather than just being a piece of furniture. You should be a helping hand to the director to move the story forward. A set or the house should tell a story about that person, that character. I think that is the most important thing, above making it look nice.

Since you have worked with most of the directors, who do you think has a deeper understanding of art direction?

Ram Madhvani for sure is an amazing director. He has an eye for detail and I've learnt a lot from him. I am working with Rajan DK right now. He has a very good sense of detailing. When I worked on a Hollywood film with a director named Duane Adler, I found that he has a great sense of detailing. The movie's name is "Heartbeats."

Since you have worked with Ashok Mehta Ji, what did you see in him as a cinematographer something which others don't have?

I spent around a month with him and I was new but that was enough for me to see his eye for detailing. I have never seen anybody so keenly lighting things and so deeply focusing on lighting. He was just amazing. He had the power to change the whole set with his lighting. As I was new, I used to go in the morning so I didn't hang around with people and obviously not with Mehta Ji. We just couldn't disturb him while lighting. For this reason, I used to hang out side. One day he lit the set and I just couldn't believe how amazing it was. It was just so beautiful and subtle. The whole set looked so different; it felt like someone added more life to it. That's what I have not seen in anybody else.

You come from an art direction department and production design which they call nowadays. Did you ever interact with him?

No. I never had that opportunity but my boss Guruji and Ashok Ji were very close. I was very new at that time and it was my first project. After that I never got a chance to work with him.

Is there anything about the film "Neerja" which you would like to speak which I have not asked and you wanted to talk ?

It was really crazy to figure out what was it going to look like even though we had all the 3D and 2D drawings. We had our doubts, is it actually going to look like a plane, am I making a plane ? I used to drive down around the ground, from far behind and have a look at the structure to see if it looks like a fish or not ! It is looking like a whale. I used to think if this doesn't end up looking like a plane, I'm dead. One day, I didn't have my car and the plane was almost done with the basic paint, so I came in a rickshaw. The rickshaw guy saw the plane and asked me, "Achcha Yaha Se Bhi Flight Jati Hai", I replied "Yes". I knew that I got the things right.

- Interviewed by Lalit Rao, Film Critic (FIPRESCI) □□□



Interview With Neerja Film Sound Designer *Subash Sahoo*

Important Film of Mitesh Mirchanandani as DOP



What was your preparation when you first heard about the film “Neerja” as it was to be shot mainly on the set of an airplane?

When I first read the script, I felt excited as it was based on true story inside an airplane. It was my first time working with Ram Madhavani, he was so particular about everything. He was involving all the technicians through the filming process even I was involved throughout. I feel that film “Neerja”’s preparation was equal to that of four films. It is as if one is starting the career once again afresh. We started building the set before two months of the shoot. We used to visit the set regularly. We used to sit for script reading and visit the sets. I used to realize that Ram has something different in mind.

He didn’t want to shoot the film in a typical Bollywood way; he wanted it in a documented way. He wanted to capture each and every character in a candid

way. Hence, we planned that we shall shoot with 4 to 5 cameras setup and run continuously for 45 minutes at a stretch and capture the artist’s action. It was like mixing 3 to 4 scenes and shooting the part continuously, all the action happening outside, top, bottom, back, everywhere. The main problem was timing. Now a days, we have the possibility to shoot only for 18 to 20 minutes but not 45 minutes. We had to be super active to change the card at correct timing and at regular intervals.

We required proper coordination and a lots of preparation. After seeing the location, I felt very excited as shoot progress went on, I felt it is not very simple shoot, it is a complex shoot, after doing like 100 films in my life, I felt those were nothing. The director wanted everything to be active like we take telephone, the intercom system in the airplane where crew members use it to communicate. Air hostesses move from one place to other, like up and down it

was a double-decker airplane. For this reason, when giving instructions all phones needed to be active. All the speakers needed to be active. All the space needed to be active in the set. All the lights needed to be active so that each character feels like a passenger in the plane. The passenger will hear out all the announcements from pilot on cockpit to Airhostesses. The problem was when we are talking on the microphone and the speaker is on, we might lose the original dialogue. Different actors would be talking at different positions. There were many complications. We went to get proper reviews of microphones to be fitted.

We started researching technicalities of each and every microphone. How sensitive is the microphone so that one should not get the feedback etc? Many preparations were done before hand. When we are using 4 to 5 cameras, which are hand held throughout the film, there is nowhere where the camera is blocked. We had done many mock rehearsals before. We had chairs made, doors, cockpits etc., our cameramen practiced using 5D cameras before the shoot. As we wanted to shoot in the first attempt itself, as it would maintain the originality or we could miss it in later takes. This is the reason why 5 cameramen rehearsed for days using 5D cameras, how actors would come, what would the framing be etc. It is the first time also nearly 280 people were cast from all over India for whom there was also a workshop conducted for 15 days. The reason of casting all of them is that that they should all behave like strangers to one another.

We used to feel difficult where to keep the boom microphone. We used to film a sequence once in a day, just only one take. The same sequence could be done some other day also. It was with that we used to maintain some originality. This was done to ensure that there is not much pressure on cast to get the perfect shot in several takes. There was no choreography. It was like come and shoot and go. The mock rehearsals which we had done, helped us a lot. After a sequence for a day, we used to shoot other take afterwards but not on the same day. One shot, one take in a



day that's it. Later that day, we used to shoot other sequences. It was very difficult to shoot in such a short space, cameras were handheld, going up and down, frames changing continuously. It was difficult for the boom operator to operate boom. To tackle this problem, I used to go on sets and check out the scenes in order to know what are the positions of the actors, which seats have been allotted to them.

It is with this information that we used to finalize the position of boom mike. With the help of production designer, we placed microphones at various positions in the airplane to capture the sound by hiding inside in different places. It was like we had 12 to 15 boom microphones placed according to the required position. We built a video booth and digitally captured the sound and video. It was very difficult task to choreograph each and every character. The airplane is so big, a character moving from one place to

other was to be captured completely. This time around, I had more than 10 people working in the sound department with me for the first time.

Ram is very innovative. He decided that in this film everything has to be wireless. We had to wirelessly transmit sound from the top; all the microphones were rooted to me for monitoring. In that video village, we had 5 monitors for 5 cameras, setup of my sound equipment where I had nearly 40 microphones input and 3 to 4 members monitoring the setup. We divided the airplane into 3 to 4 sections. The main character Neeraja used to move around the whole plane and we had difficulty in capturing the sound. I depend largely on wireless mike. It has a certain range. I decided to give 2 to 3 mikes to lead actors including Neerja so that it can cover up large area all around. The sequence where she goes to the cockpit to talk with pilots, there we used three microphones on one character. This was all pre-planned in the pre production stage for all the characters. To get the authentication, I used telephone microphone at cockpit for pilot as well as for airhostess' announcement as the final mike to capture their dialogues.

How did you decide which sound is good as you said you had many microphones?

It was really problematic to decide good sound; I had to listen over and over to more than 32 tracks to identify the good sound. This entire process was done in postproduction. For a film you





can get all the good audio in a month as I used only 8 tracks as final because of less character but for this film, it took me more than 2 months to get the good audio track. The reason being that it was recorded in 32 odd tracks. As it combined so many scenes & each passenger with boarding staff, pilot, terrorists almost 35 to 40 people are talking in the same shot.

The dynamic range of dialogue is really vast because of soft dialogue of family to the screaming of terrorists. We had difficulties to maintain it every time. One should know that because of extreme shouting actor loses the grain. Some difficulties occurred during the next day when we start the scene afresh. The actor used to shout really hard before coming to the shoot to maintain the previous day tonality. The terrorists were from Libya but all the cast is from India; they were trained for 4 to 5 months to get that language and dialect. While in post, we came to know that there were some sentences which were not pronounced properly then we used to sit for dubbing.

We faced big problems to get that originality. At that time, I heard that because of surrounding they were in the character, crowd etc. all alone, it was very difficult for them to recreate the same energy. In order to achieve that I decided to hire a boom operator who could hold the boom. The actors after a couple of rehearsals should not see the screen. They should enact the whole sequence. To enact 3 to 4 assistant directors played the other characters so that they can perform during the shooting. I made sure that they can move all around the studio. I got my boom operator to move and capture the sound. I didn't restrict him to stand at one place. I wanted only two words from the dubbed sentence.

This was how we dubbed the sound. Most of the sound was from location itself; nearly 95% of the sound was from location. The part when they spoke that Libyan language was difficult. The language pronunciation had many times gone wrong. For this reason, we had to dub in the studio. We could not dub only two lines, because it was very difficult in

maintaining the flow, so they had to dub the whole sequence.

What is your favorite microphone and other equipments used for the location?

Basically, these days people use the same microphone everywhere. I used Lectrosonics 400 series with sunken top. I used 3 Deva 5.8 recorder, 24 tracks, someday we required 32 tracks also. It all depended on requirement also. The main problem was to root the sound of a particular monitor connected to that camera. We have 4 to 5 monitors. Every monitor was connected to a camera. The monitor needed to produce the sound from that camera only. It was a difficult task to root the sound. With the help of trial and error method we finally succeeded in getting what we wanted. However, we did all the preparations to get the perfect output. In Boom Mike we used MKH 50, Shoeps CMT, MKH-60, 416 depending on the location.

- Interviewed by Lalit Rao, Film Critic (FIPRESCI) □□□

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EDITOR – RAMESH MALHOTRA

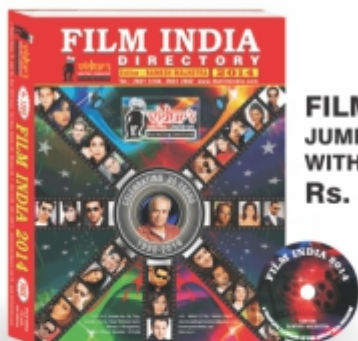


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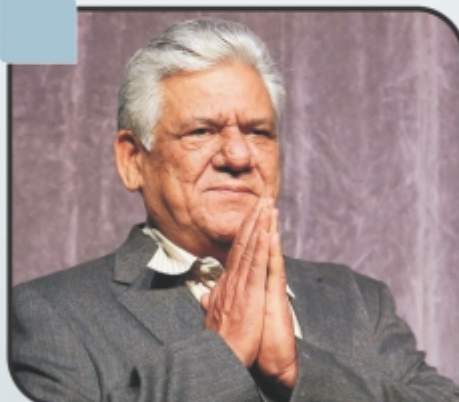
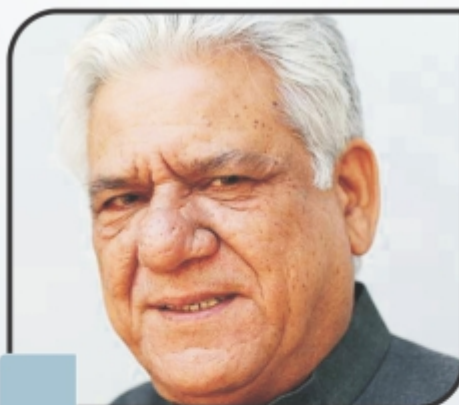
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Govind Nihalani

on his association with

Late Shri Om Puri



When Om Ji passed away, the questions I was asked most often by the press about him were, "How was he as an actor?" and "What was different about him as compared to any other actor?" As a film director when you work with an actor, he's always like a new chapter for you. I instinctively feel whether the actor can pull it off or can he be pushed to the limits. Thus, in this relationship, we both explore our potential, I as a director and he as an actor. That's the kind of relationship I shared with Om. I never thought about what separated him from the rest. Every actor has his own unique personality, sensibilities & methodologies. This is why you can't compare an actor with the others. Ultimately what counts, is, what you as director and he as an actor achieves together.

In my opinion, if you're an actor, you should be like a beautiful wrist watch and not like a grandfather's clock. If you look at the wrist watch, it has a

beautifully designed dial that displays the precise time, you can depend upon. But at the same time it also has a complex mechanism below the dial. It has several springs, gears and micro parts. We can't even hear any "Tick Tick"



a formidable challenge for an actor to convince the audience of his agony without the assistance of spoken words. Om was an emotional person and any serious actor would be emotionally involved with his role. In "Aakrosh", the hero of the film is being blamed of his own wife's murder but in story, the hero's wife has been raped and killed. The opposition lawyer is trying to turn the case on Lahanya accusing him of murdering his own wife. Lahanya had several scenes with his defense lawyer, played by Naseeruddin Shah. Om (Lahanya) was silent. He had to express agony through watching / recalling in his own mind the images of his wife being raped and murdered. He would get so emotional with those visuals and the traumatic memory that his eyes would

get bloodshot and tears would start falling. Of course, I had to edit out those parts of the scene because they were too intense and emotional. We had to do a lot of retakes because the scenes got too emotional and that wasn't the requirement. It was Om's first film. As an actor when one is just breaking into cinema, it is difficult to possess complete control over emotions because of the lack of experience, but whatever he did, he did it with honesty and simplicity. He did not manufacture emotion nor caricatured it. He was not an intellectual but used to do the things with instinct. A lot of times he himself didn't know what he would do once the camera rolls. These were his early days. Gradually he refined his technique and acquired emotional control. I was fortunate to witness his cinematic journey from the early stages. He was extremely good at emotions such as helplessness, anxiety, agony, anger, rage and emotional empathy. He didn't even have to work a lot for that. He was instinctively good at it.

One of the reasons for his exemplary performances was his purity of heart. We all have heard that acting is reacting. So when you see a scene

while it functions; we see only the end result. But if we bring the watch near our ear, we'll hear its "Tick Tick". Every actor who prepares for a role has his / her own way of doing so. For example, he / she thinks about voice modulation, body language, gait, gestures and so on. Then there are rehearsals. When an actor performs, whether on stage or in front of the camera, all his preparation must remain invisible. Hence, in my opinion, a good actor's preparation and effort for his acting, should never leak into his performance. Some people overdo it. They over calculate and over prepare and the result is that you can hear the "Tick Tick" in their performance. To keep the whole effort, the whole machinery of preparation silent and invisible, is the most distinguishing quality of any great actor and Om did possess that.

In "Aakrosh", Lahanya, a tribal youth, played by Om, didn't have even a single dialogue, not even a word. It was





where two characters are talking, you just watch Om's reactions and you would feel the depth of emotions he was capable of expressing. He never took short-cuts. When the role demands different shades of emotions, the best way is the hard way.

In "Tamas", Om's character, Nathu, is very concerned about his wife who is pregnant for the first time. He has also killed a pig for which he was paid five rupees. The dead pig is found outside a mosque and that has created a situation of communal riots in the town. The confused Nathu feels guilty of triggering the riots which may endanger his wife and unborn child's life. He is unable to handle the situation. Nathu's concern for his wife takes another level as his fear turns into panic. In such a situation, what would an actor do? He has to depend on his resourcefulness and a director has to trust his actor, and that's exactly what I did. I put him in a lonely space, in a jungle and told him that the situation was that his wife was about to give birth and he was desperate to find a safe place and there was nobody around. I told him, "Do whatever you like", and what he did was so heart-rending.

Sometimes some people become the icon of the time in which they live.

Look at Om's life, he was born in 1950, our country had just been freed (1947) from the British rule and that was a period when India entered a new era

after overthrowing the colonial rule. People had dreams of freedom, justice and happiness. But there were problems too. So many people lost their homes, families were separated, Kashmir was attacked, China war and wars with Pakistan etc. Hence all the dreams we dreamt of were interrupted. There was disappointment and helplessness. It was a difficult time. During this time, parallel cinema was born in our country. It expressed the angst of our society during that period. The young film makers were charged with the zeal to usher in change and every movie was made with the intention to make a difference. Filmmakers were not alone, there were writings, novels, poems and plays written. There was a sense of determination to do something constructive among artists, musicians and filmmakers. It was a vibrant time. Om was an impressionable growing



young man during this period. I think his sensibilities that developed during this time integrated really well with the movie "Tamas". He was able to identify with every experience depicted in "Tamas". The fact is that whatever happens at some point in your life affects your current actions. With his heart-rending scream at the end of "Aakrosh", Om became the icon of his time. Subsequently, if one looks at his body of work, he really represented the spirit of the time in which he lived. When one thinks of Gandhi, you immediately think of the history of Independence. When you think of Om, the spirit of post independent India comes alive.

However, one should remember that an actor does not choose a role, it's



taken to him. But an actor's contribution to the role is his manifestation of it. Hence when one thinks about partition, one thinks of Om. Om's contribution to cinema is not only due to his sincerity or emotional temperament but also owing to a bigger story that he personally went through during that period and had all the memories attached to that difficult period. It is because of those experiences that he so successfully represented those characters in front of you. Om is one of those rare actors who become an icon of one's times. For example, like Dilip Kumar is the icon for romance in the history of Indian cinema. Making an actor the icon of his time is done by the audience and not by the actor. It is because he is oblivious of that fact, he's doing that unknowingly. People who watch his films and the critics who review his work place him in that place of recognition. It is a proud moment for us that an actor like Om Puri was with us.

There is a story behind the last scene of "Ardh Satya". We were shooting in a location which was supposed to be a girls' hostel. I told Om to get ready for the scene but in reality, I had no idea about how I was going to end the scene. Hence, I proposed to do a mechanical rehearsal and I asked Om not to emote but to do it just mechanically. Om started and slowly he started becoming emotional and there was silence on the set. Everybody stopped working and just started watching him. Om kept on speaking and I let him go on. I had asked Smita (Smita Patil who played his girlfriend) to respond to him in her own way, with no particular instructions from my side. Om's intensity was palpable, and you could feel his vibes on your skin. During this rehearsal, as he went into that mode, Smita got really involved in it and she raised her hand instinctively to touch him but did not touch him and just stopped short by few inches. I asked Smita to do the same thing in the final take. This is how I got the final gesture to end the scene.



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Padma Shri

Balwant Thakur

Theatre Director's Speech on 'Actor at Vanishing Point' in a Seminar During BRM 2017.

Many things have already been said regarding the relation between a director and an actor. At different times, different people have shared the thoughts and meaning of this relation. But I believe that this relation cannot be defined in a single line. Working for the past 35 years, I have some opinions regarding this. But these things are based on individuality; they are area specific, region specific. In these 35 years, I have been part of many national and international works. When we talk about structural and socialised relationships, here, it is blind. I feel that theatre is one of the most organised sectors where each and every person is trying to experiment. Every person to move forward always experiments with something new.

As Shantanuji said that Balwant has

been a very strict task master. Sometimes it was very tough to rehearse at some places where there is no proper transport at 3am, it is totally dark. For this strictness mentioned about me, I feel that there should be some motivational level; it is also a big challenge with your actors. Coming to the definition of the relation, the world sees the director as a creative person. If the director does not explore his multidimensional personality, many things are stopped only at the creative level. Here, in my view the role of director in creative terms is only 10% and for the other 90%, he becomes a manager. This 90% manager role, in my perception is the structural and socialised approach of developing a creative sector. This can also depend on an individual's perception, something what you think of theatre.

Outside India, we do not call a theatre group as family, but here in India it is a family. For example Natrang is called as Natrang Parivaar. Natrang Family as even the invitation says it. The particular family's structure depends from one family to other. We need to plan the structure. How to strike the chord, how to maintain the balance in the family etc. Sometimes, in the studios, actors stay overnight, rehearsals

happen at 3am, but many things close early. We face many problems, there are many challenges namely food, stay etc but this does not mean you need to become a P.T master and give your orders. It is all about the psychological understanding with the actor. Let me share something. One of my director student has done many award winning works. He always says that there is so much difference in approaching an actor and working with actor.

Coming to film, the director approaches any actor. He approaches him with a very big team. Coming to theatre it is like one to one. The physical intimacy here cannot be found in any of the creative art fields. We need to develop how close we move with the actor, how we motivate him to walk with us. That approach and relationship is to be maintained. Many of the colleagues say that you favour the actors too much, put them on your head. I ask my actor to run, I feel that he can do better than what he is doing. That is my style of working, my attitude towards work. In the beginning, people used to say that your actor is diverting away into films, not concentrating on the work here. Next time, I won't see him again. I will break his legs. I used to hear all this talk but I don't feel in this way. It is like you

pet a hen but it hatches the egg somewhere else. This does not work. Give liberty to your actor. I feel at the national level, there needs to be a discussion regarding actor's forum, serious discussions need to be held among the actors. I have worked with many actors; I have given them a lot of freedom also. I live very near to them. I work with a lot of understanding with them. I also give them liberty to share everything with me, whatever you have in your mind, please do share with me. I have also worked in government sectors. I have been watching through many years. I feel that we are nullifying actor's role and position which is not right. Why is there no full time theatre actor? I am searching an answer to this question from the past 35 years. We don't have any system where actor oriented



support structure can be setup. An actor is not having a proper support. Firstly, parents scold him later they scold the director more. Parents scolded me that I had spoiled lives of many people. The relationship will get stronger if you support him, promote him, I can see the future. I know he has some scope. I feel we should not hide anything. Tell me one actor in entire north India where we have a full time theatre actor and is living on it. We have created an environment where the actor needs to act separately and also earn his living.

Coming to foreign theatres, we have a socialised structure where the actor is only actor and nothing else. Everything is planned, the actor's pay in a production, the countries he is going to visit etc. I also feel that here in India also, an actor has to have some

guarantee getting some kind of a monthly pay. He has nothing to worry about future. This is a very big challenge. I am in talks with many people regarding this. I am trying to create a multiplex, a cooperative system where the tickets are sold, and the share of that ticket to each and every actor is directly transferred. I am trying to work on this. We need to address this economic factor. I feel this is not happening at many places. Actors are searching for stages, searching for his identity; we all say that theatre is medium of an actor but in the end it is not happening. We need to address how Indian theatre is progressing, taking care of actor. First thing give liberty to the actor, secondly not to undermine his economics. In society, he needs to have his social status which needs to increase. If it does not increase then it is a problem. The theatre actor should be respected a lot. That respect is always related to his behaviour. If we address these things then we can surely see a lot of positive changes. If we as directors also take things in a light way just to get our work done with the actor, then the scenario would worsen. Other directors also taunt me when I show love and bonding towards an actor.

They say to me that the director is the supreme being in a production. You take the director's role very down and start promoting the actor. For example they tell me that before one of your first shows you will get a call from the actor that he is not going to perform the show. Then you will understand our point and director's role. Many people consider these things that my actor could ditch me anytime, something wrong can happen etc. But I feel that it is all up to us. You will surely run your production in a perfect way. The motivation you give the actor will surely help you; build a good relation between you and your actor. Always be positive. I am looking forward to the bright future of Indian theatre. Basically, my study is in economics, I am a law student. I observe many things outside and here in India, I feel now time has come to follow a proper, structured way. I am coming out with a perfect plan as a cooperative who can work in a collective sense with one vision. I am sure that in coming times that stage would soon come to India. □□□





VISION FOR NSD

PART-2 of the Series



In continuation to our 'Vision for NSD' series, I bring to you the 2nd part in the series with a view to see NSD as a new age theatre organization. The changing times call for the following betterment:

9. Entry within NSD campus for former NSD graduates: It is quite a humiliating feeling when a former student needs to explain at the main gate that why he/she wants to go inside NSD. I think that NSD needs to issue an alumnus card to former students (with a magnetic stripe) so that after swiping it at the main gate, an entry is registered. In this manner, they won't have to give long explanations regarding their entry.

10. Visiting Cards: Introducing the networking talent among NSD students is a must in today's competitive world. If you meet a student from Symbiosis/MICA who is doing MBA, first thing that they do is the exchange of their business card with you. It gives the feeling of meeting an organized person. Though, NSD does send its students for various networking opportunities and I remember meeting final year students few years ago during a dinner and cocktail hosted by the German Embassy for a music video launch. But I felt that NSD needed to make them more equipped.

11. Student's website: Making students imbibe a professional attitude

in the true sense of the term is important for any institute of national standard. NSD should encourage its students to book their domain names for 10 years in order to make their websites on which they can load their pictures of specific plays, characters enacted, press reviews and other relevant information.

NSD can buy a large chunk of server space to offer free space with complementary templates. These templates could have 10-20 varieties which can be used numerous times. Each template would cost roughly Rs. 3500. A freelance IT expert can integrate these templates for an average cost of Rs. 2000.

12. NSD should work as a purely teaching institution. There should be two autonomous bodies namely,

a) Directorate of Theatre Festival to organize BRM and other theatre festivals.

b) NSD repertory as a "National Theatre Repertory". Hence, there should be a provision for a separate budget allocation. It should have individual directors with 5 years' tenure. This will help to decentralize the power which is currently centralized with one person. By doing this, NSD would be in a position to concentrate more on teaching like FTII rather than merely being an event management company meant to organize theatre festivals.

13. Students production needs to be shot from three different angles. It should be shot on all 3-4 days as long as the shows are being performed. This

will help in capturing multiple moments, thereby concentrating on a variety of actors during each day. This will generate a big archive of the plays as it doesn't cost anything extra.

14. All student's production video footage shoot should be assigned to a freelance director having television experience who will see the grand rehearsal of the show along with 3 operators and after that he will explain to all 3 camera operators how the play needs to be shot. If the camera operator hasn't seen the grand rehearsal previously, it will be difficult for him to decide during the show where he needs to concentrate while shooting. It will also help him in planning when to change the battery as he will know beforehand when there is a switching of one scene to the next and all the lights will fade out. I noticed how during the single camera shoot of "Anton Chekhov's Stories" production of first year in the boys' hostel, the operator was changing the battery while the performance was in progress and he missed out on 10-20 seconds of the scene.

15. Students diploma productions by final year students need to be given due care as is given to any guest director's production of 2nd year, which comes out with a brochure and a poster with 6 shows. The diploma production should have a proper brochure as well as a poster. As it used to be in the past, there should be a "Diploma Festival" showcase where each diploma production should be given 3 days and 6 shows.

16. NSD teaching staff is

appointed to teach NSD students. They should not be allocated to direct NSD repertory company productions as it robs students that are studying currently of their professors' time if they are busy directing NSD repertory plays. There are many experts working outside NSD who can be called to direct NSD repertory plays.

17. NSD director along with all members of the teaching faculty "must" watch students' scene work (though it is called "scene work" but it's a complete production of 2 hours) after the 1st semester and other similar exercises and provide their valuable inputs in the class room. This will not only encourage students but will also help in assessing the potential of the students. One of the former students aptly reflected his concern saying, "faculty members don't care much to watch our scene work and in the viva they ask questions without seeing our work". There are many students who cannot communicate in a flowery language but are wonderful actors. In such a scenario the true potential of a student cannot be assessed properly.

18. Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM) schedule should be announced 10 days in advance along with the online booking's exact time and needless to say it should start working exactly at that time and on that specific date.

19. There should be a provision for 75% online booking of tickets and 25% Window booking. One person should be allowed to book 2 tickets only rather than the option of 4 tickets for the small capacity auditoriums like 'Bahumukh' and 'Sammukh' as per one IP address.

20. The tickets should be reasonably priced at Rs. 50/100/200 rather than Rs. 300/400 to encourage greater audience participation.

21. To encourage the younger generation to come and watch plays during BRM, students aged 26 years and below maybe given a special discount of 20%.

22. After online booking, tickets for the same should be made available at one go irrespective of the show date and time from 2 counters in NSD

premises from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm in order to avoid rush prior to the show at the ticket window of various auditoriums. This way the late entry of audiences during plays would be prevented.

23. Stage lighting versus discussion panel lighting: I remember Prof. Waman Kendre telling technicians in the control room before the panel discussion in 'Sammukh' to adjust the lighting as it was too harsh. Normally, diffusion material in front of the light is not used for stage lighting for plays. However, lighting professionals need to understand that they can use gateway paper/butter paper/Lee or Rosco diffusion sheets to diffuse the light which will be soothing to the eyes of the panelists during such discussions.

24. In the same panel discussion moderated by Prof. Waman Kendre in 'Sammukh', lighting on the podium was falling on the podium rather than on the face of the person delivering the lecture. Finally, someone had to ask the officials on duty to move the podium while the lecture was going on in order to enable the face to catch the light. This is a must to get the correct exposure for available light photography and also for audiences to have proper feel.

25. An equally careless attitude towards the lighting was witnessed in 'Abhimanch' auditorium throughout BRM 2017. The top panel displaying the subtitles in English was lit by floodlights falling on it. It was simply a matter of cutting the light falling on the panel so that audiences could read the subtitles of the play.

26. During the lecture of Govind Nihalani on Om Puri, one sensible, former NSD student could be seen signaling the technicians seated at the lighting console panel from the other end of 'Bahumukh' to dim a particular light as it was falling on the projection screen where the clipping was playing. When the technicians didn't understand for almost 20 seconds, someone from the audience sitting close to the panel stood up to wave with both hands to make it clear with a loud gesture to switch off the light falling on the display screen. In view of these gaffes, NSD needs to appoint

trained professionals to handle the lighting during BRM.

27. Guests coming from Bombay could arrive the night before their respective program/lecture so that factors like flight delays and delays due to traffic etc. can be avoided and the next day's program starts on time. Director Govind Nihalani's lecture was scheduled at 2:00 pm but started only at 3:15 pm. Hence, those who had to go to SRC for the 4:00 pm show had to leave in between after 30 minutes at 3:45 pm. All this happened when the lecture lasted one hour.

28. If BRM cares for its audiences then they really need to work on the quality. The closing musical program of this year was horrible. Hence, Kamani auditorium became half empty much before the program finished.

29. The BRM 2015 opened with NSD director Prof. Waman Kendre's own production with 2 additional shows at Kamani. In 2016, the opening saw chairman Mr. Ratan Thiyam's play. This time the same mistake was not repeated but two productions by chairman (one directed by himself and another by his group), two productions by NSD director Waman Kendre and two by Ms. Tripurari Sharma were included in the festival. Not only that but Sunday's prime time slot was allocated to them. On 5th feb, 7:00 pm slot in Kamani was allocated to "Mohe Piya" directed by Waman Kendre and on 12th February, 8:30 pm Abhimanch was given to "Urubhangam" (a mediocre production) directed by chairman Ratan Thiyam. NSD being the host organization should not indulge in granting such obvious favors to itself.

These simple yet necessary changes are definitely the need of the hour without which the organization can function (and has been functioning) but can never truly exploit its potential and reach an international theatre organization standard. A little bird told me, "Somebody is listening" !!!

Naresh Sharma

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BRM 2017

Over view



This year's edition, keeping with the past, reflects some changes while keeping the original mandate of the festival intact that was showcasing plays from India and world to the students, lovers and practitioners of theatre. The 21-day event treated theatre lovers of six cities including New Delhi, Kurukshetra, Pune, Agartala, Hyderabad and Patna of some great theatre performances from across India and 12

countries. This time a record of 602 entries from India and 70 from abroad were submitted to the selection committee. Among these the short-listed 94 productions were staged, including 14 from abroad with one from Israel unable to make it due to logistic problems. These performances in various forms promised the audience BRM presence could be felt in far flung areas like Arunachal Pradesh and other

North-East States by holding seminars, training sessions, workshops and festivals. Director Natrang, Balwant Thakur was one of the speakers in the seminar moderated by Wamen kendre . He spoke at length on the assigned topic 'The Actor and the Director' he also spoke on the economics aspect of theatre. Most of the cinematographers failed as Director in India and could not survive in long run. Very few DOP who

understood the game of art house Cinema in 80's , Govind Nihalani was one of them .His Cinematic work is based on literature (short story/novel/play). He spoke about his relationship with late Om Puri.

Among the most talked about productions from abroad were "Anna in the Tropics" Directed by Deborah Merola, " Love and Life" from Sri lanaka , a wonderful non verbal performance . Another non verbal performance by "Husband and wife" group from Turkey called "Dream Of The Phoenix". As an audience we were spellbound for 70 mins. The audience was touched by the gesture that Turkish artists had taken enough care to include the Hindi text , classical dance movements , old Bollywood and popular contemporary songs , Om chanting to connect with Indian Audience. It enriches the vision and thinking of the audience.

In India some people do B.A after doing their M.A.! Our respectable Chairman ,NSD Governing Body ,Shree Rathan Thiyam ,stalwart of theatre ,belongs to this special category. Many Years ago, I saw a performance directed by him in Paris for which there was a standing ovation , I have never ever seen in my whole life where the audience were continuously clapping for at least 3-5 mins . Later on whenever I had the opportunity in Bombay or Delhi, I made it point to see his plays without fail. I am an ardent admirer of his previous works like Chakravayuha ,Uttar Priyadarshi ,Ritusamharam , Andha Yug . I lost respect for " Rathan Thiyam " , when in 2015 he not only allowed Wamen Kendre to open the BRM with his own Directed play but also had his 2-more additional shows . Again shamelessly BRM 2016 was opened with Rathan Thiyam own production. I personally believe that when you deteriorate as human being your work also deteriorates as it reflects your inner being.

I left 20 mins. before another interesting play (Sajida's play as i had already seen it) so as to reach 10 min before the show begins but what a disappointment it was. For 19 mins. there was 8-9 artists keep playing Manzira and 2 others- Pung Dhon Dholak .Then for another 21 mins., till i



left, four Manipur actors were jumping from left to right and doing acrobatics against white backdrop. There was no hope when 50 percent of the total

duration of the play was wasted in this nonsense.

It is high time for Rathan Thiyam, that he should start watching plays of



other people to realize where he stands in the theater world .(I have not ever seen him watching any play for last 3 -years during BRM!!)

If this year he happens to see his own NSD diploma productions of talented lot - Sravasti Banerjee, Bhoominathan, Praveen kumar, Vipin M, Vidisha Purohit, he would realize how far this " New Generation of wiz kids" has gone.

Various Productions bring in the new designs, styles, angles and texts which showcase variety of possibilities of doing theatre.

Sravasti Banerjee belongs to the category of those directors, who don't just bask in the glory of past achievements but consistently working to improve upon her previous production, the show was packed to its fullest capacity. It had few more scenes which were not there in the previous show. One can gaze the success of the show by the cheers and reactions of the audience. Among the audience one could spot Director of the well appreciated play in BRM "Aana In The Tropics" Ms Deborah Merola, various Film & theatre Critics- Sheekesh Mishra, Vinod Bhardwaj , Ajit Rai, Kavita Nagpal. "Final Exit " was best NSD Diploma Production of 2016 and much better than many so called -professional plays showcased in BRM-2017 and hence deserve The Prime Time & Prime Day & Prime Venue slot in BRM. To say the least play uses the FARCE to contemplate about "Suicide" and hence "Life", the most precious gift to us. Proper Casting, Who else could have played the characters enacted by Sikander and Tasabber Ali including Minor Characters like "Hangman" perfectly cast from NSD - working staff due to his body Structure . Innovative dialogues like "Budhi vardhak Churan ", Evolved Text of the play made the play a Successful Experiment.

If you liked "A Beautiful Mind", By Ron Howard, you would also like "Infinite". The play is not Theatre version of the film but deals with same keyword "Eccentric and

Genius" . It is the story of father and his relationship with his daughter .This Diploma has the best sound design I have ever heard in any NSD student production. With minimalist set and without any pretentious set on the Stage "Chandan Kumar and Bornali Borah- have given their one of the best performances" and has created the magic on the stage along with other wonderful actors like Rahil Bhardwaj and Rana Kamal.

Closing Play of the Festival Molier's TARTUFF directed by Boominathan has achieved what " Acharya Tartuffe" by Prasanna many years ago with NSD Repertory could not. Within two mins., the opening sequence of hypnotizing visual and mesmerizing music set the mood and will confirm Boominathan talent as a Director. Boomi's production treated the subject in a unique way which is an example of how one can convert a play into a memorable experience. He has sincerely worked on various layers like Costume Design, Hair Style, contemporary connect of dialogues. Tasabber's costume and his Bollywood actor's mannerism add new dimensions to the play . Medha is equally filmi in every sense of the term particularly the way she keep saying" peetajee " to her father brilliantly enacted by talented actor Chaitanya . Rana Kamal as lead "Tartuff" is the perfect cast and do justice to the Role. Other Talented cast of actors like Bornali Borah , Rahil Bhardwaj , Chandan Kumar, Sikandra Kumar, Jot Grewal ,Mandeep Randhawa makes it a wonderful play.

Theatre Schools and Film Schools are the bastion for experimentation. If audience was looking for theatrical production, beyond DRAMA, which don't fit into the "Run-of-the Mill "category of plays,"THE 3rd WAY "is must watch. Vidisha has Intelligently integrated, Installation art work in an evolved text for the production." Two Musical Boys" ,Daood & Sagnik, have added the soul to the play of talented cast of NSD graduates - Sikander, Medha, Mahendra, Vivek

and Prasanna having thoughtful Light Design .

Once in a blue moon, i will buy 30-tickets for a play and bring our CRAFT students to watch it. " TAMASHA-E-NAUTANKI " deserve this honor. The prime "Time , Day and Venue " allocated to this play, which is normally reserved for a play directed by NSD - Chairman / Director ,speaks volume for its standard. The play explore the dying tradition of Nautanki in today's Context with sensible content .The backbone of the play were two brilliant actors "Sneha and Joy".

Surya Mohan Kulshreshtha's play Bhagvadajjukeeyam was a real treat. He thoroughly understands what theatre direction is all about. The way a dialogue needs to be spoken, each and every movement of the actors were thoughtfully choreographed. Since today digital technology is available, I felt that prerecorded music track could have been freshly recorded for the crisp sound.

I rarely watch the same play by the same director twice, but TUMHARA VINCENT, I saw again in Kamani Auditorium. When I first visited Holland many years ago and was among one of those standing in one km long queue having more than 500 tourists in front of Van Gogh-museum in Amsterdam , it reconfirmed his importance in the world of visual art. The rest became much clear when you spend half the day admiring those rich colors of Self Portraits and his other paintings.

My interest in Van Gough grew in 1991 , when as a 1st year FTII student , I attended my first International film festival in Bangalore and saw this wonderful French film written and directed by Maurice Pialat . Later, I also saw Vincent, by Paul Cox, Vincent and Theo by Robert Altman and others to know more about him and also to know how other film makers has treated the same subject. Much later these films inspired me to read

"Lust for life" by Irving Stone.

Last year when Kunal Kuldeep invited me to see the play in SRC , Tumhara Vincent , directed by Satyabrata Rout, I again had the opportunity to think about the world of Van Gogh. Since Vincent's voice sounded familiar to me so I inquired with Kunal about the lead actor and then realized that I had seen his Diploma Production, Andha Yug in BRM many years ago and that's why his voice sounded familiar. Since in the play, he had shaved his head for playing - Ashwatthama, I could not recognize him but how can you forget his reverberating Voice!! The story of Vincent van Gogh's life in this play has all the elements wonderfully enacted by Sahidur Rahaman - passion, conflict and most important Van Gogh's eccentricity, which is not easy to convey on the stage or celluloid. The play successfully showcased "the drive and determination" he had to succeed as an artist.

The play may not have the wonderful reproduction of Van Gogh's original painting due to limitation of the budget, but scenic design ,lighting, costume by Gagandeep , is not just " decoration" but transports you in fascinating world of Van Gogh.

To say the least Sahidur Rahaman is not trying to copy "Jacques Dutronc" of Maurice Pialat , " Tim Roth" of Robert Altman or "Kirk Douglas" of - Vincente Minnelli but quite successfully created his own unique category of "Sahidur Rahaman as Vincent " of Satyabrata Rout's vision . After watching " TUMHARA VINCENT any theater actor is natural to feel jealous of - Sahidur, as it is once in a lifetime role.

Various Other Plays which were real treat to the theatre lovers were -Love Your Nature, Panchajanya , Chekhov Chaika ,Outcast, Anand Raghunadan, Laagi lagan.

- Naresh Sharma, Editor, CINEMATOGRAPHY ART.



A close-up portrait of Rohit Sharma, a man with dark, wavy hair, wearing a maroon shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a recording studio with equipment and lights.

Interview with Music Composer **Rohit Sharma**

Rohit Sharma hails from the national capital New Delhi. With a Bachelor's degree in Engineering from Delhi College Of Engineering, he is a trained musician in Hindustani Classical Flute from Pt. Harshwardhan and Western Classical Piano from Delhi School of Music. His film scoring career began during the early 2010s with the critically acclaimed film *Ship Of Theseus* and later *Buddha in a Traffic Jam*, which was released in 2016. He is also the founding member of *Swaang*, a group of actors, writers, directors and academics all involved in the film industry in various ways. *Swaang* burst on to the online space in December 2012 after the New Delhi gang rape when they composed 'Maa Nee Meri', a moving letter from a daughter to a mother. His latest release "*Anaarkali Of Aarah*" written and directed by Avinash Das, got exceptional applaud and rave reviews from film and music critics, all across.

How you became a part of *Anaarkali Of Aarah*?

Actor Swara Bhaskar introduced me to the writer director Avinash Das, who vaguely knew me as a member of our progressive band *Swaang* and was mildly impressed by my work available online. I had worked on the soundtrack of *Ship Of Theseus* and *Buddha In A Traffic Jam*, which had music of a completely different zone /genre, so he wasn't sure that I would be able to bring about the rustic flavor of Bihar. He gave me references of over a many songs. After hearing the first track I recorded, all his worries were put to rest.

What were the challenges you faced while creating the songs and music for the film?

The script of *Anaarkali Of Aarah*, it's geographical /cultural scape and the guidelines by the director left very little scope for experimentation in music. So to keep the song tracks

true to the script and yet sound multi-coloured, I tried to broadly create three types of tracks; First one being the lip-sync songs like "*Dunaliya Mein Jung*" or "*Mora Piya Matlab Ka Yaar*" or the climax song "*Sa Ra Ra Ra*" that are performed by artists on stage /on screen, wherein I tried to create bigger sound spectrum than what actually exists in such real gigs in *Aarah*.

The second category belongs to the rehearsal songs and a couple of background songs like "*Mora Balam Bambaiya*" or "*Hamare Jobna Pe*", which had more authentic "songs of the land" feel.

Third category has songs with more Urban /Bollywood feel, like "*Mann Be qaid*", sung by Sonu Nagam and the thumri "*Badnaam Jiya De Gaari*", sung by Rekha Bhardwaj.

Tell us about the double meaning lyrics used in the songs.

The protagonist of our film is a Singer-Dancer, who seduces her audience by singing dual meaning bawdy songs. The bigger challenge was to distance our music and film from the regular Bhojpuri stuff. Avinash Das came up with this idea of writing songs with sexual connotation, but with a hidden political /social comment on the present times. Our brilliant writers, Ram Kumar Singh, Dr. Sagar, Avinash Das, Prashant Ingole and Ravinder Randhawa, who is also the Associate Director of Anaarkali Of aarah, achieved this remarkable feat, without compromising on the aesthetics.

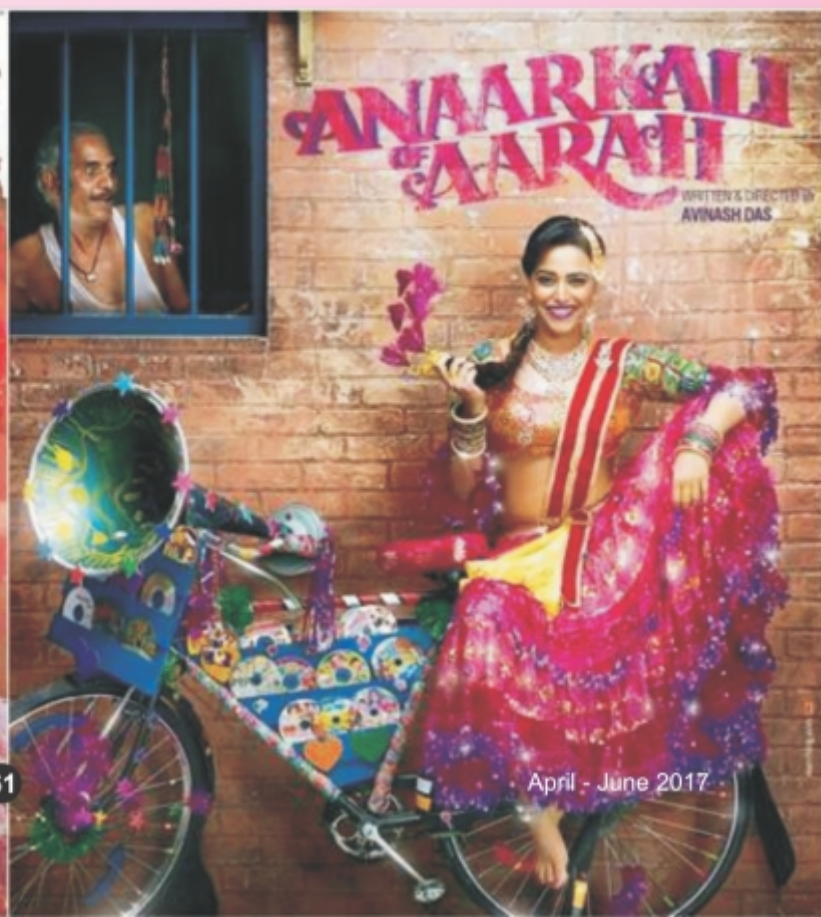
How did you find the perfect voice for Swara Bhaskar?

Swara has a deep voice and to make her sound more authentic, I had Swati Sharma (of Banno Tera Swagger fame), in mind. I was all the more convinced about my choice, when she told me she was from Bihar. Pawni Pande was a surprise find. She sang the scratch track of climax song "Sa Ra Ra Ra"; and she sang it so well, that me, Avinash, Swara and Ravinder (writer of the song), all of us decided to keep her voice in the song. To tell you the truth, we never called her to re-dub the song; so her voice in the track is same what she dubbed as a scratch! Pawni eventually sang two more tracks in this film. Here I must add that Indu Sonali, who is a big singing star in Bhojpuri films, has also graciously sung two songs in Anaarkali Of Aarah.

How special is this film for you?

It's not very often that one gets to score for a musical film and that too where music plays a character in itself. Films like, Mughal-E-Aazam, Teesri Kasam, Pakeezah and Karz had every major event, every twist and turn in the film was marked or underlined by a song /soundtrack. Likewise in Anaarkali Of Aarah, even the climax of the film is riding on a song "Sa Ra Ra Ra", which is three songs rolled into one. So yes, this film will remain special for me always.

Important Films of Rohit Sharma as Music Composer





Tell us something about your band Swaang.

I met Swara and Ravinder, while doing a film titled F.O.S.L.A. (Frustrated One Sided Lovers' Association) written and directed by Suraj Jaiswal, which unfortunately couldn't get completed; but the songs in that film somehow brought us all together to do an album of progressive songs. We composed 8-10 songs for the album, but eventually released our first song "Maa Nee Meri"

a moving letter from a daughter to a mother, in retaliation to the gruesome Nirbhaya incident on 16th December 2012. Swara, Ravinder and I formed our progressive band Swaang and started doing shows, primarily addressing contemporary social and political issues.

What are your upcoming projects?

There are not many; Colours Of Life, set in Kolkata starring Rituporno Sen gupta, directed by Prakash Bhardwaj is

almost complete; currently working on The Holy Fish, written and directed by Vimal Chandra Pandey and Sandeep Mishra. Otherwise, I am in the process of signing some decent films that will be released on a bigger platform, than my previous films. Also reaching out to do mainstream films with wider audience reach.

- Interviewed by Lalit Rao, Film Critic (FIPRESCI) □□□





Workshop by

Jayant Deshmukh

Production Designer in CRAFT Film School, Delhi





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* Films of Subash Sahoo as Sound Designer