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CINEMATOGRAPHY ART

On Directing
NH10

Navdeep Singh

On Film Distributions

Avtar Panesar

On DOPs

**Shivendra
Singh Dungarpur**

Interviews on

NSD Production

with

Kanhaiya; Chittaranjan; Sravasti;
Greeny; Vivek; Medha; Bhooshan Bhatt

Production Designer

Sukant Panigrahy

DOP

Anil Mehta

Arvind Kannabiran

Savita Singh

Mohana Krishna

Sound Designer

Allwin Rego

Sanjay Maurya

Editor

Deepa Bhatia

Cover Picture

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MUMBAI

+91 9320223624



AHMEDABAD

+91 9978370326



ODISHA

+91 9699281539

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Editor & Publisher:
Naresh Sharma

Associate Editor:
Lalit Rao
Akansha Kochar
Rashi Misra

Sr. Assit. Editor:
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Ram Pratap

Photographer:
Arun Dhiya

Head Office:
CRAFT: Center for Research in art of film and Television.

272, Car Market, Sector - 7, Rohini,
Delhi-110085

Tel.: +91 11 3241 6868 / 3291 6868.

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Editor's Desk

In every issue of our magazine, we give a serious thought as to how we can make the magazine more readable by "Cinebuffs". Hence it has been our constant endeavor to add new sections. The current issue is our 8th issue where you will find sections on film making called "Business of Cinema". It has interviews with Avtar Panesar, who heads international Distribution of Yash Raj Films and Yogesh Lakhani, MD-Bright Outdoor, a company which is kind of pioneer on outdoor hoardings and other display media. Future issues will be covering more of business aspects related to film " Distribution and Publicity " , which is the backbone of making any good film as box office hit.

The regular section has features on editors, cinematographers, directors, production designers. Another space which brings forward is the new generation of talent from NSD be it writers, director or actors. Though our magazine is focused on cinema but most things remain common between the theater and the film. This current issue features interviews related to two important students' production directed by guest faculty workshop By Chitaranajan Tripathy and Kanhaiya Lal Kaithwas. We look forward to your suggestions to make it better and better with each coming issue.

Cheers!!

Naresh Sharma
naresh.sharma@log2craft.org

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interview with **Avtar Panesar** Vice President - International Operations

Most of the YRF banner films are geared towards Indian taste of mass appeal, how do you position international release of such films so that it could interest the native audience of that country, besides US/UK market.

The term "Bollywood" is both a boon and a bane.... While it creates intrigue it also plays to stereotypes which keeps a certain audiences away. Ultimately the key is to identify the right partners who come on board for a film

with passion to showcase it in their market and let that lead us. I find that it always helps to have partners that know their terrain and know what angle to spin to reach out to their audiences – that insight is invaluable. So as with anything "good people" are key. We just released "Mardaani" in Poland recently. The film has been released in an Arthouse circuit – while the Polish audiences have seen Bollywood extravaganzas earlier, they appear to have moved away from it now. When



yash raj films

they saw "Mardaani" they were pleasantly shocked and surprised that we also make films like these. I also take key Stars like Rani Mukerji to promote "Mardaani" in Poland and Aamir Khan to promote "Dhoom 3" in Japan. These emerging markets to get media support for a film, which may otherwise miss out on the attention without the talent. It's a slow burn but I believe that Indian movies are like Indian food, they're an acquired taste, but once you're hooked – you're hooked for life!

With Films like 'Dum Lage KE HAisha' YRF banner has extended its diaspora for international market as well, it could appeal to audiences untapped so far ?

Yes indeed and because we believed in the film and felt that it had the merits to speak to a more global audiences, we held back the international release and only released the film domestically to start with.

What is your sale strategy for such films?

We are now in the process of fine tuning the film for the international release and hope to repeat its domestic success. We have had a very encouraging response from the diaspora audiences albeit they're all disappointed that we didn't have a day and date release. We hope this strategy will pay off since the hype of the India success has now reached our countrymen living abroad. For the non-diaspora audiences, we have rechristened the film as 'My Big Fat Bride'



Does YRF tag such films as low-medium budget films or art houses or different catalogue films from their presentations so far ?

Not really, for us a film is a film. Ultimately its either a good film or bad film, so the budgets don't really play a part at that level. I feel this view point stems from that thought that regardless of the fact that we are vertically integrated studio in the true sense of the word and control pretty much every part of the value chain, at it's core Yash Raj Films is a company driven entirely by the creative process of nurturing, developing, producing and delivering good stories. At times we may succeed or fail in that process, but that is the core of the company and that's what set's our Studio apart.

What kind of business from such films like DUM LAGE KE.....is expected to in terms of revenue generated by DVD / television / theatrical release from international Market ?

That's the million dollar question for any film especially before it's release. As you may be aware, the DVD is a dead format today, so the revenue streams have shrunk from that point of view. The digital hasn't been able to replace that business yet. But on an average the ratio has been 30% of the films revenue can come from international sales. Of course there are films that can buckle this trend, but by and large this ratio stands true.

The Foreign Language film section is so huge for all films across borders to be accommodated, how come Films like ' Monsoon Wedding' made some noise, but no Indian Director has been able to match these footsteps either in the same very year of the film release or

much after that as well .

I believe that as an industry we have been the most self sufficient and successful film industry in the world. We have never needed to the external support for our survival, be it, finance, production, talent or distribution.

Our industry has been built by people who were creative people at their core but with an entrepreneurial streak. So we have built this industry without the support of anyone including the government. This has been our biggest strength, but as we move in to this new world, it seems to be becoming our weakness at some levels. This is because we don't follow the rules laid out by the gobal film making community, i.e. making a film and delivering it months before its release, doing the festival circuit to maybe compete or just create awareness or a buzz for the international audiences, making films that speak a more global language and collaborating more with other countries which gives those countries a certain ownership of these films, resulting in local distribution support. We are still and perhaps rightly so in some cases, an inward looking industry but I believe if we are play on the global stage now, we will need to change the rules of how we function as a whole. So when there's a film we feel that can break through we need to take the risk of taking it out to the markets and showcase it beyond just the diaspora, look partnering in areas where we don't have sufficient strength or reach – so a new distribution strategy needs to be put in place for some films.

Of course, you may not be able go do that the big ticket tent pole films as the domestic and overseas Diaspora are the target audiences, but on smaller films this is quite possible and we are now taking these baby steps, so I suspect you will see more such successes.

We would love to hear your success mantra as achievements since you have been part of International sales at YRF. Could you sight few examples for our readers please?

I'm not sure I'm qualified to give "gyaan" but I guess I only work with people who are passionate about my

films, people who may not always be from this business and are the know it all types. I have developed people as distributors who had nothing to do with distribution but are now on the top of their game in their regions. I believe whether you're employing someone or looking for business partners, there are only 3 things I am interested in, if you have these 3 fundamentals the rest can be taught... Honesty, Integrity and Passion for my business. I also don't jump from partner to partner on a film to film basis, which builds faith, confidence and loyalty towards my brand and films, as my distributors know that they will not be unnecessarily pitted in a bidding war to raise the price on a film. Ultimately, I believe you can do good clean ethical business and still be successful – YRF as a Studio is a testament that ethos.

□□□



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Interview with *Sushil Agrawal*

Since 1986, Mr. Sushil Kumar Agrawal, MD, Ultra Media & Entertainment had been in the forefront in producing and distributing various interesting content worldwide. In their endeavor to provide a one stop shop service for the Marathi film industry from shooting the first scene to the end DPX/DCP format, Ultra Media & Entertainment Private Ltd also provides them with their "state of the art", In-house post production facilities. This Hi tech studio based in the heart of the Mumbai City offers a range of services through their indigenous softwares and latest technologies. In this interview Naresh Sharma, interacts with Mr. Agarwal to find out about the current DVD distribution Scenario in India.

In today's world, where a lot of downloading happens on the internet, what is the current situation of DVD distribution in India?

DVD distribution not only in India but worldwide has taken a back seat because of the Internet, but there are still people who are passionate about collecting the good stuff. Suppose there is Guru Dutt's pack or Rajshree films pack they will definitely procure the DVD.

VHS media is totally gone. Now whatever is available is on VCD or DVD and because now Blu-ray prices have gone down, there is a demand for Blu-ray, but yes not to the tune of what it was 5 years ago, so the industry is almost 80% down. Suppose seven years ago if one title was selling hundred pieces today it may be selling twenty pieces and this 20% market is stagnant for the last five years.

Are people really buying Blu-ray?

Every film is not available in the theatre, also either it will be available on TV channels or digital media. On TV you have to view the movie as per the TV channel schedule whereas when you have Blu-ray and a good home theatre system you have the privilege to view the film as per your own convenience. Also it is a status symbol to buy a Blu-ray and keep it in the library.

For any commercially successful film, how many copies of its Blu-ray version would be coming out?

1500 to 2000, not more than that due to the price tag of 600 – 700 rupees, which earlier was 1500 – 2000 rupees and in today's scenario there would be 15,000 DVD copies.

In Germany first few months you can only rent the DVD and after the DVD rental phase is over you can buy the DVD. Why do you think this didn't happen in India?

It has not been possible due to piracy. In India piracy is very rampant, that is why it is uncontrollable due to the size of our country compared to other countries.

What kind of revenue does an art

house film generate for you, say films like "I am Kalam" or "Dum Laga Ke Haisha"?

These films which you are mentioning are semi commercial films. Every art house film will not be like that.

People love to keep copies of such films, like for "I am Kalam" we sold tremendous number of copies as the packaging was very good, the news coverage the reviews of the film were fantastic and that is why people bought that film as it was not available on TV or theatre.

Films like "Dum Laga Ke Haisha" or "Queen" are such that people would like to preserve these films but if you see the routine commercial film, they watch it once at home and gift it to some neighbor.

What is the expansion which Ultra has gone through in the past five years?

We at Ultra always look at the future. We knew what was going to happen in future, in the era of VHS. Also we were the first people to bring the VCD of a film in India, so we started this digital form, also we saw that VCD is not very much picked in other parts of the world and that the DVD is growing. We had foreseen that DVD is going to come, so we started planning for the same. While we were buying the rights of VCD and DVD we also saw that the digital era is going to come, so simultaneously we started buying the rights of digital platforms, so that is why we have a library and more than 1500 films for the video DVD rights. We always go in the right direction and expand accordingly. We came from VHS to VCD & DVD, and then from the digitized era we came to digital era, we saw that there is a need of good quality picture and people would be requiring good quality HD and later 4k quality so we set up our own studios for restoration and up scaling of the film. We have expanded in that area and yes there were other things. We started buying copy rights for whatever was available, we bought negative rights, we also produce certain films, and now we also produce small films for digital platforms. So these are the vertical we have touched.

You mentioned the production

part, so in future how many films on an average do you intend to produce in a year and are they going to be semi commercial or fully commercial films?

When we say production of films we are hardly going to produce 1 or 2 films in a year and that too depends on the subject, if it is good otherwise we are happy buying the rights from people who have already produced and the products are tested. But yes we are going in for huge production for digital platforms like 10-15 programs so we are already producing for various digital platforms and now it will be going huge.

When you buy rights for a DVD, is it only for India or other Asian countries are also included?

That depends upon the producer and the deal. When we import English or any foreign movie generally we buy rights for India and all SAARC countries but for local products sometimes we buy rights for India and sometimes the world, for example for "I am Kalam" we bought worldwide rights.

But you have a stronger base in India, which is the major market for your DVD films like "I am Kalam." Do you think it had an appeal in the international market?

"I am Kalam" had a worldwide

market. We sold it everywhere either DVD or TV rights including China. China is a very tough market to crack for Indian films. Films like "I am Kalam" are a different example but generally it depends on the film.

There are two types of markets overseas which are specific for Indian films. One is called "Traditional Market" where Indian people and some Asian people will watch the film and it's even distributed by Indian people.

The other is "Non-Traditional Market" where all foreign people will watch the movie. For non-traditional market it depends on the film. They will be happy in watching classic movies say by directors like Guru Dutt & Satyajit Ray. If you go to the European market people will not prefer films like "Chennai Express" but will definitely prefer a good classic.

Do you remember any film which did wonders for the non-traditional market?

"I am Kalam" is a very good example for our company. It was that film which encouraged us to go into the non-traditional overseas market and study it. Since the last 2 years we are attending a lot of film festivals, film markets and trying to sell in those markets. □□□



interview with

Yogesh Lakhani

Chairman Bright Outdoor

There are sites which come under Bombay Municipal Corporation & there are some private sites also. Is everything controlled by BMC?

All the private properties plus the government properties - Railway, BMC, BEST, Airports, MMRDM in all of these properties the BMC's permission is required.

For these kinds of hoardings you have to take permission from BMC's Art Department, Road Department, Garden Department, RTO Department, DMC, AMC, Municipal Commissioner. Earlier it was like you take permission for once and it used to be for long term, only the permit was to be renewed every year, but now a days every two years the file goes for re-examination to the BMC and when the whole file has been re-examined the permit is renewed for another two years. So everything that is done is done officially and under the

guidelines of BMC.

If the property is a private property and if there is a hoarding over there then does one have to pay the rent for it?

The rent has to be paid to whosoever owns that private property, one has to pay the tax to the municipality, a license is required, and another assessment tax of the municipality has to be paid. You have to form out the whole structure for the light man and for the meter. You have to pay to BES - Reliance, so in short, yes there are multiple expenses.

We see that in few hoardings the bright outdoor is imprinted and in few it is not. Is there any kind of fee difference between the hoardings with bright outdoor written on them as compared to the hoardings without bright outdoor imprinted?

No, there is no such difference between the prices of hoardings. The bright outdoor logo is imprinted on the back side of all of the hoardings, say for example if the booking comes from the client then the main logo is imprinted in the front only if the client asks for it otherwise it stays at the back. It's just like a blank air ticket with our logo on it. Say if we have 1000 hoardings and the client books 700 hoardings with the logo in the front then the client gets the display of his work on the 700 hundred hoardings along with the bright outdoor logo and the remaining 300 hoardings also have the logo but on the back side of it. There is no variation in the rate of the hoarding it's just the symbol of availability that it's a client hoarding.

Is your business of bright outdoor hoardings set up only in Delhi and Bombay or other cities also?

No, it's in PAN India. Metro cities in

the south, north, east & west, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore it's everywhere.

When a film is to release how many days do your client's book the sites for?

See now days people mostly book our sites for maximum 10-15 days because it depends on the budget of the film, these days the budgets of the films are decreasing. There are both big budget and low budget films. So, it depends on the film say for example you have to have food on a road side dhaba or a restaurant or a five star or a seven star hotel or if you want to travel you will travel by train or by bus or you will take a flight it totally depends on your budget i.e.; how much you can spend. So they go with the size and the budget of the film. They book the days, package, and money and decide everything according to the marketing plan.

There are both low budget and high budget films say for example if there is a low budget film like "Dum Laga Ke Haisha" and a big budget film like "Kick," then in Bombay what's the budget of these kind of films for the hoardings?

For the small budget films 15/20 lakhs, if the budget is lower it goes till 10 lakhs and if it is a Marathi film then it goes even lower till 5 lakhs. But if it is a big budget film like "Kick" then it goes up to 70/80 lakhs. For a film like "PK" it goes up to 50 lakhs because they get so much of collection.

How many hoardings will a low budget film get in Bombay for 10 lakhs?

They will get minimum 10/15 hoardings in the budget of 10 lakhs.

I have seen that few hoardings are horizontal and few are vertical so what is the difference between both?

It totally depends upon the type of building. At few places the buildings are vertically long and at few places the buildings are horizontally wide. It also depends upon the audience that the film is targeting. There are three types of target areas we work upon - The Exhibitor, The Target Audience, and The Hero. So after covering all the three



points and keeping them in mind the hoardings are placed everywhere.

Do you have your own machines or you get your work done from somewhere outside?

No, earlier we had but now we get it done from outside as it becomes less costly. It's pretty much easy to get it done from outside. The client gets the flex printed and mounted.

Do you work only with hoardings or you have other spaces for publicity too?

We have a variety of mediums for outdoor publicity like bus panels, poles, kiosks, cinema advertising, multiplexes, mall branding etc.

Generally the big distributors distribute 10-15 films in a year and few do just 2 or 3 in a year, so do they do the bookings on a yearly basis or film to film basis?

It's done on a film to film basis. If there are many films we give them some discount but it never happens in bulk.

How many days before a film's release do people come to you for bookings?

They come about a month or 15/20 days before the release of the film. It

totally depends on the budget of the film because they invest their money in the publicity accordingly and in the same way the number of hoardings increases or decreases.

Once the booking is done then how is the payment given to you? How much do they give you in advance?

We take almost 25% of the payment in advance but if we have been working with the client from a long time then we don't take any advance. If there is any new individual producer then we take the full payment in advance. Corporate houses which we are already working with and do 90% of their films like Yashraj films, Karan Johar, Star Fox, UTV, Disney, take credit of 2-3 months. This year we did 150 films out of the 225 films that released.

Who approaches you for the work, the distributors, or the producers?

Mostly producers come for this or whom the producers have sold the film to. In distribution also there are two kinds of distributors, to whom they give the film on commission in which case the publicity is handled by those people only and if the film is sold to someone then the person who buys it does all the publicity work.





In Hollywood the casting director is an important department head like the dop, editor, but in the Indian scenario it started happening only in recent years. So how do you foresee the future of casting directors in India?

First of all I would like to tell you that this job profile is going to be one of the main departments in Bollywood in one or two years as I know it from my own experience of how people are responding to this job. I am happy that I am part of this change.

How do you find the right talent to cast?

So far as finding the talent is concerned, first thing is that I don't stick to one city as I think India is flooded with talented people. I search as per the script, dialogues, type of character demands, for which I go to a particular city or the local area to source out actors as theatre is happening in every part of India.

Do you start the search for people only when somebody approaches you for casting or is it an ongoing process?

It is an ongoing process. I have my teams in Chandigarh, Delhi, Bangalore, and other cities and they keep sending me the talent portfolio. Anybody can walk into my office on days that casting is on. So my casting process is on, regularly. Our data is ever increasing and people of all age groups are coming to us.

If a person wants to approach you, how can they go about it?

They can just walk into my office, the person will be attended. I have a separate team for introductions and a brief audition is taken. If we like the audition they are shortlisted, then I personally audition them. It is a very simple process. If you have talent; you can walk into my office.

Generally when an agency connects the talent to the director or the production house they charge or cut a percentage and then pay the actor. What is your way of working?

Normally so called modeling agencies will promote their own people as they get commission from them. But in our case it is very different. We purely work for the producer and basically we are hired by the producer or the director, if they like they work with me. They pay my fee like any other HOD of the film, so I am not interested in how much the actor is charging etc. In my area of work we put forward whoever is suitable for the film. I will find the talent from anywhere, whoever is right for the role, I will go with it.

If there are two films, one in which one requires 5 actors and the other, in which 10 actors are required for small roles, what will be the difference in your fee?

Interview with Casting Director

Mukesh Chhabra

I don't judge my fee by the number of actors. It depends on the budget of the film, either it is a small, medium, or a big budget film. For a film called "Shahid" directed by Hansal Mehta, I charged less as it was a low budget film.

Whether I am casting 5 actors or 20 actors, my fee will be the same. But if I'm casting for a big star oriented film or a very detailed kind of casting, the fee will be higher.

After you have cast an actor, is your presence required at the time of the shoot?

I am not required, in terms of coordination. When the casting is done and my job is finished then the director and producer take care of the actor. They will call me when the actor is not working out during the shoot and they need to replace them. I am required when the director/producer wants me to do an acting workshop with the actor, then I get into the workshop area.

If someone you have cast after approval by the director/producer and after 2/3 days you realize it's not working out, do you then charge extra for replacing that actor?

By God's grace; 99.9% times it does not happen. Before I confirm the actor I

take my own time for casting as the director has some faith on me. Sometimes I intuitively feel that a person is not right for the role then I do not suggest such people.

Tell us about your Theatre Experience.

I was working with TIE for nine years in Delhi and I did my diploma course from "Shri Ram Centre" Mandi House. After that I applied for a job in TIE as I wanted to work with children. Before that I was doing amateur theatre with theatre groups in Delhi.

What is your experience of working with International Crew?

One thing I have realized during my casting experience is that you have to mould yourself in the way of working of the director. Every film maker has a different way of working and dealing with things, be it Anurag Kashyap, Imtiaz Ali or any other director.

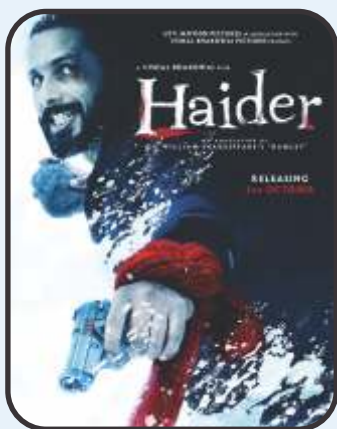
I am thoroughly prepared for working with different film makers. As a person you have to forget that you are Mukesh Chhabra. Also when I was working for a film called "Trishna" with Michael Winterbottom, while talking to them I realized that I need to be updated, smart and sharp.



Their ideas are very clear and if you listen to them carefully half your job is done as they don't give vague descriptions, instead they are well planned so their briefs are very precise and particular.

□□□

Important Films of Mukesh Chhabra as Casting Director





Master Gaffer

An Interview with Mulchand Dedhia

What changes have you noticed in basic lighting and grip equipment?

Earlier, there were single "risers stand" and they could go 7 feet high. Rest of the lighting was done from the Taraffa (catwalk). By the time we started working with, double "risers' stand" had arrived - we were happy that there will be increase in the height but even double "risers' stand" didn't go more than 9 feet high. But now new "stands" can go up to 18 -20 feet of height which is called "Windups or "Easy lift stands".

Earlier, 10 k lights and Arc Brute lights used to be there but other big lights or halogen bulbs were not there. To pick up even one Arc Brute light, 4-5 people were required, and to pick up even its assembly, 2-3 people were required as it use to be that heavy. Mainly, we had C- clamps or G-clamps and Taraffa clamps and Taraffa cutters with the piece of black plywood only, later on I had designed more than 50 different types of clamps, say from the thickness of 3 mm upto 10 feet to clamp on even metro pillar!

So if I have to put a light on a metro pillar of 10 feet or a building's pillar of 8 feet or even more than that - I can put light on it. I even named my company "light and grips"! At that time grips also were not available in India, the trend of grips started after 2000. Grip basically allows us to set the light anywhere or, we can say the grip of a light is used to hold it with the hardware.

Do you think over the years, relationship between DOP and Gaffer has changed?

I will tell you an episode, I was doing a film called "Sitam" in 1978 with Vikas Desai, Barun Mukherjee was DOP. In 1978, my first son was born and when he was 6 months old, he fell down while playing with my brother. He was

hospitalized and whole day I used to be with him for his treatment for more than 9 years and if there was a shooting at night, I use to do that. And if you are not sleeping at night or even during the day, for sure it will affect your work.

I have worked earlier also with them, so they noticed that there was a change in my work. Vikas and Barun Da called me and said, "You are not working the way Mulchand works, you are not the same Mulchand". I got a bit scared and I said, "What happened? Why are you saying so?" They informed me about the change in my working style and asked me the reason for it.

Then I told them about this Incident. So they advised me to sit at home and just ask them for the money that I needed. They said that I can join again when my mind is at peace. This kind of relationship between DOPs and Gaffer can hardly be seen these days. The HODs now are least bothered about the personal problems affecting their crew.

I remember you had talked about Round mirrors which people used to carry to outdoor shoots, please give us details about that.

There were few DOPs who occasionally used round base mirrors. For example, if sun is moving from East to West - because of the curve, it was not needed to adjust the mirror. But, now we are using flat mirrors.

Do you recollect any situation, where despite many odds, you were able to deliver.

I remember one incident from TV serial CIRCUS of Saeed Mirza, Aziz Mirza and Kundan Shah. Three directors, three different cameramen, three different groups of light men but for all three units, I was the only one who used to do lighting. As I finished one unit, I used to hand it over to them to manage further and used to move to another set.

Sometimes I used to sleep in the tents of circus itself. That time I had used my own designed clamps, we used them according to circus tents. I remember one day, we did shooting for 26 hours continuously and after that there was a scene of an actor (tripist artist) falling from the top, so, I had to go to the top holding a video camera in my mouth. I went and on a single pipe I made my spot. With the help of rope, I slid down the camera and with my feet I twisted the camera. After I said, "Roll camera" and when it started recording, I removed my feet - camera started moving and took the shot.

How did people respond when HMI came for the first time?

Initially 4 kW HMI came with the magnetic ballast first time in 1978 for the film "The sea volves" in Goa shoot; electronic ballast was still not there. To switch it on, we had to give double phase of electricity i.e. 440 volts. So, we needed to change the socket system also specially for 4kW. I had already used HMI in 1980's Ismail Merchant's film "heat and dust". Earlier, we used to keep 575 W on stands and bounce it on umbrella, at that time we didn't use to give direct light. Due to U.V lights When we used to switch on the magnetic ballast, the spark used to be so big and noisy, it used to feel like something has happened to the light, so, the people who were new or new actors who didn't know about it used to leave the set out of the fear that something has happened. I remember that till 1987, 2.5kW was the biggest light in India. Even when we were doing "Salaam Bombay", the biggest HMI with us was 2.5kW.

Today we have too many H.M. I bulbs U.V protected. Now new invention of LED lights is there which is low power consuming and long life bulbs. So in future more LED lights will be there for Films n TVCs. □□□

What are the basic qualities that you look for in Director of Photography before zeroing-in on any one for a particular Ad film?

I have been privileged to have worked with some of the finest DOPs from Ashok Mehta, Barun Mukherjee, Venu, K. Ravi Chandran, K.U. Mohanan, P.S. Vinod, Santosh Thundiyil, Avik Mukhopadhyay, Vikas, Sivaraman, Kiran Deohans, Anil Mehta and Kartik Vijay to name a few. For me, making an ad film is like making a film. I enjoy the process of developing the visual element with the DOP. So I think the key feature of my choosing a particular DOP for a particular ad is not just lighting, it's also the sense of framing.

When I joined the industry, I didn't know how to shoot an ad film. I knew how to shoot a feature film because I was trained at the FTII. My approach to shooting an ad film was more realistic and candid. I preferred shooting on actual locations rather than in studios and working with actors rather than models.

I like to be quick in my thoughts, I like to capture images, so I needed to work with those DOPs who would be quick in terms of the thought process, framing, sharing ideas with me. When I look for a DOP, I think that the film is not only made by me but it is jointly made by him - he is an integral part of the creative process. When I started out in advertising, I was shooting a promo film called "Devdas Paro". I wanted to learn the ropes of advertising. I didn't know how to go about it but Barun Mukherjee taught me. I learnt how to approach advertising films from him.

In advertising, some kind of instant branding happens that this guy can shoot the sari related films, this guy can shoot liquor related films or, this guy can handle big stars better. Did you also find that certain cinematographers can shoot more of studio films or more of outdoor films?

It's a really sad misconception. I think all good cinematographers can work in any atmosphere and any condition. However, in the case of product or pack shots, certain



Interview with Film Maker Shivendra Singh Dungarpur

cinematographers are considered specialists.

You mentioned styling, when Channel V and Mtv came, this word became more popular. How do you interpret styling not in the terms of the content of the commercial but in terms of the lighting also?

I think what has lasted over the period of time has been the story telling. In advertising too, people want to see an interesting idea on television - you can style it as much as you want. The culture of storytelling has lasted thousands of years whether it is in advertising, or any other form of art. I feel stylizing is defined by the idea itself and nobody can do that better than Prasoon Pandey. Prasoon is the only Indian ad filmmaker who is able to style a film and still not make you feel that he styled it - there is a sense of naturalism but at the same time there is a sense of styling in it. Even over the years, people still remember the Fevicol ad, they remember 'The Times of India' ad and the number of great ads which he has done. I feel if one

has to learn a fresh approach in advertising they have to learn from Prasoon Pandey.

Evolving is the very important part for any creative process, so whenever you get a brief from the agency, you need to translate it into the visuals, how do you find the source of inspiration so that you could do something fresh that you have not done in the past?

I feel that people have become lazy with an increasing reliance on the internet. People download the references and say "do this". They don't take inspiration from nature or from people. They are not looking around at daily life, from where the best ideas evolve.

The originality of the imagery has to come from within; the creation has to be born out of the mind of an individual. A person can get inspired from various sources but he has to imbibe ideas that he can find around him.





Interview with Director of NH10 *Navdeep Singh:*

Tell us something about your process of bringing Small Detailing, which one does not find very often in Hindi Commercial Cinema.

A lot of it happens in the scripting stage itself because I work quite closely with my writers. Even before a writer writes the script we spend months just discussing the story, script, plot and a world view. What is the world view we are going into in this project? What is the story really about? What are the layers?

Personally I like films which have layers. It's great when you can watch a film at pure surface level and that really appeals to an audience that's happy with the surface level. Then another audience will react differently as they have certain information and will pick things riding under the surface. Yet then there will be an audience which will find things further below that and then finally an audience which actually puts

little bit of themselves into it and finds those things which even I hadn't really thought about.

Before writing we have long discussions about scenes and normally do a draft and discuss the little nuances we can capture. When one starts the reece process and starts looking for the location little ideas keep popping up when you are on ground itself. For example when we were roaming around villages in Haryana, we saw some signboard about an abortion clinic for 200 rupees per abortion, which normally people will not notice.

We had put one of my ex producer's name there as the Doctor (as he aborted one of my films!!!) So detailing can come from anywhere.

Since it is kind of a Violent Film, so after choosing the subject what was the anticipation about the audience that will come to watch this film?

In fact when we wrote the first draft and showed it to some producers, many people gave the feedback that we should cut down on killing, make it gangster oriented, etc. Ultimately one is making a film for an audience and the more the number of people who watch, the more you feel satisfied otherwise you can just tell the story to a group of friends and it's cheaper. But you are aiming for a mass audience. But you have to be honest and make a film for yourself first and then hope there are millions of other people like you who would appreciate your vision. Worrying about the risk should be left to the producer because the director has many other things to worry about.

Why did you keep most of your action in the night?

It was partly the way the script was. In terms of the passage of time in the script, it needed to happen that way.

Having the girl being alone and helpless at night, being isolated comes out more strongly in the night. Had it been day, it would be a very different story. Then it would be about that mob that's after her rather than just these few people in the middle of the night. It was a difficult task as we were on a tight schedule and budget and that made our job much more difficult.

What was the thought behind things like one seeing "Randi" written inside the toilet door and also when her husband dies near the bridge, similar thing is written on the wall.

The thought was that for women in a society there are daily reminders. When she walks down the road she's reminded that she is a woman, a woman in a man's world, particularly for women in India where patriarchy is so strong. Women have to conform to the roles that society has prescribed for them, so it was partly that.

Even inside the private space in a woman's washroom, there's an intrusion that any woman sitting there who reads it is being called a "randi" by whoever has written it, obviously a man. It's just that women constantly face the brunt of male aggression towards them. It becomes an echo of that in the end and what she has tried to rub in the



bathroom comes back to her.

Deepti Naval is seen in the role of a "Surpanch" in the film, it could have been anybody. She has an image of being a soft hearted woman. So was it about playing with her image and giving a surprise to people?

Hundred percent it was that. I love her as an actor and it was to cast her against her image so that it would be a surprise and secondly so that it gives a punch to the stomach. It also tried to reflect the reality that a villain can also be a mother and you can kill your own child and feel sad at the same time. Because I am sure it is a twenty year investment in a child (We made subtle references that "kibeti college jatihogi" so that her internal conflict could be depicted.) but because of the rules of the society she is forced to do

something. Obviously it is not a drama and we couldn't spend too much time exploring all that, so we tried to slip in these kind of details. Deeptiji said no first. It took us some time to convince her as she was not at all keen to play a negative role. But I am happy that she finally agreed.

After the initial ten minutes of the film Anushka Sharma did not have the glamorous look. How difficult was it for you to convince her and what motivated her to accept the role?

Anushka really didn't have any resistance to it, we had offered her the role, but at that time she was busy with Bombay Velvet and after that we had many problems like not having enough funds and convincing the actors. A year later Anushka and Anurag were talking and Anushka asked "How did that film

come out?" and Anurag said that it has not started.

So she said she will do it now as she has time. She still remembered the script after one year, so that's how she came on board. She was aware there will be glamour make up in the beginning and later as per situation it will keep changing.

What was the reason that Anushka wanted to be a producer for this film?

She would be the best person to answer this. But I think there were two factors. One she wanted that the film really gets made as such projects either don't finish or are stopped. Also she didn't want to financially burden us by her fee so it would be more viable if she put in her fee as the part from the producer. I am really grateful that she thought on those lines. □□□



Interview with DOP

Arvind Kannabiran: on Shooting **NH10**

Most of the film takes place in night. Hence, how did you choose which section you would like to go for in "Day for night" mode and the remaining would be lit in the night ?

There were only 2 shots which were deliberately shot "day for night". We needed to shoot transition shots between a couple of locations, and could not afford to spend an entire night on each of them, so we decided to shoot them 'day for night' and grade it as best we could to match. Apart from this, a number of scenes did end up a little bit like 'day for night' as the sun rose every morning while we were still shooting.

How did you light the night exteriors?

The whole middle section of the film where it just becomes night up until the point where she just enters the village is all set in the wilderness, where a part of it is jungle area. There was no building, no light source, no lamp posts, nothing nearby that I could use as

motivational source for my lights other than moonlight. So basically what I did was, I put a moon box on a 250 feet industrial crane. I had a box made up of iron pipes 15 by 15 cube covered with diffusion material on all sides except on top and four Dinos playing four ways. Given that the moonbox took 6 hours to build and moving the crane with it on was next to impossible, I would site it every day for that nights shoot. The position of it would be determined by where it could effectively service all the locations to be used that night. It gave me ambient light over a little less than a square kilometer. Once the shot was blocked and framed, I would then hit them with light from lamps at ground level.

What about the areas where you could not move the industrial crane?

There were problematic areas, shooting right under the moonbox the ambience was too high, or too far and it would be too low, but these are things one has to deal with, especially on a

tight budget shoot. A lot of the lighting was designed so as to expedite the shooting of the multiple set ups which were scheduled for that night.

There is also one more thing while talking about the situation. There was also available light like lamp post etc but did you also manipulate with the artificial light?

Well, like I said, in the wooded area, in the stone quarry and in the field , there were no real sources I could use as motivation, but during the climax in the village, it was easier. Street lamps and house lights, either existing or introduced made things simpler.

Talking about most moving car shots, chase sequences, a very subtle kind of light was going here and there to give the feel of movement. How did you light those shots up?

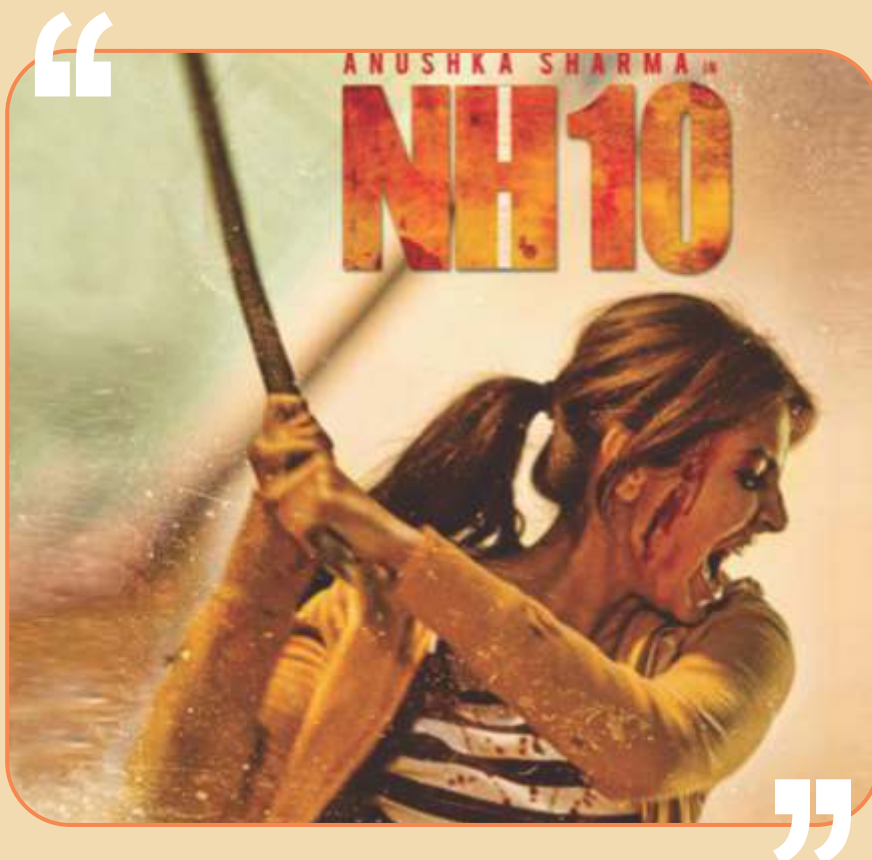
A lot of the film happens in the car. For this reason, I did a lot of lighting with car lights both in the day and night. I largely used small LED panels in the car

(both day and night) and the Kino Bar Fly on occasion.

For the cars, I had to bring the light level down as it will work with ambience I had lit outside with moon box. Basically we would have shots where whole area would be lit and the car would pass through the area and the conversation would happen in the car. There is a scene where the heroine stabs the inspector in the eyes and kill him. For instance they drive and come to a stop and the rest of scenes happens at a stop half way through the drive where she kills him and leaves. It was decided like that the same car lights had serviced him through the drive as they were moving also serviced them where they stopped. There was a continuity in that and because they were balanced on the outside on the exterior, it just worked fine. Basically they all had to balance the moon light outside the car light. Inside then I had every time a time car came by I had them hit by a head light from the rear window or from the side window, sort of flash it was though just for the drama's sake.

Though all the cameras are equipped for low light conditions, did you have a particular preference over a brand of camera and lenses as there is a lot of variety available?

I used multiple cameras, the Sony F-65 for all the daytime scenes as I liked the texture it gives you, and I like the fact that it has a rotary shutter, so I don't get much judder or strobe. I am very fond of the F-65 as I love the detail one gets in shadow area and the texture of the overall image. I needed a second camera on board as we had decided to do a two cam shoot for the most part. As I couldn't use two F-65's (costs wouldn't allow it), I had to look at other cameras. I tested the Sony F-5 which had just been released and found it closest to the F65 barring an extra sharpness in image. So I was shooting F65 at 800 ISO and Sony F5 at 2000 ISO and when I had two cameras going in day time I had F65 and F5 where the F5 at ND 0.3 thrown in all the time and one very light diffusing filter (Classic Black Soft 1/8) to offset the additional sharpness in the F5 image. The lenses I used were Cooke S-4's with the Sony F 65, and with the Sony F5 later



at night I used a combination of S4's and old Pancro lenses. My camera provider found me a fabulous clean set of Pancro which was in great shape barring the worn out coating, but the whole point was to have the lenses without coating as I could have headlights flare and highlight them a little bit, whilst also having lenses which are not ultra sharp. The new generation lenses are ultra sharp to the extent that I am not fond of using them very much. I also used an old Canon 12-120mm, the sort made in 1970, which my camera provider found for me, again in fabulous shape. It was great as it opened at 2.7. I ended up using that in a lot of night stuff. There were times when I had to use the Angenieux Optimo 25-290, that was the biggest tele lens I had. The Optimo needed a bit of diffusion as well so it matched the S 4's.

What was your basic "mantra" while shooting this film?

Unless it is overtly stylized, my belief at a large level, especially for narrative, is that the camera should disappear. One doesn't call attention to oneself. One makes it look as right as

possible and consistent. The minute one starts calling attention to yourself, by putting on a beautiful back light, which looks beautiful but doesn't really have a place in the scene, one is just pulling away from the story and taking the viewer away from the viewing experience. If I were doing a hardcore bollywood film like "Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna" or K3G, I would light it for glamour and everything would be beautifully lit. Doing a lot of detailing which takes time. Believe it or not it was incredibly rushed shoot for NH-10 as we did not stop. We did an average of 18-20 setups a night.

In my opinion, for a DP, there are two realities in filmmaking in India, one where you do what you want to do, and secondly what you have to do, given time and budgetary constraints. I had a choice, I could light one scene a night spectacularly well, with a lot of detailing, and rush through two or three more in a slapdash manner, or design them all to hold consistently, look right, and allow me to finish them all in the time available. I opted for the latter approach, and have no regrets about the choices I made. □□□

Interview with *Anil Mehta*

After Highway and Finding Fanny, acclaimed cinematographer Anil Mehta shot an equally diverse film, Badlapur. In an exclusive chat with RACHANA PAREKH (for www.pandolin.com), the director of photography shares his experience shooting the intense crime drama.

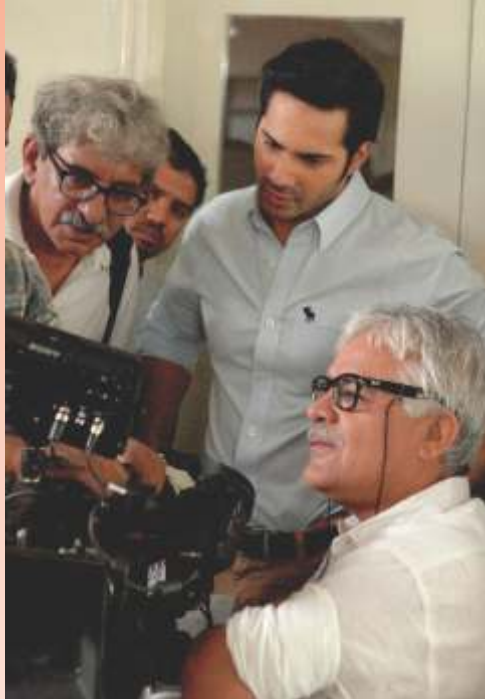
How important is the story or the script of a film you take up?

I have often asked myself the same question. Basically I see the cinematographer as a person who travels along with the director to tell the same story. One has to be able to assimilate what is written in the screenplay and then be challenged or excited enough to tell it in 'film form'. If that motivation is not there, then one might as well take a job in a bank?

This was your first time with Sriram Raghavan as a director. Can you throw some light on the association?

Yes, that was also the exciting part for me; I get to work with a guy who is known to be 'unpredictable' and famously 'indecisive'. I got to see up-close another approach that involves being alive in the moment, of evolving, of co-opting what is being said around you. Not being a big fan of story boards and locked breakdowns myself, I enjoyed the process of engaging with the uncertainties of live locations, blocking scenes on the day and of scheduling the day without a dialog draft of the scene. He is a man of few words, you need to be able to sniff the vibe and move on. I had actually assumed that we would be on the same page from the word go, but it was not like that.

He has recesses which are not so accessible. There was an occasion when I landed up at his house insisting on a printed script so we could start scheduling and scouting for locations. I knew how important the locations would be in a film like this and a couple of months away from the shoot we did not have a finished draft. We ended up



having a lot of cheap whisky that evening, better than a finished draft, I guess. His process involves continually refining whatever he has written, yesterday's dialogues are stale today. You learn to respect that because nuances



show up in newer drafts which are evidently better for the film. Life becomes hell for the assistant directors (ADs) and production people, but the film gets better. Luckily on this film we had a first AD, Aarambh (Mohan Singh), who is a filmmaker first and scheduling junky later. We also had a long-time associate of Sriram's, Rakesh Sain, who would second guess the future for us. The Executive Producer, Vishal Bajaj, wore his hair really short so there was no risk of tearing it out. He was a real sport and would bend over backwards to accommodate last minute changes, followed by more changes. Without this 'guerrillas in a trench' attitude, it's almost impossible to make a movie like this one.

What 'look' did you set out to achieve for Badlapur?

'The Look' in bold caps, scares me. For me the look of the film is embedded in its elements. Starting with actors,

costumes, make-up, sets, locations, lensing, etc. It is a sum total of all these decisions that you make while on the go, not some layer you lay on in the proverbial 'DI' (Digital Intermediate). Let me give you a small example: The film is titled Badlapur, we wanted the film to inhabit true spaces/real locations, so we went to Badlapur, Ambarnath, Bhiwandi, Nasik, almost all satellite towns off Mumbai and Pune but we didn't like any of them. All these places have started looking like the city's suburbs. One day, after many frustrating rounds of recce, we were poring over innumerable location photos and hopelessly looking at the map of Maharashtra, when, on an impulse I asked to go to Igatpuri the next day. I was told that Sriram was busy doing hundred other things and would not be free. I said I would go regardless.

So with the production designers, ADs and some locations crew we set out. We moved around from building to building, street to street and soon we had covered the entire town. No suitable location, yet. Although in the script it was a 2 BHK in Badlapur, to me this space had to have the meditative quality of a recluse, not the grungy, claustrophobia of a small town apartment. To cut a long story short, we decided to 'build' a Barsaati type apartment on the terrace of a newly constructed building on the outskirts of Igatpuri. Production Designers Anita (Rajgopalan Lata) and Donald (Reagen Gracy) were thrilled. The Producer, sitting in Mumbai, thought we were mad to ask to build a set for interior scenes on location, as it did not balance the books. When Sriram came for a final 'dekho' all he asked is, 'How did you all find this place?'. The smile said the rest. The paint on the walls, the view from the windows, the props, the drapes, the naked tube light, determined the 'look'.

Badlapur seems to have a dark tone, though Highway, which was also an internal film, did not have a similar visual style. Comment.

Badlapur is not all dark and gritty, it's not obvious in that way. Let me dovetail into the previous question, again to do with the 'look'. When I started Badlapur, I did think that with this film I might be able to make a style statement, 'Noir', 'Grit', 'Inscrutable Shadows' could make a heady mix, but sadly when I started

shooting all that went out of the window, I approached it as it came. Then during finalisation I said, 'Ah... DI!', now we'll crack it, my long-time trusted Colorist at RMW, Tushar Jadhav, will bend some rules/curves. He came up with some crackling options. Old man Ken Metzker chipped in with his 'version'. I have to admit, I did not sleep well that night. Next morning we played the scenes straight up, like they were shot and it looked fine. Tushar confirmed my hunch. He said, 'I have rarely seen visuals play out so seamlessly on first pass'. We decided to let it be, to go with the look as embedded in the visuals during the shooting. So now you will have to tell me if there was a 'dark tone' or did the cinematography just blend in with the story telling.

What was the lighting set-up for Badlapur?

Two tube lights and a bulb. And that's not a joke. When I spoke to Mulchand (Dedhia), our very own 'world famous' gaffer, of my intent, he was quite excited. He said that he has always wanted to do an entire feature with available light. I said that I was not going to be that adventurous on this one. I then proceeded to give him my light and crew requirements, which was a really minimal kit comprising a couple of KINOS and a few 650W/300W Fresnels, a 2K was thrown in as safety net. I asked him to fit everything into a Tempo, not a light truck and to restrict the crew to three to four men. He heard me out but sceptically told the Producer to wait till shooting day, when all the bells and whistles will be called in, on the shoot.

Well now that the film is out, it can be said that we did make this one with 'Two tube lights and a bulb'. And, oh yes, we bought a commercial sodium vapour fixture and put it in the Tempo. The Producer on the other hand kept sending my requirement list back for double checks: 'What! No Dolly' and 'Only one day of Steadicam, are you sure?'. I was not sure at all, but I was quite happy to go with the 'minimal' as an aesthetic choice. To be totally honest there were days where we shot with bigger sources, but very few and far between.

What camera and lenses did you shoot the film on?

I generally use only one camera to shoot a movie, except on some big days, involving stunts or songs.

On previous films like Highway and Finding Fanny, I shot with SONY F 65 which is a full blown 8K chip with 4K Raw recording. It is the top of the line model and has great bandwidth. For this film I wanted to cut back on that also. So I asked for a Sony F 55, which has a smaller profile, it's a lighter camera and records lighter 4K raw files. I knew I was going to shoot in really tight spaces too. Nawaz (Nawazuddin Siddiqui)'s house is as tiny as it looks. The director's first response was, 'This is too tiny to shoot in'. For a change the cameraman was actually gunning to shoot in that house and mohalla. The F 55 sat on my shoulder for many, many setups. The lenses were the usual kit of Master Primes with a 20mm Ultra thrown in. Pretty much the entire film is shot on Primes.

Can you tell us about the locations used in the film?

The film starts in Pune and moves to Badlapur, few scenes are set in Mumbai. That's the arc. We wanted to stay faithful to this arc. Pune for Pune, Mumbai for Mumbai, Igatpuri for Badlapur, then bits and pieces in Lonavla, Vashi, prison in Nasik, a shooting bungalow in Juhu, one set in a Mumbai studio and some cheats for police thanas. The more important thing is that we never 'bought the street', we 'informed the cops', we did not 'buy the train', we 'bought tickets for the compartment', we did not 'lock it off' we worked with the 'chance' of real life. Take the first scene of the film; camera wise nothing happens, everyday life on the main street in Pune unfolds for a really long screen time, except that all is not normal, as you soon find out.

That scene, which seems the simplest was the most complicated to execute, and like I said the cameraman had nothing to do, except sit and watch it unfold. Igatpuri, its rains and trains, are a story unto themselves. Nasik jail felt like we were all in rehab, it was so peaceful in there. At Colaba, around Regal cinema, the busiest district of Mumbai, we were stealing shots with Varun. Locations were made to serve the film and not vice versa. Sriram was very charged with the idea of not deadening the environment

for the movie, rather finding the movie within the environment. He is not a control freak but then that can freak the production personnel. Bottom line : we got the film shot in 45/46 days.

Any VFX / CG in the film?

There is only one sequence in the car, which is green screen. Rest of the CG work is incidental like removing string, clean up, add blood etc. all very effectively handled by Tata Exlsi. Pankaj Khandpur and Vishal did not need any prompting in that area.

Which is your favourite sequence in Badlapur?

I am always stumped trying to answer this question because it is never about one sequence. Ok, maybe one shot where nothing much happens. The camera is fixed in a mid-long shot, Raghu (Varun) has just told Liak (Nawazuddin) the truth, Liak walks out of the door and for more than what seems an eternity nothing happens. Varun is sitting in the foreground, Nawaz returns and still nothing happens, then, he says three-four lines and leaves, Varun is still sitting there; that's my favourite moment.

If you ask me, what did I do – I will say I switched on one tube light and a bulb and sat there. As a cinematographer it's not one of those fabulously designed or fantastically lit shots, the beauty of the scene is that even the director or editor have chosen not to cut to a close for such a big moment in the film. Everyone has held back and let the moment play.

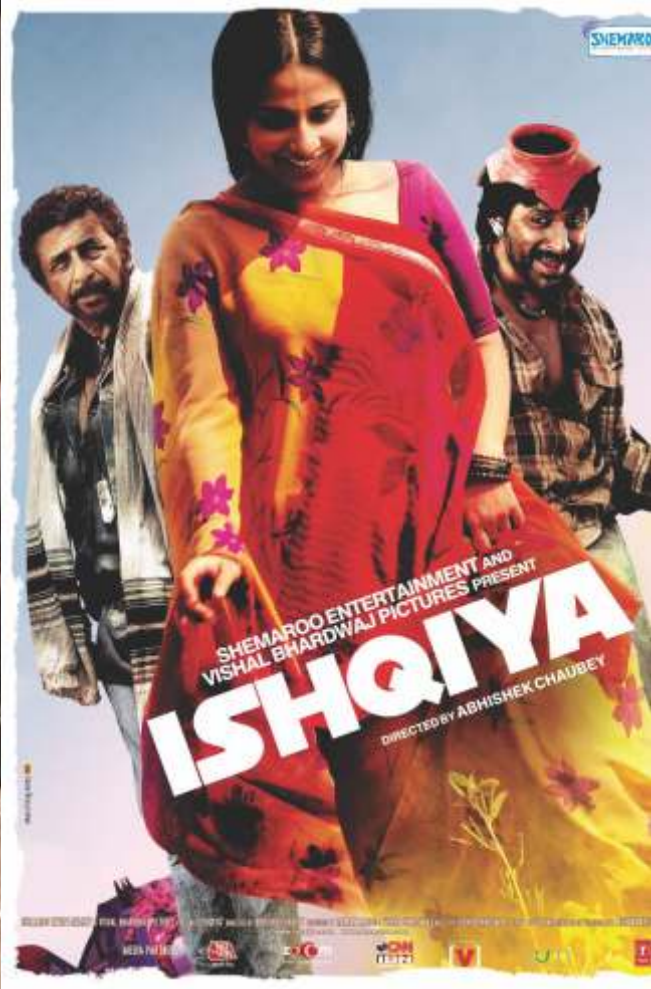
Are framing, lensing and composition of a scene crucial and different for each film, especially the genre?

While this is a vital question, I am not able to articulate an answer. I do find myself shifting the camera a few inches here or there, every now and then; find myself changing a lens even after thinking that 32mm is the lens for the shot. It's both an exploratory and intuitive thing of how you respond to the moment, to what is happening in front of you. Composition, lensing, lighting are the cinematographers' lifeline.

The interview is also available at : www.wica.in



Interview with DOP *Mohana Krishna*



“Ishqiya” was your first film as DOP and in the debut film one tries to do the best, so how did you start preparing yourself?

When I was given the script I read it for not only one day but for days thoroughly, trying to understand it. Then I collected few references in terms of images and in terms of texture which I shared with Abhishek Chaubey, the director of the film. Whenever you are reading a script your brain, your processor is continuously on and it is searching the data from whatever you have seen to relate to it. That is how I collect the references. I take 20 references then I take them to my director and I ask my wife Vandana to cut the particular portions from films. She is an editor graduated from FTII.

After I hear the script from the director/AD, I look at his expressions, what he is thinking, how much clarity he has, and then I read the script. I then collect few references and ask my director to select few of his references. Abhishek Chaubey is very focused. He used to appreciate a lot of my inputs and he supported me very well in terms of logistics, whatever I needed and he gave

me a free hand. After reading the script I do corrections as an audience and I bring them to the director's notice. Whether he accepts them or doesn't is his discretion.

We used to sit from 8 o'clock in the morning everyday and work on two three scene's till about 11am and sort out any errors or confusions there itself then 11am onwards he used to do the rest of his work and I used to do my cinematography work. We shot the film in around 55 days in a single schedule. That was one of the most professional teams I have ever worked with .

Tell us any challenging situation of location lighting in “Ishqiya.”

There was a scene in “Ishqiya,” when Vidya Balan is tied with a rope on a chair in a room and all doors are closed and the guys are bargaining with her. The director briefed me that all the doors are closed and there is no light source in the room and only one door is open because later on the LPG cylinder is going to leak in the room. The entire day I thought of how would I light the scene as there was no source of light and the door that was open for their

discussion also gets closed later when the gas leaks otherwise the gas would go out. I thought what to do now as I cannot commit any source there.

I thought of increasing the space between the windows and between the slit between the two doors. I asked my art director to increase them a bit then I started lighting it up as it was a set. I put up Kinoflow on the top and one bulb. My meter was showing "error" and my assistants said, “Sir this is not going to get exposed on the film.” But we shot it and got a fantastic result.

Does it happen that you expect a particular kind of co-operation from an Actor/Actress where they have to go out of the way to do things because it will be convenient for you?

Stars never challenge you or the Director on set. I must tell you an incident about Vidya Balan when we were shooting at Satara. It was a temple sequence and the light was going. Light would be there for another half hour only and too much work was left. After we finished the shot with Vidya, there was a costume change and usually actresses take time. I went and



requested Vidya Balan if she could change the dress quickly since there was not much time. Vidya agreed and she went inside. I was looking at the leveling of the track, just 10 minutes later Vidya was ready in the different costume, she patted my shoulder, and asked is it ok? That is the height of her professionalism.

Tell us your experience of working on "I am Kalam" which was shot in Rajasthan.

After I agreed to do the film with Nila Madhab Panda, they wanted me to go for the reece without reading the script. I do not go on a reece without reading the script. That is my policy, because what do I do there without reading the script? I clearly told him that I cannot come to the location without reading the script. After they narrated the complete script, we went to the location at 4'o clock in the evening. They showed me the motel and the palace where we wanted to shoot the prince's part and soon after I looked at the opposite side of the road which was empty. I asked, "Where is the dhabha that was mentioned"? He said "The



dhabha is there" and took me 500 meters away from that place and then said "This is the dhabha."

Now the dhabha was to be there in front of the palace. Then I walked back from there to the road opposite the palace and told him that the dhabha has

to be here. If I shoot from the dhabha's angle I need to see the palace and if I shoot from the palace I need to see the dhabha. But if the dhabha is 500 meters away how will I show the dhaba? Then, unhappily he accepted that because there was no choice for him as Gulshan



Grover's dates were blocked. Thankfully he listened to me and shifted the dhaba and finally we started shooting. Later one day, very pleasantly Nila Madhab said "Thank you Mohana for shifting the dhabha here, now I realized what you have been saying."

You shot "R...Rajkumar" directed by Prabhu Deva, who is a well known choreographer. What were his expectations from you?

Prabhu Deva is very talented. He comes to the set with so much clarity. He knows exactly what he wants and he tries to finish the film in the given time frame. I really enjoyed shooting the songs with him because he designs complicated shots. As a fresh DOP I used to take it as a challenge to execute that. I would say "R...Rajkumar" is a two and a half hour song that I have shot. He treats every scene as a song, he treated even the action as a song. Indians enjoy the songs a lot, it's like a dream. Every moment is thrilling for everybody, for the audience, and for the technicians. I am sure for the artist as well. He is a fun loving guy, super chilled, super fast and a very nice person.

What are the various "Aesthetical Considerations" required in terms of understanding on the part of the

Cinematographer?

After I read the script extensively we decide a location. Basically the locations are of two types, in terms of color one is warm, and one is cooler.

The cooler zone is cyan, blue, green and the warm ones are reds, oranges, and yellows. So first we decide the location then the art comes in to place. Whether it's a contrast scene or a muted one we have to use whatever colors are there in nature, we cannot do anything to nature. Green is green, that's it. You have to work backwards.

Then the second element is the art direction in the frame and the third element is the costume. Now you have to choose the color as per the background. Whether you want a contrast image or you want to merge with the background, your art direction will depend on that and accordingly you will organize the various properties.

Then the next part is the costume which will again depend on whether you want to have a contrasty or muted color scheme. The most selling element in the frame is "The Artist." My key element is my artist and hence also the artist's makeup. I do not doubt any makeup artist as they are brilliant whether they are big or small, but they need

directions. They do the makeup but if they have knowledge about those three elements I have worked on then they do the right makeup. If they are in the vanity van doing makeup then I have to get in and inform them that my background is this kind so I need to have this kind of makeup, the base has to be this, then the hair, etc. My key element in the film frame is the artist's face. For a normal audience the face is the focus all the time, rest of the image part is subconsciously affecting. I would call it synergetic condition. Your point of interest should be separated, it should be distinguished.

Whenever the artist comes on to the set I go and closely watch. I look for separation. I monitor initial and everyday makeup. Artists are very cooperative especially Vidya Balan. During the shooting she would come to me every day, chat for two minutes on something or the other and in those two minutes I used to check her makeup.

When you conduct the test for a camera, what are the things you look for in a particular test?

I particularly check the skin reproduction. Be it skin detention, skin color, skin texture. Also I test details in the highlight and shadow area and overall latitude. I especially do the camera test extensively. I see how the sharpness is getting affected. I do the latitude test indoor as well outdoor, I check the flair flinch of different exposure levels. I show the footage to the director and then I recommend why I want to hire a particular camera. Instead of explaining this verbally, I show it to them because all of us are basically an audience first and technicians later.

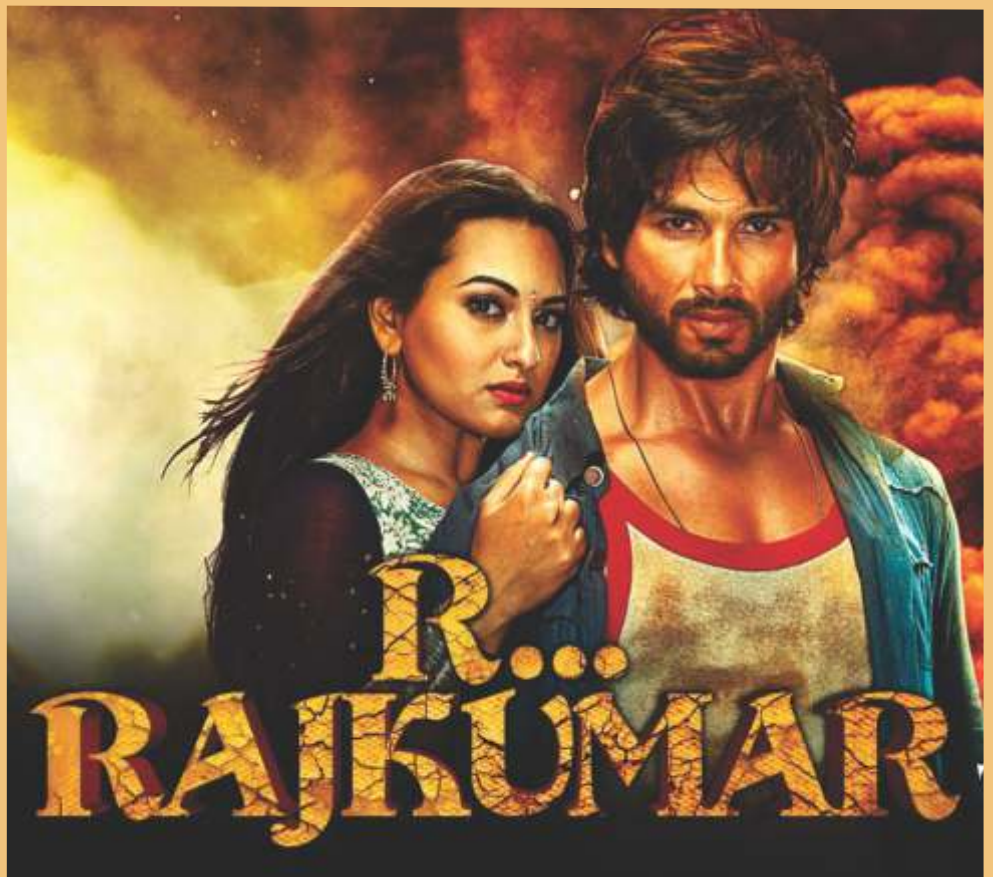
What are your suggestions to young DOPs?

They should try to understand the film first. One should work hard on the script first, understand the requirement of the script, and do sufficient exercise. Watch similar films, collect the references, talk to your director, and then come to a conclusion about what your requirement is. Then get the technical things into the frame, then discuss about your grips, then discuss



about your cameras. Your camera work should not be detached from the script. I am not passionate about taking mind blowing shots, I am more passionate about fulfilling the script's requirements. It is your responsibility to get the best from the art director, costume designer, hair stylist, and makeup artist. Look into these things as well. You are more responsible for these things than anybody else, as it will add to your work. These are my suggestions to young DOPs. When it comes to the post production please feel the responsibility to watch till the final output, be there at DCP conversion, and check three/four tests of DCP conversion and please be ready to work in any DI setups with any colorist because you are going to be the key person, you are the magician there, try to understand machines and post production.

□□□





Interview with DOP *Savita Singh*

How did you start your career after graduating from FTII, Pune in 2008 ?

I was really lucky that after my graduation from Film and Television Institute of India, I got selected for one of the most prestigious workshop for cinematographers, “The Budapest Master Class”. It's a 15 day workshop conducted by master cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond and Elemer Ragalayi. I got to meet cinematographers from all over the world and we learnt from each other. This was a really enriching experience for me and gave me a lot of confidence. After the workshop, I started assisting Binod Pradhan sir. After a brief stint with assisting, I was fortunate to bag my first feature film 'Phoonk'.

Someone told me that Ram Gopal Verma was looking for a DOP. Suddenly, everybody around me was sending him DVDs. I also sent mine. He happened to like my diploma film 'Karmasha'. It's the same film that got me a National Award for cinematography.

One is tense while getting the first

film especially when working with an established director. How did you prepare yourself for it?

I had not seen many horror films. Hence, I revisited a few films which I liked already for example 'Rosemary's Baby' directed by Roman Polanski. Basically, I take two routes. I like to revisit what my directors would like to consider as their references in general and then I also try and collect references of my own from films, paintings, photographs etc. Referencing for me is a process that takes me closer to the film and genre that I try to immerse myself in. Sometimes a reference picture can take you to an interesting route or an interesting interpretation and most of the times the final output is miles away from the reference itself.

I like to revisit paintings again and again just to understand how the use of elements like color, foreground or background which have created a certain emotion or a feeling. I like to look at a lot of still pictures because

sometimes you get an interesting idea out of it.

I strongly believe that referencing isn't some thing that is project oriented, it is something that we have been doing throughout our life. It is a collective collage of the influences and things we have observed over the years through literature, paintings, filmmakers we admire and so on.

You did one film with Prawaal Raman. Can you please talk about the film “404: Error Not Found” ?

Actually, 404 was a very intelligently directed film. It was quite catchy, managed to scare me on another level and it wasn't a horror film in and out. Since we didn't have the budget for the 35mm, we ended up shooting on super 16mm. It had a lot of lingering shots, build-ups and the characters were shot with lot of distance. It was not like the usual way how one would shoot a horror film where one puts the camera under the table and puts a wide lens. It was shot with a lot of shallow depth of fields.

We had a style which we stuck to from beginning to end. Unfortunately, the film didn't get its due and got a very poor release. But I still meet a lot of people who absolutely love the film and rate it as a cult niche psychological thriller film.

What is styling for you in terms of lighting ?

Style can have many definitions. For me, putting the light is actually 10% of the job but where the light should fall and where it shouldn't is the main thing for me. I don't like to use too many lights. I would like to work with 2 or 3 sources at one point no matter how wide the scene is. I am more concerned about where am I cutting the light from and how I am moulding it. With that little touch of letting the light fall somewhere and not fall somewhere, fall little bit somewhere and more somewhere- one is creating one's own gradient and texture. As an image maker one is taking a decision at that end such as what and how much does one want the audiences to see and that how is one evoking a mood.

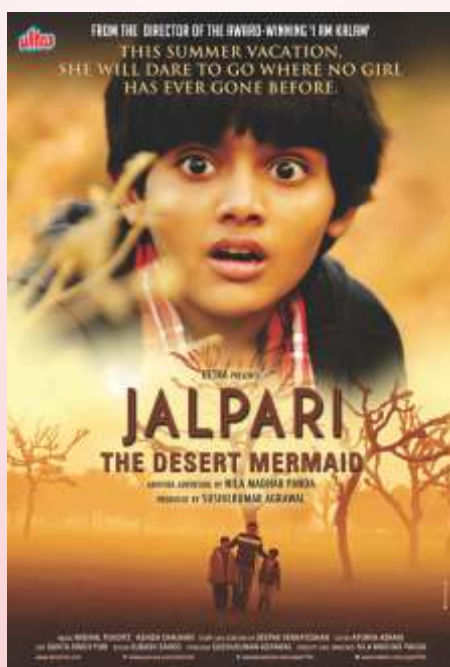
Your answer reminds me of the very loosely used term, 'dramatic lighting'. Can you quote an example from any of your works where you used the dramatic lighting.

Normally on stage in a play, one puts a spot on the person where one wants audiences' eyes to go and one would darken something where you don't want the audience to even notice and using fade in and fade out of lighting. These are basic tools of dramatic lighting. My idea of dramatic lighting is the same. When I want to accentuate something, a drama, or something to be looked at more than the other. How I light it is one big part of it and of course then how I lens it. Even if the character is in the background and isn't in the full figure, if I choose to keep the focus on a key in the foreground or a watch or a pigeon in the foreground, I am able to dramatize his state of mind with another object where maybe like the time is ticking by. This is my idea of creating drama. Recently I just finished shooting for 'Hawaizaada' where I used a few dramatic lighting idea for a couple of songs and sequences. We played with single dramatic beam of light, moving lights casting shadows in frame,



lightening etc. In a narrative or in a scene space it's difficult to suddenly make lights move unless the film is something like which has been devised and thought as a very theatrical idea.

Basically there were a couple of props that we wanted to accentuate in the song which are important to the state of mind for Ayushman's character. The beat of the song was such that if I was shooting an inanimate object, a couple of them and then look at the boy suddenly it was not the magic of song and beats were not happening. Hence, I used a lot of props, which would create interesting shadows such as interesting antique props, some partitions, some



cages etc. I created a wall kind of a thing in front of which we kept the prop and I used a light which was on the trolley which we moved on rhythm with the song and then that we kept doing as a cutting point from one shot to another. It just looks dramatic and it enhances the state of mind of the character. As I was trying to connect somebody's state of mind with an inanimate compass or an inanimate pen or an ink pot or a book or anything like that and also bring essence of the time that is passing. I did a playback workshop for the students of Whistling Woods which I shot and Vibhu had directed it. The song was 'Tere Ishq Nachaya' by Sona Mohapatra. We conceptualized it in a very dramatic fashion. The same space would become an army barrack and the girl's room who is waiting for the soldier who has left her. We would jump time but not change space. At times, we would do that by the change of light. There I used a lot of lights changing in a shot. Something is fading out, something is fading in. As I fade in, I've moved to another space. In that 10-30 seconds' cut on a woman, I want to suddenly justify Bulleh Shah's words and make the emotions dramatic.

What are the factors which you consider as important in the process of image formation today in the digital world ?

I like to get very closely involved in costumes and in art direction because I think an image is not just made by lensing and lighting. In terms of image, what one sees is are the actors, what are they wearing, what is the background against which they are standing. The image is created by the costume designer, art director and DOP together. These days, at a later stage VFX also plays a huge part.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in digital format today ?

I think camera is the medium through which one is shooting but at the end of the day the bigger question one asks is how do you retain the same image and make sure the same image is seen in terms of color that you intend to show as a DOP. Today the ownership over the image has really gone down in the sense that it's not so much in hands



of DOP anymore. The same footage shot on digital camera, on a digital platform would look different at 20 different platforms. Of course, there are huge advantages of shooting in Digital like. One doesn't have to worry much about the footage, how much is one shooting. Film gave a sense of discipline, it was critical for a person not to waste the stock which is missing now. Digital is getting better with the time but it has not matched film. It is still miles away.

Tell us about some interesting situations you faced while shooting?

I was shooting in a small lane for 'Hawaizaada' and there was hardly any space for the camera and actors. There was not much place and I wanted that like a workshop kind of space where we needed to have a furnace and such kind of a location. I just wanted a little bit of fire simulation. I realized that the furnace itself was giving very beautiful light. The only thing was that I would have to shoot in really low light. Hence, I just gave one little source from outside the window that was really like one small corner and we managed to get a small soft kicker of low intensity. We shot full open and all I kept doing was throwing some lobaan in the fire whenever I wanted the fire to go up. It



worked very well for me. Then there was one scene in 404 where the kids were rehearsing for a play. In middle of that play, the main character a professor comes and takes his prodigy away. It was the beginning of the professor taking him into a dark space. We didn't want to see much. We were talking about how to do the scene. We had to deal with some non actors who were supposed to play. They were supposed to enact a play in the middle of the happening of this scene. We didn't have the right actors. We didn't want to see much. I just saw one of my light boys was just drying paint on the floor with multi-20 light. I really liked the way it was looking at that

time. I just said that you stay here and that multi became the main light source. We just lit the wall behind it and everybody else was a silhouette. We shot the whole scene in the silhouette and that multi guy was actually lighting up for the play. He was the part of the play and it became a single shot handled thing. I like to keep doing things like that sometimes where one has that kind of space in film. This is not the case always. Sometimes you just have to think more about the scene.

Since 'Hawaizaada' is a period film and people generally do Sepia or give a warm effect. How did you go about handling this period film in terms of lighting, lensing and shot taking?

One of the key element in the film is the period it is set in, i.e. 1895 Mumbai, a period that we had never seen. The film was previously titled Bamba Fairytale and we wanted a dream-like genre, a fantastical world. We wanted a period film, but not the kinds we are used to seeing.

It's a film which has been written with a lot of freshness and one thing I and Vibhu were sure about was that we didn't want sepia in the film nor we wanted to go for earth colors because that's the first thing that comes to your

mind when you think of Period dramas. Blue and green were the colors we locked. Everything in the film, we would have blue and green and grays maybe and a little bit of white and a dash of red. Sahil Kochar was doing our costumes, we had many elaborated meetings with him where we discussed not just blue and green, the shades of blue, the shades of green we would have in the film. Together as a team we decided that we will not let some alien colors walk into the frame accidentally also. Color-coding a film is not an easy job. One has to create a space, a palette and then sticks to it. For example red color would also be muted red or royal red, a certain kind of a red and it will only be used sparingly like 20% of the frame. It could be used in a muffler but not in full attire because that would shout too much. Hence it will always be in the dash. This was the rule even in the drapes of sets. If we ever wanted to use some shouting colors, we would have it only in a small drape but never as the color of the set or furniture. We were very closely making sure that the film was sticking to a palette and a form.

We have also lensed it very differently giving a softer, telephoto lens feel through the film and playing with the focus and depth of field.

Tell us about your experience of working on Hawaizaada. What camera and lenses did you use. Can you elaborate about the sets and lighting also?

When we started the shoot, a year and a half back, film was fading out and digital had caught up. But since this film was like a painting for us, it had to have the texture of the film negative. I'm very glad that Vibhu Puri, my director supported me to shoot on film. We have shot on ARRI 435 as it was a non-sync film, using Cooke s5/i lenses. I like this lens as it has a soft and seamless quality to it also the 1.4 f-stop opening helped me as I tend to shoot a lot of shallow depth of field. We largely used a single camera except for few days when we were shooting action or flying bits where the actors were on harness. In such scenes it is inconvenient to repeat the same action many times, so we used a two-camera set up.



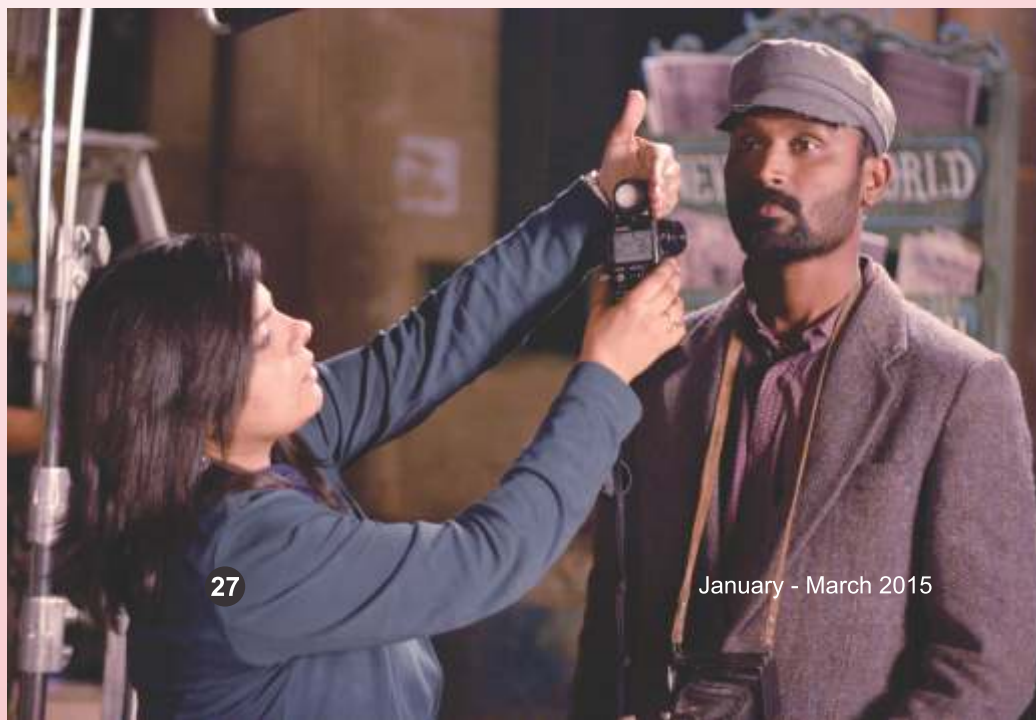
The biggest challenge was to execute a certain level of visual finesse in a limited time. It is a VFX heavy film in that we had a lot of Chroma key replacement for the ship. As far as the flying bits go, we stayed away from too much CG. Chroma replacement was a huge task because we didn't want it to look fake. " Ayushmann was made to swing on harnesses and we shot it at different angles, with a Chroma around. That sequence is shot over two sets and the plates were shot separately. All these things happened in different layers and were finally put together.

We were shooting on a lot of real locations so I made sure that the harshness of the sunlight didn't directly fall on the actors and the sets. Molding the natural light was a big task. Since it was not a very big budget film we did not have any pre-light days or equipment or big lighting team. We were always thinking of quicker and faster solutions. I like to spend a lot of time on the location or set before we shoot to observe the place and see how

the light reacts at different times so you know the strength and weakness and can play around it.

Lighting up sets was interesting. There was an exterior set of Mithunda's ship and it was not feasible to shoot it on the real sea so we had to put a huge Chroma set of 120 feet X 80 feet which has the upper deck of the ship and everything around is a green cloth. It was challenging because we had to create the sense of a skylight and make it look real, like it has been shot on a beach. We didn't want any harsh sun situations so it was shot during late evenings and early mornings. Overall my light requirement was very small and we were playing with basic light sources. We would add a lot of lights and make a big source rather than put small lights everywhere. In the film, the spaces are very artsy and the emotion is massy. So I used light to mix two worlds to create the right mood and at the same time keep my actors well lit to create a sense of gloss and glamour. Unless there was a requirement where the actors have to look harsh or to not show their faces.

Hawaizaada is a very saturated film with many colors. We have paid a lot of attention to the set colors, costume colors etc., so nothing in the frame is accidental. We were creating separation, contrast, depth and mood with the colors in the frame. In the post-production stage I told my colorist that I wouldn't want to lose those colors, the saturation and at the same time create a unique look that has a dream like softness in the images.



Interview with Production Designer

Sukant Panigrahy



Photographs By Sutan D Kite

How was your experience of working with Prakash Jha who is not into the glossy things but into a very hard core realistic look?

Prakash Jha was starting "Gangajal" and that film was first offered to someone else, since that person was busy he approached me and introduced me to Prakash ji and they told him, "this guy can do the job, he can try," because he was also looking for somebody new. "Gangajal" was my first film and I was a little nervous as with this film I had taken complete responsibility of something which I had never done on my own before.

Earlier also I had responsibility, even when I was working on "Fiza" and "Ghajgami," I was handling most of the things but I was still not fully responsible for everything. "Gangajal" was my first film after a very long gap as an art director and this film released soon and my work was appreciated. The whole film was very realistic and my whole experience before this film was of very

glossy films due to working with Yash Raj films & Karan Johar.

It was a challenge looking for actual places and doing the recce as there were many locations.

In the film the police station, head quarter, and the check post were the main things. It was decided that it will be done in Bombay, somewhere in a school or a college. It was a question of finding the right location and dressing it up. You can see Rajasthan has different architecture and same with other places but Bihar has some different kind of architecture.

There is nothing prominent in it that you stand somewhere and it will look like Bihar.

If you put a taxi from Delhi it will seem like Delhi but Bihar has no particular thing and that's the time I approached Prakash ji that I needed one week to travel to the place and see and move around Bihar and feel the color difference.

It was very tough for me and at that time there was no Google that you could do research and see the images on and though there was internet even then very few references could be found.

The only thing we found was the logo of the police over there. The interesting thing was that I didn't have to follow anything in particular, so whatever I was showing was relevant. I just had to displace the Marathi signboards. Even though there was a hotel room for me, I never went there even for a single day. All day I was on the field and that hard work can be seen in the film. It was not one specific set, it was always like finding each and every location from the printing press to the factory where the action sequences were shot, changing from one temple to another.

After that did you do any other film with Prakash Jha?

No. But after that I was not ready to take any other film. I started working on

my scripts.

Did your wanting to become a director hamper your way as an art director?

No, it did not. In fact it helped me. I have worked with many first time filmmakers, they found me like somebody who listens to them properly, gives good suggestions, and it was not that I was imposing my ideas but was simply suggesting them. So for them I was like an associate director cum art director. When they suggest my name to other directors they always say he is a director's art director. He sees from your point of view. I think that insecurity will come only if they think I'll take away their job. With many directors I've shared my knowledge of art direction. Many times the budget was low but we could manage.

How was your experience of working with Shimit Amin in "Chak De India"? which is again a film with a very realistic look.

Shimit Amin in "Chak De India" was looking for only real locations but because he liked my work in "Gangajal," he had confidence in me.

I gave him the confidence that even through sets I will bring the realistic look. When he saw one of the sequences on screen it looked real and then he got the confidence and decided that he will work only with sets. For actors he went to different states and auditioned people. He also wanted Shah Rukh going to his house on the real location but it was not appropriate as the houses were of different sizes and it was quite risky to take him to the real location. After all the options I showed him, he agreed on my designs and it turned out to be a good collection. First half was almost sets only for 6-7 days then they went to Delhi for those training and jogging shots at the stadium but everything else was a set. Just that Shah Rukh's mohalla set could not get close enough to reality as there were limitations of budget, space, time etc. Basically you are the one who is marrying two parties, one is the director

with a vision, and the other is the producer with a budget.

"Aaja Nach Le" was a different set up, how did you create that feel?

"Aaja Nach Le" was a very crucial film. It was a huge responsibility when it came to me because the entire film was to be done on a single base. It was Madhuri's comeback movie. The story was set in a small town and 90% characters in the film were from that town and nowhere in the world can you block an entire town. Anil Mehta had already done a lot of recce, but to hold a huge unit in a village for 3-4 months was very difficult. So they decided to create a set. Since the set was not to last longer than 6 months, we decided to use real mud and cow dung rather than artificial material to build the set. I calculated it in a way that it didn't even go expensive. It was a kind of experiment considering the budget and a lot of people from the industry just came to see the set as it was eco friendly.

Since it was a realistic set, the background would have needed some



houses as well. Didn't that take too much of your time?

My previous experience came handy there. We gave it a landscape kind of feel. Since it was to be there for 6 months, the feel that some family is living there was to be created, so we used cows, dogs, dhabas, etc to give that feel. After the movie was over, Yash Raj films was like it's all so real so how can you reuse it? I used it in "Tashan" when I was to show Kanpur.

Give us a detailed idea about this new profile of a "Set Decorator" who collaborates with the "Production Designer"?

Suppose this place is a set, the production designer will design it and give it to the art director. Art director will construct and oversee, the property guy will do the props, and the set decorator's job is of a set dresser like say to get the curtains approved by the production designer. All that is required is to decorate the set. Earlier the art director used to do everything other than the set construction, from designing to buying, set decoration, properties, basically he used to do mostly everything.

Do you think there are people who specialize only in constructing the set?

Nowadays there are many. There are many contractors who only take contracts as set constructors and nothing else, inclusive of whitewashing. Just now for my film, I hired a set constructor in Rajasthan, who was supposed to only construct the set and all the detailing and decoration was to be done by us. So that way we divided our work which is much easier. This idea has come from abroad. Everybody does not follow it the way one must. In the last film also I was doing everything.

In the Indian scenario what kinds of micro-specializations exist in Production Design?

There are many kinds, for example, Samir Chanda has done a lot of period and realistic work. His team is known for the detailing just like you see in Vishal



Bhardawaj's films. It is not that I won't be able to do that but it has become his trade mark. I did "Gangaajal," "Dev D." So what happens is that you are then known by your style, just as in my case, I do realistic kind of films but I also do glossy films like "Tashan" and "Ek Tha Tiger." For me I was ready to blend in anything because all I wanted was to do any kind of work. I just have to see the director's perception, what direction he wants to go in. Dev D was a good experience. Anurag's story inspired me to design differently.

The whole story and how he tweaked the songs, the music, and the tone of the classic story retold in a different way. So why not make it look different? That's why we tweaked the design as well. The brothel never looked like any brothel or hostel or anything, for the small hotel also we graphitized the house, as for the underground bar, such a bar does not exist in India, but we created that because the film was giving us that space to design.

So that's where the production design thing comes from. Earlier all you needed to do was just create the sets, be it a hospital, school, bar or anything but these days people are conscious of the design. When production design comes in at the pre-production stage it can be seen in the movie.

One person apart from the director who works closely on a project is the cinematographer. What do you expect from him so as to work smoothly?

There's a lot actually. Sometimes art and camera department get along well and sometimes they just don't for various reasons. Working on Dev- D was such a delight as we both were on the same page. He had his limitations, I had mine. Sometimes on the set I would use some practical lights and he would come and adjust some lights. Say the DOP wants to light up the ceiling with 100 lights and the producer says I've the budget for only 20 lights, how will I get those 80? When you tell the DOP, and the DOP doesn't want to understand, it will be very problematic.

Today computer designs are becoming very popular, is this an advantage for an art director or not?



Definitely! Earlier in hand drawings you were not able to showcase what exactly you want in terms of lighting, texture, etc. whereas in the computer design one can. What I do now is create a set on computer and add lights and send it. Since everything is going digital, it's good that we are on the same page, that okay, this is the look of the film, and this is the lighting that I am seeing on the set. So it helps the DOP and the director as well.

If at some point the cameraman says that he wants a warmer feel or more light or a reddish kind of tone, then we can work that out on the design level so that the director also gets the clarity of how it will look. Then the costume and everything can also follow their palettes accordingly.

Do you need to learn some specific software also?

Yes. Computer literacy is very important otherwise you will be left behind. I learnt it in time unlike my other fellows who are now dependent on others for the same. I sketch after sketching I work with Photoshop for different styles.

Talking about the film, "Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain", how did you recreate the whole 1984 scenario?

I've been to Bhopal but there was no such special characteristic that I could

represent. It was about slums and also the director had done a complete research on it. I was not available at the initial stage so they hired my assistant and then they did some percentage in Hyderabad. They created part of the factory and a little bit of the basti outside. It was all a set. Inside the factory was not entirely the set. It had some digital enhancements as well. In Bombay I recreated the basti where the climax and many scenes including the hospital were shot.

Talking about the scene of the Bhopal station, how did you recreate it? What are the specific things you worked with?

It was not a major set. Actually it was shot intelligently. The basti and a



little bit of the interiors of the factory in Hyderabad was the major set. The station was more of a set decoration thing. We did a little research on what were the things then, what kind of posters, and ads used to be there. We created those posters graphically and used them on the walls to give it the right feel. The director was very clear about what he wanted so it was all done in a very smart way.

Tell us about your work with Raj Kumar Gupta on films like "Ghanchakkar" and "No One Killed Jessica."

"Ghanchakkar" had more of stylized kind of sets unlike "No One Killed Jessica" which had realistic kind of sets. In "No One Killed Jessica" we created

many locations. You'll hardly come to know that it's a set. In this film too I was called up at the very last minute. Wasiq Khan was to do that film. Only in "Ghanchakkar" we did a little bit of unrealistic sets otherwise it's all realistic sets or locations.

Please pin point some of the things that the DOP demands which are helpful for the film.

Some DOPs who are much more experienced, visualize the design and also look for the practical lights which will give authenticity rather than bringing too much of artificial lights.

Say for example somebody says I want to create depth here in this room and since it is a small room you just cannot do that. So how do you as an art director bring expertise of art direction to get the depth? Right edging helps a lot. Like in the paintings, they have deep edges and soft in the middle etc.

What do you miss most when you recollect your career of 20 years?

One is obviously that had I studied the art formally, I could have appreciated it more and contributed in a better way. It is important for an art director or any technician for that matter to understand what the director is visualizing. I always try to understand what he is trying to say and give the best I can. This understanding was not from the beginning, it came with experience over the time. □□□





Interview with Film Editor *Deepa Bhatia*

of craft. For this purpose, I stopped editing for 3 years. During this period I read a lot, watched a lot. I just started to learn editing in my own way. I was more confident when I got back to editing after that gap. I kind of felt that balance between instinct which is invaluable to an editor and craft which is the basic technique. Later, I edited Jahnu Barua's film "Maine Gandhi Ko Nahi Mara" in which I had felt a different kind of confidence as I was in a comfort zone.

You have done so many films. what is your basic expectation from a director ?

The soul. The films which don't have a soul, they just don't work. They may have best technicians; they may have everything at their disposal but they just don't come together. When you just see the material you can feel that inherent honesty and inherent character. When that character is not here, it is almost that 80% of time one is losing the battle. I have even felt that when I watched other people's work.

I have seen some films which I didn't like but they were edited beautifully. I have also seen films which I felt were not well edited but I still loved the film because the filmmaker's soul is very strong. There is something in the films which rises above all departments of film making and vice versa. Hence as an editor, we can bring in the craft and try to do everything we can. But finally it is one quality that only a director can bring to the table. It is that edge a director brings.

Do you think that there is much more opportunity to experiment at the editing in a documentary than Fiction ?

I think it is a fact that the film is made on the editing table holds completely true for documentary. like

How did you start your career in editing?

After I finished my social media communication course from Sophia College, I joined Govind Nihalani as an assistant director on the film Sanshodhan. We had an ad film editor who was not able to give as much time as Govind ji probably needed. The machine had all the material and nobody was there to work on it. So I thought let me just try.

I did this over the month whenever the editor was not able to come. After a month, I just edited some material and showed it Govind ji. He liked the way it was put together. Of course, I was not an editor. Later he kept telling me that you have a good sense of editing and I should pursue it. Even then actually, I didn't take it seriously at all. I think that a year after he started a project "Hazaar Chaurasi Ki Maa". He called me and told me to edit it.

He also said that he would request Renu Saluja (they had worked together in Ardh Satya) to polish it if i don't do it nicely. I felt very privileged that i had a boss who saw a talent in me and helped me to discover it out. I just cut Hazaar Chaurasi Ki Maa. It just went like as if I was born to do it. I knew how to navigate the process technically, I knew that there was so much to learn because I was a newcomer but the creative process which is the heart of editing

came organically to me .

Later you also edited films such as "Takshak" and "Dev" tell us about your experience of working with Govind Nihalani.

Govind ji shoots a lot with multiple angles. So with him i got the chance to explore the material. I had to experiment if I will began with this what will happen ? He had his own machine. Hence, there was no pressure for editing clock ticking. He gave me time to experiment. Since he had worked with Renu Saluja on Ardh Satya he shared a lot of what he observed from her method of working. For example : he told me that as an editor one has to develop a visual memory.

The key of editing is to be able to remember all those thousands of shots. He told me how perfect were Renu's cuts and how much she contributed. Though I never assisted her, she became my role model. This is how I edited 4-5 films for him. He taught me everything and we had a wonderful working relationship. My only difficulty was that I couldn't get him to see my point of view sometimes ! He was my mentor so I couldn't force my view but the truth is that a editor should have a strong voice.

I was also going through my own doubts as an editor. I was working on instinct, without enough understanding

for my own documentary which I made on the farmer's suicide, I had a young editor Avro Banerjee as I wanted some objectivity. Since the day I visualized the film I thought of a certain beginning. I had always seen it that way but he threw a very different idea that was so exciting !

Hence in a documentary that really holds true because you don't shoot so much as per the structure as you shoot a fiction film. A fiction film is bound within different parameters of the script but if the material is there then good editors can really perform miracles. As I always say to myself for films that I edit if it was loose or clumsy, did you smarten it up to the best it can become? That's the goal I keep; make the film the best it can be.

It is also said that “rhythm and pace” is to be created in the editing. Do you also think that it is created more at the time of shot taking or it is only created in the editing ?

Rhythm in the scene comes from two things - internal and external elements. The external rhythms include how is the camera operated, how is one covering it? What is the break down for shots? How many angles is one giving to the editor? One can manipulate the rhythm based on the material. How does your actor say his lines, what is his rhythm? You may do the whole six-minute scene in a single shot. What can I do about the rhythm then? Once the film comes to the editing table, you know that if you have angles, if you have coverage, you can manipulate.

If I find the scene which is too slow. I can speed it up. it is in my hands. If I find that the scene is going too fast, I can slow it down too. I can create a pause. you have to break down the rhythm which is feeling correct to your heart. I think rhythm is the key to editing. It is just like observing people.

I think as an editor we have to constantly observe people as it gives us the chance to reconstruct that in the cinematic space. Most of directors i have worked with, all of them tend to shoot enough so that I can play with it but yes, if one has fair amount of material, coverage then you can do a lot with rhythm.

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When we talk about the pace it is more like the scene is going fast or slow or is it more of the overall film ?

If you watch a film like “social network” how quickly the characters speak ! That is because it is reflecting a time which is energetic, young, cutting edge, when new ideas were being explored. So the general pace is high energy. Different films have their own way of communicating different emotions.

If one talks about from where the pace comes from, it is generally the way the character is speaks lines. Sometimes people say that the film is too slow. Editing could have been sharper. I remember that I edited the film

'Takshak' and a critic wrote that film could been cut short by 45 minutes. I was like... do these people know what is 45 minutes of screen time? What actually happens is when the viewer/critic is unhappy with the film is that we have to find something to blame that blame invariably falls on the editing and the pacing.

How important it is for the choreographers to be present at the time of the editing ?

I don't like anybody to be present at the time of editing be it the director, the choreographer and the action director. They have shot the film. Now I look at the material. I have the shot break down, I have the script. Now I have to



well. The Padda brothers, Trigger happy... all of them are really good at it !

Why the length of the rough cut is too long then the fine cut ?

First problem is that film scripts are overwritten. Earlier in my career I used to be in this situation. My 1st cut was of 2 hours, 3 hours and I needed to bring it down to 90 minutes. When you are young in your career, you are afraid to alter the scene. You first give complete opportunity to a director's vision. It is at a later stage that you say ok let's cut, maybe we can change this. What I do now is that I don't have any difference of more than 7-8 minutes between my fine cut and first cut.

Experience helps a person to gain more skills. Editing involves macro and micro inspection. When you are cutting a scene you are looking at the micro structure...the nuances, the small details. When scenes are cut, you pull out and work on the macro picture. Both the director and me now look at overall pacing rhythm and the larger experience. Reinventing is the key. For this reason I think macro and micro shift is always tricky.

How comfortable are you in doing your edit in close or doing edit on the spot when the shoot is done ?

It is the personality of the director. For certain directors, having the editor on the set is an advantage. In my case if I

do my job. Supposing as a director you have planned something for the beginning, I might be able to bring in another perspective. If I get it wrong, I'll redo it.

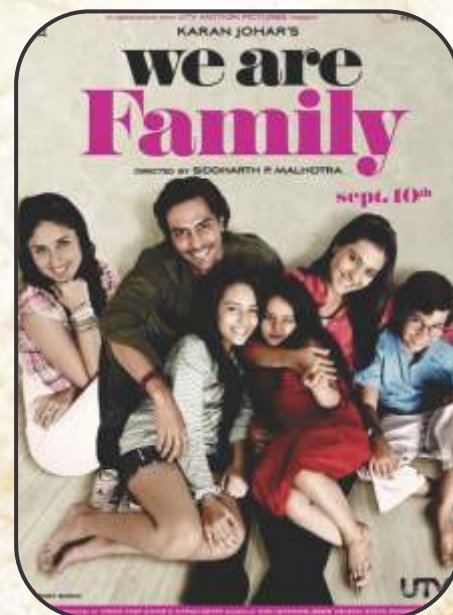
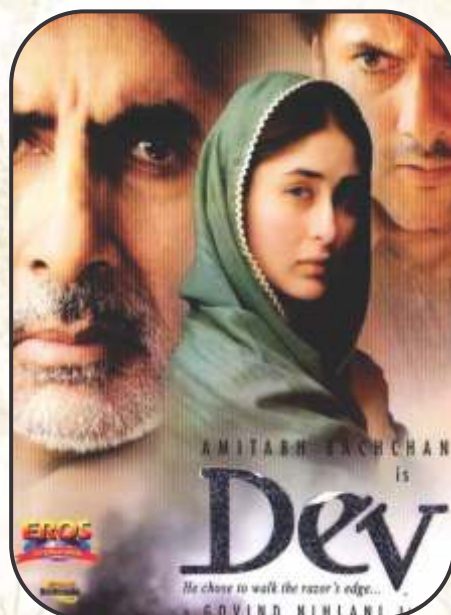
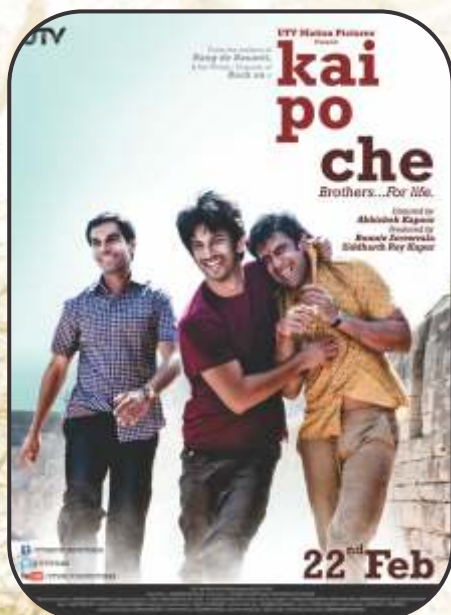
In the same way I tell the choreographers let me cut it. Come and see it. Please give me feedback. If you want something to change, you are the director I will change it. They give their suggestions and they have some amazing ideas too but give me the opportunity to bring in an option, to interpret the material. I have a lot of arguments with choreographers who send their assistants to tell me how I should do it. I don't like that interruption.

I look at ng's and all other shots. like for example 1st take ng, 2nd take ng, 3rd take ng, 4th ok, 5th ok, 7th ok, 9th perfect. What happens when I look at from take 1 to 10? Did he not like the actors' tone ? Did the camera movement change ? I understand the mind of my director through his 10 takes. I don't know why all editors don't look at everything. For me ng's speaks so much more. I spend hours watching rushes. This is why I do one film at a time.

Do you think a promo also need to be cut by a special editor who cuts only the promo ?

I think that promos edit are marketing driven. They are best executed by those who get that space

Important Films of Deepa Bhatia as Film Editor



am editing on the set then I lose my objectivity. I do go visit the set , But I don't like to edit on the set. My process is that I take lot of time watching rushes. Editing is very meditative. It is one part of film making which gives you time to think. I don't know why people rush it. While shooting, one makes impulsive decisions day after day. Both writing and editing are contemplative and it is critical that we don't rush it up. For me this is like a temple. It is a meditative space. For me, it is also a very introspective world. A director comes up with an idea, he develops the script and shoots. It takes 2-5 years. that's how long he has lived with it. As an editor I too must try to discover his film completely. I must know it as well as him only then I can be useful to him. For that I have to look at the material very carefully. Now I know as much as he knows. Now, we have discussion during which he says "why didn't you use take 2, I must be able to justify that choice by being completely in tune with the material.

Is there anything else which you would like to say related to editing ?

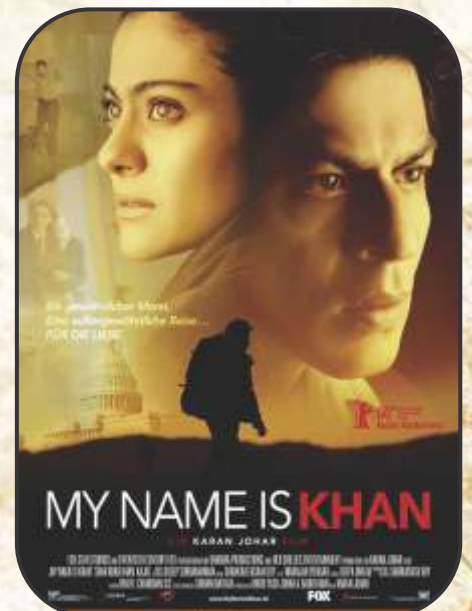
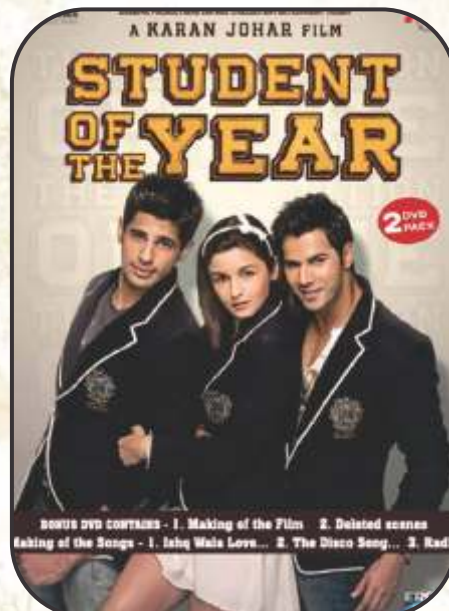
Most times editors are fixing problems created by poor writing. It is really important we invest time in good writing because at the end of the day, that is what will create good films. Regarding the process of editing itself, I always believe the key is watching the footage with great care. That usually gives you good results. □□□

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Important Films of Deepa Bhatia as Film Editor





Interview with sound designers
Allwin Rego and Sanjay Maurya.

Can you explain the process of sound designing a film?

Sound designing for us is an ever evolving process right up till the final mix. A director has a vision which lays the foundation for every film. We start sound designing mentally right from the time we hear the first narration. This process is ongoing as we watch the first edit and subsequent copies. Sound designing involves extensive prep work and once we zero down on the sound elements required for a particular film, we make sure those sounds are recorded while on shoot or during the edit stage as the requirement arises. We have an extensive library which we have build painstakingly over a period of time

and which are used in all the films.

What are the challenges you face when you do any film which is a location sound oriented project?

It depends on how good your production track is in the first place. If the production track is noisy and you have to use it then you are in trouble because your centre track is generally overloaded. It also depends on how the actors deliver their dialogues. No matter how much we aim for a 100% sync sound, when we are actually on location, multiple problems arise. Every film is a different experience. 'Queen' was shot across three countries with three different production sound recordists

and the challenge was to maintain consistency in the dialogue tone and levels as each recordist had his own recording style. Another challenging film was 'Detective Byomkesh Bakshy' which is set in 1940s. It was important not to have any contamination from the present times in the soundtrack to show that era. Hence it involved some extensive dialogue edit and cleanup.

What is your basic brief for a film like Byomkesh during PPMs with costume designer and production designer?

We have to ensure that the costumes used are sync-sound friendly and make minimum interference with

the dialogues. The sound recordist will accordingly check the footwear, clothes, jewellery, saris etc. For example: If there is a saree creating rustle or noise then you try and have alternative fabric options such as cotton, different tapes and other stuff which will keep microphone away from the saree or away from the noise.

You guys have worked with directors like Anurag Kashyap on 'Dev D' and from the same school Raj Kumar Gupta on 'No One Killed Jessica' which is a genre kind of a film. When you work with a particular genre, how do you keep these factors in mind when designing the sound?

For 'No One Killed Jessica', we sound designed the film keeping in mind the distinctive personality traits of the two lead characters - that's Vidya Balan and Rani Mukerji. As Vidya's character was very mellow with a lot going on in her head, we ensured there was very less ambience in the shots that centered around her. Whereas as Rani's character was vibrant and we played around with sounds accordingly.

Everybody knew 'Dev D' in terms of story but when somebody is making it again there was a very strong reason from the director's point of view but how do you contribute in terms of design part of it?

Dev D was one of our most exciting films. It is a musical with 18 songs. Hence, dynamically getting the film in control was the most important thing. It was a new age film. So we went crazy. A lot of songs were processed, re-processed. A lot of experimentation happened and we had free hand from Anurag and the producers. It's important to ensure that the multiple sound layers don't distract the audience. The film had so many back to back songs plus the background score, not to forget the street performance and the city noise. So one has to maintain a smooth flow from ambience sounds into songs and vice versa. For example: There was a song titled Pardesi where midway through Dev plunges into water. When Dev is pictured underwater we lowered the volume of the track to give it a drowning kind of sensation adding



layers of low frequency tracks and kept the song playing on in a completely reverberated mood. In a way it was completely processed to be in a dreamy space to complement Dev's constant being high on drugs. The other element we consciously used were airplanes taking off to signify Dev's constant need to get high.

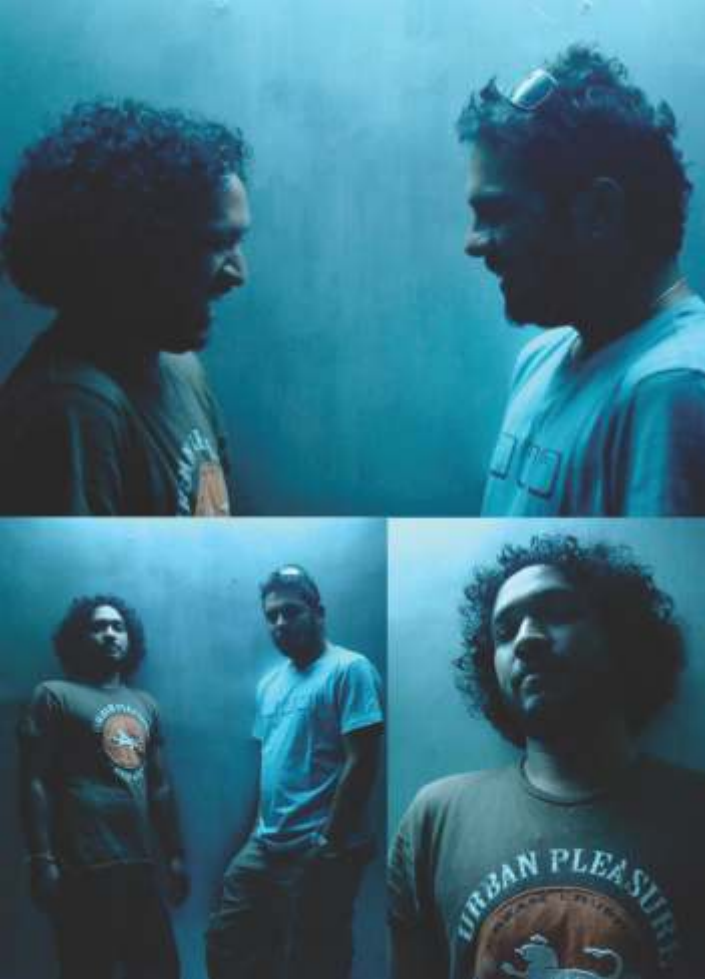
Sometimes it will be easier for someone to say that it is a psychological thing but you have to translate that into actual sound. How do you do that?

Well it takes layers of sounds to come up with an effect or sometimes none as silence too plays out extremely effectively. We try to depict the human state of mind. If the artist is happy then the atmosphere surrounding him is cheerful vibrant and if he is in a unhappy mood the atmospheric sounds can be dark and depressing..

To get these kind of effects, how much do you depend on the stock library or do you send someone and do a location live recording of a variety of things which are going in your mind ?

Over time our work flow has completely changed. We rarely use domestic library sounds currently. For Kahaani – we went to kolkatta and recorded different sounds associated with the city. It's a dubbed film and most of the ambient sound you hear in the film was recorded during ten days of Durga Puja over two years. The soul of Kahaani was in the city of Kolkatta. One needs to feel it. The whole idea is to give a sense of realism when one is watching it. One should feel like that one is walking next to the film's protagonist. If Vidya is in that room you are with her in that room. If she is suffocating right now, one has to suffocate with her. This is the whole psychology. For example - Vidya comes to the room for the first time and windows are shut, everything is shut. She is in a complete lost state of mind, she feels claustrophobic. To add more layers to it we added different kinds of sound to give that sense to the viewer.

Would you prefer to use sounds which are not musical as such but could act as a musical track into your background sound track ? Do you work on those non instrumental sounds?



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Let me explain with the example of Kahaani again. Kolkata is a vibrant city. While we were recording sounds, we spotted a flutist. But we had to take care that while we were recording he doesn't play a modern tune so we don't get involved into a copy right thing. We have to spend time with that guy, build his trust to get him to play stuff for us. It involves a lot of people skill. Thus, Kahaani had a lot of that character. It had a lot of traffic. Kolkata is like one of noisiest cities we have ever been to. Everybody honks there. In Kahaani, we had a catalogue of honks which is one of the most interesting sounds of the sequences. All our multiple sessions to Kolkata helped us with this. We have a big bank now. Similarly 'Dev D' was also a dubbed film. We recorded several interesting sounds right from the Sabzee Market to Khan Market and from Connaught Place to Jama Masjid, not restricting ourselves to sounds required only in the film. If you find a good sound you will find some way to interpret it.

How do you take care of mixing part in terms of recording which will distinguish a musical film like ABCD from a typical Bollywood musical ?

For the mix part we have been fortunate to work with really good sound mixers like Debojit who has mixed ABCD. A lot of things were easy but ABCD has challenging bits as well because 20 minutes into the film there is a dance sequence. It is a battle. This battle has different groups coming in and doing different dance moves. We started interpreting the scene in our own way musically because the choreography is fixed, it is on time. We put sounds and we just listened to the sound design. It sounded like music. In ABCD our design was used to enhance the movements. Sachin-Jigar, the music directors worked on what we did in terms of sound design and came back musically to us later. For instance, there is a whole sequence of this guy dancing like a robot and he does his whole machine gun loading sequence. This whole sequence is quiet big. We have done the edit with sound design. They did the music design on that sound. They used our stuff, processed it further, put delays on it. Also there is a clown dance in the second half of the film and lot of that was completely sound design. We highlighted their movements, their jumps, their hugs and falls etc. There is a

creative freedom from director Remo's end. We added sound effects enhancing the movements like probably a little bit of rap music stuff. We used it from our domestic library but just fitted in so beautifully on their existing musical structure and it stayed on till the final mix.

You must have also recorded the foley tracks. Give me some insights on it !

Foley is one of the most important but under rated process in India. It is as important as the dialogue of a film. Foley says a lot like your presence, your movements, your weight of the body, the weight of the footsteps. It tells you the state of mind the person is in. For foley recording obviously one needs to have a sense of what mic one is going to use, the distance etc. One then saves that much time in post production. The mic perspective is similar to how you change lenses in cinema that's how you should place your microphone. If you are using 50mm which is very close to human eye. Use the mic distance according to the perspective on the screen. If it is a wide shot keep your mic little away and do the foley. If it's a mid



shot get the mic little closer and if it is very close shot of footsteps in water then get the mic really closer to get that impact of that water. Use it like a lens, watch the screen and use it accordingly to have a correct perspective. While dubbing also we tell the actors to keep these points in mind so that they can accordingly adjust themselves to the mic. If it is a wide lens, just go little behind and talk.

Somebody is walking in water which is not a very shallow thing and somebody who is walking in a little water which is not too deep also. Do you recreate them in a studio?

Some of the sounds are created in foley, and some others are used from the stock library because of the restriction in the foley studios. One has to use stock sounds to enhance. So we would record the walking in water and use a layer of water splashes from the

stock to create a more interesting perspective. One records the foley and comes down to the edit table to give perspective. Only so much can be done on foley. We end up pitching a lot of stuff "Eqing" a lot of stuff before we get into mix, overlay sounds because you want more body which you are not getting in foley.

As an artist how do you update yourself on day to day basis besides the experience which you get from working in the studio?

Nature is our biggest teacher. Everything is around you, and much depends on how much you can observe. All the directors we have been working with are all accomplished filmmakers so everyday spent with them is a learning . And for everything else there is the internet .

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Interview with **Ashok Salian**

The idea behind the photograph is more important than the machine, so when you think of any series of pictures, what is the idea behind the process of creating such brilliant work?

It's a very difficult to give an answer when someone asks you about how the entire creative process works. There are certain aspects that work before the shoot and certain others that happen on the shoot, for example you might decide to do a whole series of monochromatic shots which means you work with the

designer, different colors, muted colors and muted backgrounds. That according to me is easy. But you might also want a certain look let's say a royal look in a photo, so you start with monochromatic and then work on the look, the princely look. How will you get the royal look? One is of course through the attire then through period hair styles, so you work on those. Most of the still shoots don't have budgets, so then you have to be very innovative when you organize a backdrop which is economical yet it accentuates the look of the picture, for

example the photograph you talked about with Dimple. Infact those were a series of pictures that I did for Abu Jani and Sandip Khosla way back in the nineties. You know photography is a solo process but you have to co-ordinate with people and somewhere you should be open to ideas and the backdrop of those pictures were thought out by Abu and Sandeep. I've known Abu for years so there is this comfort of being with somebody you know and so you are able to throw up ideas even if they are

stupid, you don't mind it and you brush it off if it doesn't sound good and it does not become an ego trip. We worked on very simple things. They were just cushions and curtains in the background, very simple but somehow with the lighting and the treatment it gave the look of a palace. So the creativity comes there, how you make things look better with less funding. We are not in films where we would spend a lot of money. Also, there are feature films in which a lot of money was spent but they end up looking terrible because they were not sensibly spent. I think enough work hadn't gone into it or you need a certain brain and an evolved aesthetic sense to make the different elements come together and create a heightened effect. You might be a great director but might be very low on aesthetics. A director has to be rounded or should have the good sense to select people who have the aesthetic sense who'll make him look better as a director.

A lot of pictures like the art pictures that I've done don't come as a thought process. You want to do something different. Most of my ideas have come on my long walks in the morning, that's when you are fresh. I have been pushing my brain to think, so the germ of an idea comes and then you build on it. A lot of these ideas have come from nowhere actually. A lot of people ask me but how did they come, I mean these are images that have just happened. In films you can't do that, everything has to be pre structured but in a still you can take a last minute decision and change the whole thing. So, it depends on the aesthetics of the photographer or the director or an artist and how well he or she gets along with his/her team that would initiate the creative process. In fact, make it even better. You could have decided a certain concept but it just gets better when people throw in their own ideas too and then the final visual picture you take care of, in terms of the lighting, the color and the darkroom treatment. My pictures looked different also because I had my own darkroom and I had a fairly good control over darkroom techniques.

The visual art of other artists is widely available on the internet which makes it easy to get inspired to take elements from here and there. Does that make generating original ideas difficult?

The thing is that there were people who would copy straight away from a black book or some international fashion magazines. I am talking about the late eighties and the nineties when exposure to material was not as rampant as it is today. Today one can sit on the net and get about hundred pictures that you want to do. A lot of pictures today are not original but are too inspired. Original imagery is very rare. You can make out that a particular picture has been structured and taken from ten places and put together. It's not to say that they aren't people who're doing good work. There are lots of people who're doing very good work today but they are very few people in India who do original work these days or even when I practiced photography. You're bound to be affected by images as a starter when you look at magazines and that is the reason I never looked at magazines when I was into photography. I used to stay away from magazines because I knew that once you looked there you're going to be inspired by something. It was either by accident that I got



Photograph by Ashok Salian

certain processes or because I wanted to do things very differently. I didn't want to do the regular stuff. Unless you have that kind of integrity and passion, original work can't happen. If you are not ashamed of copying initially, it's fine. Initially, if you copy images and build on it technically and in terms of content it's fine but then at some stage you've got to throw all that away and produce something original. Whatever images you see are at the back of your mind somewhere, but some people actually hold it in front of them and copy. I don't know how good or bad that is and I don't want to pass judgment on it. I think the amount of images and information at people's disposal today is maddening. You can access just about any photographer anywhere in the world, that is a huge plus for people but I wish people didn't use it lazily. It should be used as information and then they should get on with your own stuff and give it your own touch. Come out with something original. That I don't see, and even the retouching is so terribly done.

I personally detest it actually. There should be a difference between a painting and a photograph. Otherwise where's the point? A lot of them look like illustrations really, like the close ups, so much touch up. In the international magazines at least you see the pores of the skin in a close up. You see Vogue or any other magazine you'll still see the pores but, in Indian magazines, including the Indian Vogue, you don't, it's all cleaned up. Women love it. They'll hate me for saying this, though. But pictures lie!!! □□□



Photographs by S. Thyagarajan, NSD

April - June 2015





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Every year Delhites get the privilege to watch 'Bharat Rang Mahotsav', where one gets to see varied theatrical productions coming from different part of India and abroad. Among 40 plus Hindi Plays one got to see this year, two "Solo" productions which deserve special mention are "C Sharp C Blunt" and "To kill or not to kill". It again reconfirmed my faith that If you are talented, you can still mount a meaningful theatrical production. One doesn't need big government grants and lavish sets and bank upon ten actors to come out with engaging productions.

"C Sharp C Blunt" which draws on a wide range of talents was quite an intriguing play. Directed by Sophia Stepf from Berlin, singer actor MD Pallavi performs in her first ever solo performance, a funny, sarcastic and political rendition of the latest - The Singer App. - played the role of a smart phone App, Shilpa Version 202 that would sing the way you wanted her to at the touch of a button. With the advanced version Shilpa 404 where height, bust size and skin color could be altered, the mood turns somber. Interspersed were moments with a young woman looking for a 'chance' in the entertainment industry, a virtual character in a video game, and a filmmaker shooting a rape scene. It was the only play which I watched twice!

"To kill or not to kill" was another gripping solo performance staged in an open area lawn of NSD with a minimalistic but radical set design, directed by Oviyakuli Khodjakuli. It was a play in Hindustani, English and Assamese in which William Shakespeare's misogynist character Hamlet meets Euripedes' Medea, a woman angry with men. Though neither she is Medea nor Hamlet but she uses their language to express her tragedy. Jilmil Hajarika had done a praiseworthy role in terms of voice modulation and swapping characters distinguished by small alterations in the costume. During the course of the drama one can feel the active involvement of the audience as she effortlessly interacts with the audience to make the show more appealing. She uses symbolic properties, colors to create a long lasting impact in her performance. Long after the play various images and dialogues like "Ladki hosh me aao Josh main nahi" linger on.

It rarely happens that as the curtains open, audiences will start to clap merely by looking at the set. This magic moment happened with Bansi Kaul's mesmerizing production "Zindagi Aur Jonk" where the set itself spoke volumes having a lead played by the talented actor Kanhaiya Lal Kaithwas. Productions like this are source of inspiration for many new generation theater practitioners who look up to established masters like Bansi Kaul.

Today when there is so much of violence all around us and civilization is on the verge of another world war "Ghazab Teri Ada" by National School of Drama (NSD) director Waman Kendre brings on stage the socio-political issue in a musical but humorous manner. It contemplates the after-effects of war and pays tribute to millions of lives lost in these conflicts. The play highlights that though the war has always been a man's responsibility, women can also play an equally important role in bringing peace and serenity in a society.



Chor Machay Shor! & Apna Rakh Paraya Chakh

Just Before BRM, two 2nd Year productions were showcased directed by guest faculty, Chitrnanjan Tripathy and Kanhaiya Lal Kaithwas.

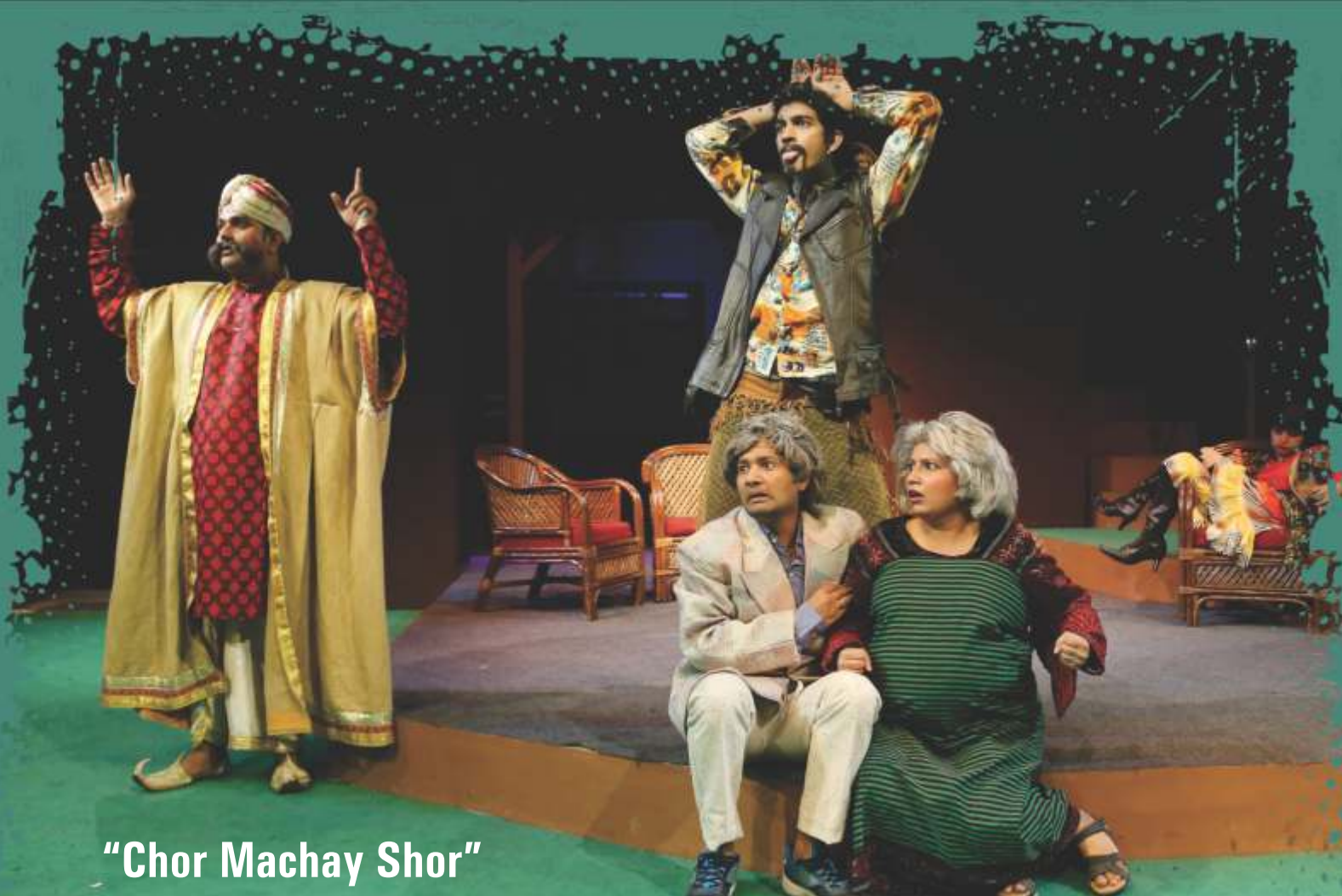
Both plays were adaptations of original French plays in Hindi. The play "Chor Machaye Shor" was first to be showcased. It was directed by Chitrnanjan Tripathy. The production had tremendous energy and pace where an audience cannot predict what will happen next. While directing the production, Mr. Tripathy integrated his day to day observations and experiences. His classical music training can be felt in the compositions like "Kabira" and "Hum Sab Kute Hai", which he uses these songs to enhance the overall production values.

The only pity which I felt concerned the production brochure which could not be released. All the students could have kept it as a souvenir of their NSD days. Another group from the same class which was doing "Apna Rakh Parya Chakh" had their brochure. It is hoped that in future people responsible for it in NSD should be more concerned about it.

After watching it, I had the feeling that it will give tough time to Kanhaiya Lal Kaithwas to match the level of "Chor Machaye Shor" but "Apna Rakh Parya Chakh" was at par be it the adaptation, students' performance. Since Kanhaiya had received training in "Clowning" while working with Bansi Kaul's group for many years, one can feel those elements in his directorial production. The beauty of the production was not only Minimalist set, Properties, colorful costume, lighting but blending realistic and non realistic style of acting. Who can forget small characters like lakhpatiya? The most impressive fact about the play was the value given in the adaptation by Booshan Bhatt to small and insignificant characters and giving due space while directing them on the stage by Kanhaiya which was missing in the original text.

Very often I say that in every 10 seconds be it theater or cinema, there should be a "bombastic experience". "Chor Machaye Shor" and "Apna Rakh Parya Chakh" give you that rare experience!

Naresh Shrama tries to find the process of making these two productions through interviews with directors and students.



"Chor Machay Shor"



Interview with Director *Chittaranjan Tripathy*

Why did you select the play "Thieves' carnival" to be performed with 2nd Year NSD students ?

Thieves' carnival, an original French play has always been one of my favorite plays. As a satire it remains relevant in today's India. "Chor Machay Shor", the

Hindi adaptation of the play, is a hard hitting satire on socio-political thievery. It's a play about me, you and our atmosphere around. Though the text and style of the original play seem to be difficult while playing it out my endeavor was to make it look easy and natural.

Again talking about various characters in Indian milieu, what motivated you to bring these characters like Sardar Ji, Hyderbadi thieves etc into it ?

As the backdrop of the adapted play was Delhi and Delhi being the national capital of India, we wanted to bring in characters from other parts of India including northern India. Look at our parliamentary history where people from various parts conglomerate after they are elected to cheat us in a legitimized way. This is why I wanted to rope in people from different parts of the country.

Could you talk about how can one bring innovation in one's style of acting?

Despite all the academic jargons one should be able to reproduce life of the characters convincingly with honesty. That should be the main quest of the entire journey.

What are the elements you worked around which gave characterization to various characters in your play ?

Talking about characterization, I think the actor needs to understand the psychology of the character he has to play. He should be able to wear the gestures postures of that character with real honesty. He may not completely be able to hide the identity of himself completely, the actor yet would be presenting an interesting mixture of himself and the character.

Tell us about the process of detailing. For example, I remember that there was a lady in Burkha and on top of that she wears the goggles which is very funny.

Actually it comes on the set only. I am a kind of director who doesn't plan a lot at home. I challenge myself to come

up with something interesting. Sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't happen. This is why there is rehearsal. At times, actors do very well in a particular rehearsal and in the next rehearsal they don't. That's the beauty of any form of art which is live. One gets good impulse one day, doesn't get it the next day. Gut feeling is the main thing behind any kind of creation. My gut feeling might be right for somebody, might be wrong for the other. Everything is impulsive. Impulse has a rational base which comes from real life experience.

There was also the chorus 'Hum hain Kutte' (We are dogs !!). Why did you conceive this kind of chorus which is not only very direct but also very subtle ?

In our day to day life we often say this... "Kutta banake rakh dia" "Mai kutta hu kya" etc. Kutta is the most trustworthy animal and we take that for granted as our political class does with us. Our dreams are shattered and we hop from one trap to the other and it is a continuous process.



Interview with *Sravasti Banerjee*

The character that you played was of an old lady who is almost double your age. What preparations did you do to make it appear realistic?

It is easy to make people cry but not laugh. It was a difficult script. In the beginning, we were horrible during improvisations. My character is deep rooted in Bengal but she is a NRI lady. Whenever, she is very excited or very joyful, she connects to that root. So, my Bengali background comes handy. I have also used Bangla slang. So that is the way of releasing tension for her. I improvised the script in this way and Chitraranjan Sir accepted it. At a point I thought I was stuck somewhere. I told him that maybe I'm going flat. But I got some very positive responses from people around me along with Chitraranjan Sir. So, I concentrated more on developing the character further and slowly it sunk into me. We used to rehearse until 4 o'clock in the morning. There were quite a few songs in the play, so we had to rehearse every day. There were also other backstage preparations. We felt like we had no time at all. Being a design student, I was designing properties for the play. Varun took up my other design-



oriented responsibilities to help me concentrate on my acting.

Chitraranjan sir briefed the designers about the look of the characters. Greeny was designing make-up. She said my hair style was going to be like Queen Elizabeth. She was very positive that it would suit me. Since I am slightly on the heavy side I was concerned about the padding. Chitraranjan sir was very sure that he wanted me to look huge. Kiran Sharma was designing costumes and she padded almost my entire body! It was adding so much to the character. During the days of rehearsals I felt the character was inside me. My way of walking, talking and even laughing changed.

Another important aspect for an actor, particularly for Comedy is "the performance of co-actors". What if sometimes they are not "up to the mark"? How did it affect your performance?

Audience as well as co actors play a vital part in your performance. Some days when there was a less-responsive audience, the show lacked energy. On other days, there was an audience which was too responsive, the show was more charming then. It's just the same with the co-actors. If one day my co-actor is not in high spirits, it affects. But, one thing which I realized- specially in Comedy you have to be in high spirits, not for ourselves but for others. Otherwise, the overall show will have a great fall because Comedy always sets a rhythm. If you are not maintaining it, the audience too will fall asleep. In Comedy co-actors are very important. Chandan and Chetan were giving me so much of positive energy.

Even my partner in the play, Pankaj, the old man, co-operated with me. In the beginning it was difficult for him to catch up with the character but he did pick up very well later. I recollect that Chaitanya and I improvised many lines on stage during the shows.

Your costumes played a very important role to deliver the visual punches. Do you remember anything else which is more





of visual oriented than being dialogue oriented in terms of punch?

One of my costumes was a leopard printed, body-hugging outfit. It felt like my overly padded outline brimming from my costume was hilarious to the audience. There was not even a single show when I entered and nobody laughed. I changed my walking style accordingly. While I was in that costume, my co-actors who were playing 'lesser human beings' or servants were in monkey or bear costumes. All these things together created the ideal setting for the laughter that I used to receive. Most costumes were very unusual and interesting, like 'lays chips wala'. It is not often that we get to see such different work in our everyday life, it is possible only in theatre. Boominathan played the role of the Clarinet player from Jean Anouilh's version of Thieves' Carnival. Each of his entries created a visual punch either because of his costume or due to his activities on stage.

If you need to recollect this play after 5 years what are the things that your subconscious will retain?

We improvised, added many things. The basic translation was done by V K Sharma. He had already done it before but this time he did it again for us. We had read the script but it was completely different, so different that it had transformed into a completely new play, an Indianised version bearing a brief resemblance with Thieves' Carnival. I like the way we improvised & contributed in our own ways to the play and appreciated each other's creative expression. I think we all gave our best, our cent- percent. I also liked the music of the play, specially the song 'Kabira'. Chitrnanjan Sir has composed theatre music for long, his experience was evident. The music was catchy, peppy, popular. Even the romantic number 'Sajni re' was very melodious. We thoroughly enjoyed the composition, the making of the music.





Interview with *Greeny* Francis

Lighting plays a very important part in creating drama on the stage, so what was your experience of designing the lighting scheme for the production "Chor Machaye Shor"?

I had decided that I will not be on stage so it made complete sense that I take up lighting. The only problem we faced lighting-wise was that of the space – "Bahumukh" – the performance space was small and L-shaped; also, the ceiling is quite low which translates to a lot of lights to create a number of areas.

Avtar Sahni has a lot of experience and is a wonderful teacher, when he starts designing something he makes sure you, the student, are present there. He tells you what he's doing and why he's doing it. He asks for your ideas and inputs about the color of the light, etc. The most interesting thing he taught me was to give cross lighting for the actors when the audience is in an L-shaped arrangement – one of the lights forming the cross is bound to hit the audience in the eyes.

The way to deal with this is to put the crosses diagonally, which I haven't seen or done before; this may, of course, be because of my limited experience.

You were also a part of the makeup, what made you think of a particular style of a wig will work perfectly for the Lead Actress?

During rehearsals Chitranjan sir kept reminding us that we need to think a little bit farcically. I think in the beginning the queen looked more like Gayatri Devi – very elegant and highly sophisticated. But Chitranjan sir wanted her to appear funnier – just to look at her should explain who she was, so he suggested using stereotypes heavily. Makeup and costumes should talk about the character and people. Therefore, overall it was very energetic and loud – be it the lighting or the makeup.

There is a character called 'Khosle' in the play who keeps changing his looks, his facial hair keeps changing, the biggest

challenge for the makeup team was to make him change his look quickly. Since the character was required to repeatedly change his facial hair, we couldn't use spirit gum – we had to find something that sticks on his face and stays firm while he delivers his lines. It should obviously appear a little convincing as well, so we reached for double-sided tape. In a film it's easy, but how do you create the same thing on stage is a technical challenge. That way, it was a learning experience.

Talking about the actors performing, sometimes you think that he is supposed to catch a particular light during his performance and shouldn't go further. How do you manage those situations?

When you are doing lighting, you obviously create general areas that one can always fall back on, just in case. You have to ensure that the performance isn't in the dark. I think rehearsing with the actors is as much as a rehearsal for them, as it is for me. Every rehearsal is also a lighting rehearsal and by the end of it, it's like choreography with lights

Since you were not a part of the on-stage performance, you must have

observed the whole process in a distant manner. Could you just pin-point a few things which you observed were really evolving?

I think our first rehearsal was three and half hours long. Everybody was taking their own time getting into the character, breathing a little bit before saying their lines.

I think the first few rehearsals must have scared the Director. He kept telling the actors they can't take that much time. I remember him saying, "Forget emotions, just say the lines, say it fast, think of it as gabble", and he kept pushing them. At the end we had a much crisper performance. By the end everyone could see what he meant; slowing down means dropping energy because in comedy everything needs to be well timed. If you miss the timing, it's gone.

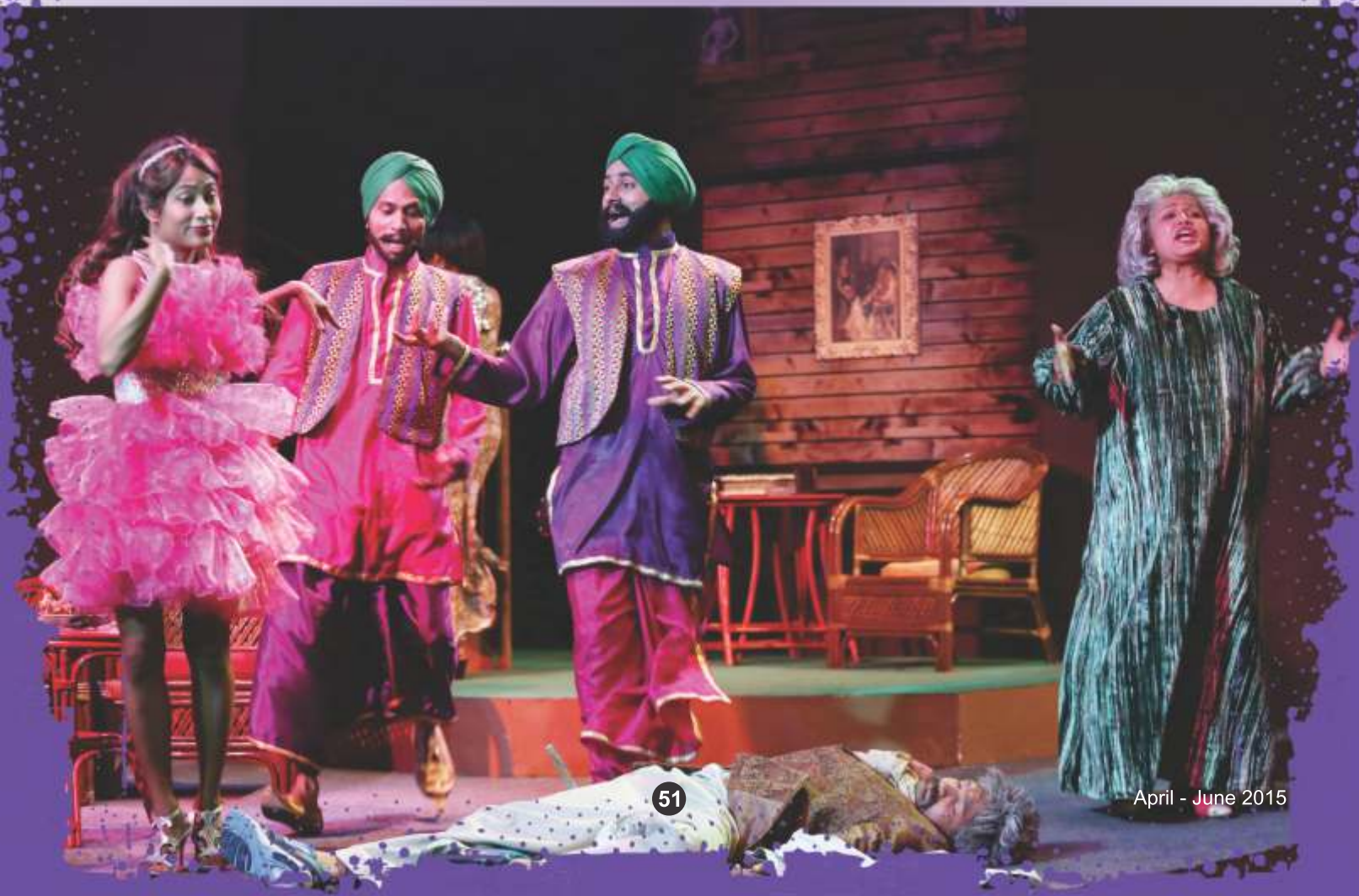
We had a gala time in the lighting booth while the performance was on. Chitranjan Sir would stand next to us along with Avtar Sahani, either he would get very pleased with the performance or get pissed off if the actors or if one of us messed up. Sometimes you get into the habit of moving in a certain way but

because the director is so particular about what he wants, he keeps pushing you until you stop that habit and you start delivering the character, as he sees it. I could see that growth, which was a pleasure.

At the end of some rehearsals, the actors were literally going mad because it was tiring – being loud, all the time. It was also tiring physically for them as they were running around at a crazy pace. They would be really disappointed and tired towards the end of the rehearsal, and we would praise them, but they couldn't believe it because they couldn't see it from outside, like I was able to.

What was unique about your production "Chor Machay Shor"?

In recent memory, I don't recall a design student playing a lead role or them playing a substantial role and the acting students NOT getting insecure about it. I think that was remarkable, they could see she was doing a good job of it, that the quality of production came first, that no one was stooping to that sort of politics, as people in competitive situations are wont to do.





Apna Rakh Paraya Chakh



Interview with Director *Kanhiya Lal Kaithwas*

When NSD invited you to do a production with 2nd year students, what was your motivation to choose this play " miser" by Molière ?

I am associated as a faculty member with MP drama school. Whatever we do in any drama school should benefit the

students. If we are doing a comedy or a farce, the input which they get from us is more important. It is not like whether the production will be a success or not but I think that the training process should be valuable. Hence, I selected a production which involves physical movement with timings. It is like give and take. It is an actor orientated play. I have even done few plays by Molière in Hindi. For example: "Miya Ki Juti, Miya Ka Sar", "Biwwo Ka Madrasa", "Bichoo", "Kavva Chala Hans Ki Chaal". The reason behind choosing " Miser" is that hitherto is frame work has been totally present in Islamic culture. I don't want to do anything which has been done before by our indian masters, teachers. I myself have my own kind of working pattern. I have worked in the pattern of clowning for past 20 years and has been associated with Bansi Kaul Sir. I know how to break the actors. For this reason, I even see the text from that perspective. For me it is like till the time I don't get satisfied, I don't even start dreaming about it !! Even if I do the blocking but I do it roughly but I don't get satisfied then I start to see the frame

work in images !! I want it to be more neat and clean as I need to see the frame work. Even if there is one actor on the stage, how is he working with his body in the framework is more important. I feel that the tools which I have with me are my actors. I have to see the actors only from his medium whatever is required for him for the story, for his performance, I have to work on that. If you have noticed that on stage I did not have many props. In that area, we have a circle and two blocks. I believe if I have space, actors and audience I could do anything. When I start working, I try that there should be no spoon feeding with students. Though I did very few demonstrations but I made them realize that if you take the pause here, this will be the meaning and you will get the response. Many students start telling that I am not able to do comedy!! I tell them that nobody can do the comedy, it will come automatically if it has to happen. You just live in the situation and slowly start to play with it. Normally the very first dream of an actor is that he should get the lines. He should do the speech work

etc. Ideal timing today is to do 90 minutes of production but if I try to do a two hour production it is difficult to sustain for audiences as well for an actor. As my style of doing work is a bit physical. Hence, it is more difficult to sustain. That's why I have converted the play in today's time. The content is same but the context is today's situations. I mean the meaning of 'Kanjoos' is not all that about money. I have used only small dialogues and I have interspersed that with silent pauses. I told them that wherever there are silent pauses comedy starts from there only. Firstly they were not satisfied as to how it will happen. As writer Bhushan Bhatt Ji and I, we used to get into arguments on a daily basis. To make it more contemporary, we have added Ebola virus to see what will be its response

What are the various elements you have used in the play which works in Indian context like clowning etc ?

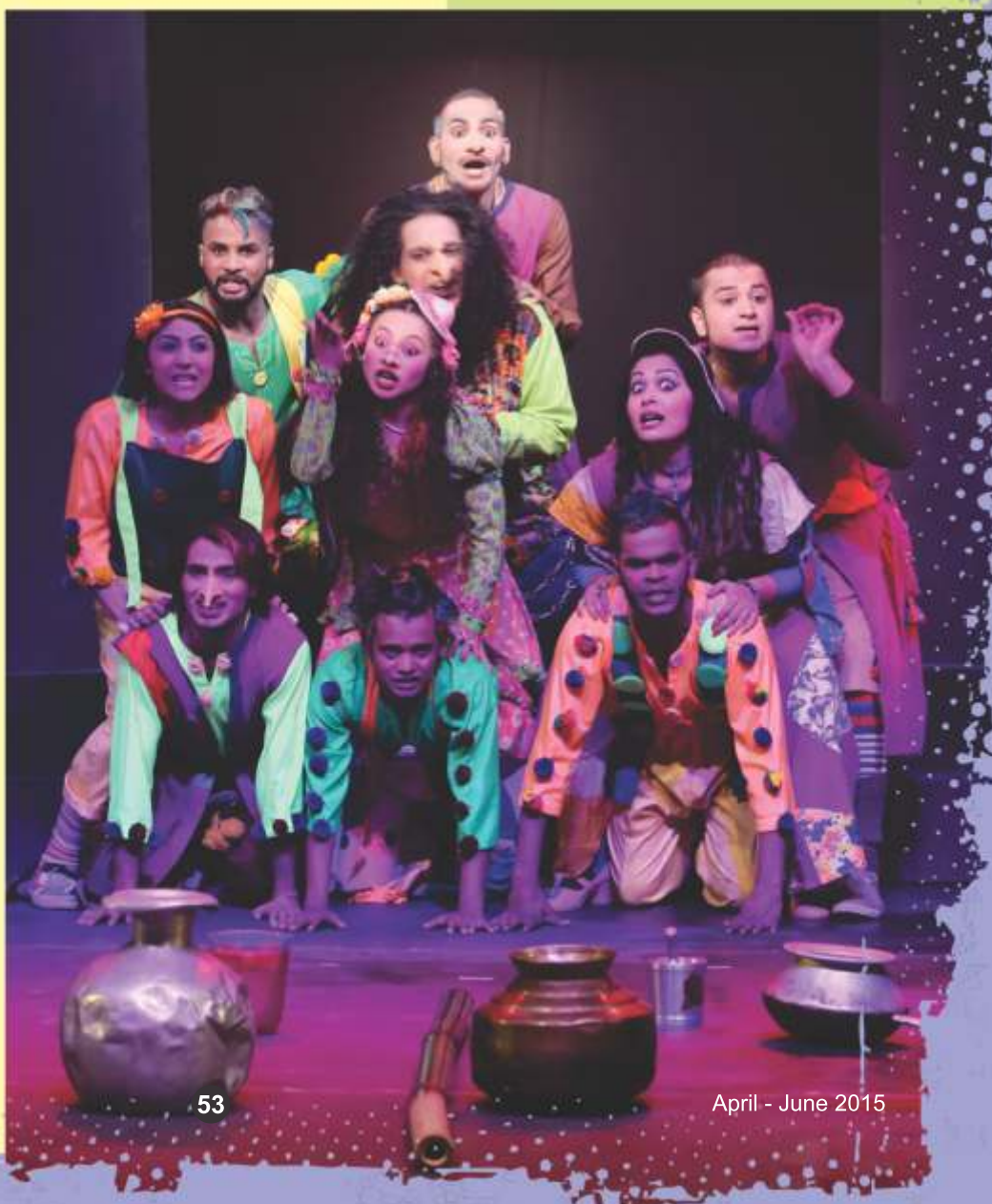
We have given 3 levels in terms of costumes and nose get up. There is upper class which is there for those who are miser (kanjoos). For the upper class level people, we have kept the nose a bit long. We started using gestures and postures in a funny way. At physical level too the lower part of the body is done heavier. We took a few gestures and postures of an animal to make it look funny. I also informed Kriti Sharma who did costume that though we are using clowning but we wouldn't go in circus style. But there were also a few elements of Indian clown. For most part, one must have seen the lower class clown in Indian society like "Bhand" in regions like Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. One will see that while answering questions they beat each other. This develops comical atmosphere and public enjoys it. All these performances take place among the audiences. They keep on moving. They might enter the audience etc. For this reason, a few elements were taken from there.

How do you do the casting ? What is your brief about "how to perform" to acting students ?

Firstly, it is a process of getting familiar with your actors. For example, I

understood on the very first day that Vivek is a method actor. For this reason I chose to cast him opposite to his nature and told him that you are surrounded by these three servants and that if he misses it, the ball would be in their court. This is why the "timing" was the whole game". One might also have observed that when Sikandar enters one understands that he is up to some mischief, there will be something. In each show after show even actors started to get the feeling that something new is taking shape. After all the six shows they told me that the shows were different. It is very challenging for the one who is doing the lead role. One has to carry the show. If he doesn't get that time to think what do I have to do because he is too involved in the drama and it is the journey of the craft that he is afraid about it. Is the drama going ok.

Is the response coming? The small characters work as an energy tonic for audiences as well as for the lead. When the servant Sikander picks the pillar then he is doing something. At that time the main actor is saving his energy. Afterwards the main actor will again lead the show. In fact even if it is a small role each actor has his gestures or own style which adds to the overall impact of the play. If he is doing one thing, he opens for another 10 things which can also happen. I told all acting students that firstly you need to select a few things and tell your co-actors about it so that they are also aware of it in advance. For example: The oxygen cylinder thing. We were searching in property section as what to do. All of a sudden we release that due to the shock of so much money..... his breathing gets stopped. After group brain storming, the actor



himself realizes that we can do this and that. Then he himself does the props. It is very nice thing that as an actor, he himself is making his own props and working upon it. He gets emotionally attached to it. When he did it for the first time it got clicked and it becomes his master punch. For this reason whenever he will come now public will give response to it. Then there was one "pillar" on which one can sit. One can peep behind it. One can pick it up. It can be kept somewhere else. These are all the levels and methods of clowning. It reflects some kind of beauty and some suspense which is there in this play. Somewhere in the mind of misers and servants like what is happening. It also worked upon the tuning of servant characters like Vidisha, Vipin, Sikander and another servant Damro played by Mandeep who is alone as he is close to the servant's son. It has always been very important for me that if even one takes any entry on the stage, it should make its presence felt to the audiences without disturbing the drama. Even if one is there to keep a prop or pick up a prop. One person's presence should be noticed by the audience.

In your production, I have noticed that even properties speak volumes. What is your process of designing that part ?

Yes. Props are important part of my stage design. For example : like the pen, the glasses of the police man's character played by Rahil Bhardwaj are larger than life. It attracts the attention of the audience. It also symbolizes his way of looking at things ! I was tempted to include props which are larger than life but we avoided as they were not going smoothly with the action of the Inspector Shak. I told Kriti Sharma who did costume that lets us take the line work of the dress of the police officers.

We can give multi color but then it was felt that people associated with the color of police uniform that if he is a police officer he should be wearing a particular color. I was always thinking as to how we can do something new and should not get affected by old things. We could have given a dhoti to the police inspector but the clowning effect should always be reflected. Hence we

decided that let us put all the medals on him even if it the NSD logo !! We did that and stuffed him with everything. We also made a black colored belt for him. Firstly, we thought of keeping his name Deepushak (Delhi police Vidhushak) but then we thought that it is not good to hit someone directly. Hence, we decided to keep shak with his one main inspector Shak "*main karta hoon sab pe shak*" like *Hassi pe shak, Ispe shak, Uspe shak, Shak pe main karta hoon Shak*. It is also the presence of mind of the actor when Sikander says "*Ye lo hawa ke glas me hawa ka sharbat*" to Choudhary Mangat. He then says "*Yeh loh tod diya na*" the audiences also think that it has fallen and hence broken. Although it is just mime. Again, it is all about timing. Finally, the student actors also understood that and starting playing around. In the beginning they were thinking that we will say the dialogue and the public will laugh but I told them that it is all about "silence and pause" and "give and take" and if you understand these things, the audiences will be with you.

Your play gives due importance to even small characters. For example : roles done by Vidisha or Vipin. How do you find your ways to do that?

Vidisha was like one side love case. She always tried but we were never able to express it. When he says "Us ladi ka nam tha bulbul" she stars crying and somebody says go inside and cry and other two servants follow her. Her style of weeping and exit create equally powerful impact. For the beginning I had this in mind that like one servant played by Vipin is crossing and lights are off, the audiences are sitting and a vessel falls.

He picks it up and then he contributes and starts to play with it. He sustains it so that the audiences should think what he is doing next, from there the whole suspense was created. Since it should be maintained and some activities are going on inside the house in some corner or another then each actor picks up one vessel and then we start playing it. While holding on one beat, another started playing. It is in this manner Vipin says Sir I know how to play bamboo and I was like great, play it. It is then while playing that he became

Ganesh Ji. This is how a good opening was formed. This also got reflected in the protest by the servant against the owner who gets established. In between the song they bring vessels sometimes and they beat the empty vessels. In this manner, I also got the crowds to play with and the stage is not felt empty. One notices that throughout the play the clowning is omnipresent. I gave gestures of animals. Someone got bird, Vivek got the crow's idea even when he walks he walks like a crow. Hence, the basic mantra to the students was that if you will enjoy then the audience will also enjoy.



Interview with *Bhooshan Bhatt*

Tell us about your approach towards the adaptation of the famous play by Moliere "The Miser".

Our adaptation was done not as a compulsion but as an inspiration. Translation is of "text" but adaptation always deals with thought and the soul of the script.

We kept the same characters as they are in the original play, we have not changed the main theme, the soul, the message, just changed the body and the way to tell the story. We have put that on today's timeline. While doing the adaptation we were very clear about one thing that we are doing this play with the second year students of the National School of Drama.

So first thing was that wherever the students came from, the culture of that place should be used. When Moliere had written this, he wrote it looking at the society at that time. If we say that theatre is the mirror of the society, it is of those faces which keep on changing, mirror is always the same.

Today many old references have vanished as when he asked his son that *"tumne yeh itne saare paise kahaan se kamaaya"* then he said that *"maine gurdaur mein kamaaya"*. But, in today's world people cannot imagine a *gurdaur*. So, the answer was referred to a political scenario, because elections were going on during that period in Delhi.

What are the additional characters that were added in your adaptation?

The additional characters are silent characters. We have created three characters as Koyal, Tingu and Achaanak, these characters are not in the main play of Moliere.

They have worked with eruptions like "hey", "arre" and for these words,

there is no specific meaning in English but these words are a part of our life. When Jugaadiya looks at the hand of Chaudhary and says that *"aap to sau saal jiyenge Chaudhary Ji"*, others start crying which in itself specify that if he lives for hundred years, the people around him will not be happy and so listening to this they start crying and you see viewers bursting into laughter watching this scene. So we tried to create humor in different ways.

We created a few silent characters but somewhere we had to characterize them. So from the beginning we had told "Koyal" that she will love the son of that miser in her heart with him along with the other two characters, but Koyal loves her owner's son. And when owner's son tells about some other girl then Koyal goes crying and the other two also walk behind her crying.

There was a character in this to depict the mentality of that miser at the place where we were rehearsing. We kept few violins over there without any strings and the silent character Tillu used to play it, he kept the violin and he was

told that there won't be any string in that and it'll be like this - as broken as it is now and with that the miser's dialogue was *"paagal sangeet toh mann ke ander hota hai, khamoshi mein bhi sangeet hota hai, bajaa"* and just do his gesture but the miser tells him that *"thik se nahi bajaa rahe ho"*.

Tell us more about various servant characters like "Lakhpatiya". Is he in the original play?

There was no character particularly like that. In the original text, there is only a suggestion that *"tu bina paise ke kuch bana ke bata"*. So without money only from air you could make. Yes, before this we had somehow discussed this thing that *"tu kise gaaliyaan de raha hai"* then he says *"main hawa ko galiyaan de raha hoon"*. So hawa word had been introduced already in the play. We actually were thinking that in a very realistic way but when I started molding this, we realized we can do things more symbolically.

On few places I expected and I got the appreciation from those words that



"meri hawa ko tu gaaliyaan kaise de raha hai" - so next time he says *"ae baahar ki hawa sunn"* so he is using the same slangs but this time to the air outside. So keeping the innocence in the whole act as Damru is not there in the second part as Lakhpatiya become important in the second and third act. We kept his dialogue more surreal like *'hawa ke glass mein hawa ka sharbat peejiye'* and later same servant reacts, *'fodd diya na'*.

We were also concerned about the language in general. For example, for Damru the dialects have been written such that he speaks very bad English like *"aap meri condenser nahi samajh rahe ho"*. We don't consider speaking wrong English that much, as much we consider speaking wrong Hindi. May be at the time of Moliere, there was not much of conflict of languages but today it is. Today language is the only thing which often tells about the status of someone. Colors also have started making sound, colors also have got voice, now colors also are being connected with caste and religion.

There was no nose of servants as it is clear that servants don't have a nose, it is only for owners. If it is seen carefully then lucky is having nose though he is a servant and he speaks his first dialogue also that *"main Simmi ke pyaar ke khaatir iss ghar mein naukar banna manzoor kiya"* and he makes it very clear at the end when he says *"warna sikka chalta hai noida mein Lucky ka"*.

From where did you get the idea of old character's vibration?

Actually this was, please excuse me but from the beginning only Lucky had caricature of Shah Rukh's character, so it was to establish that if this character is moving so much then how more his father will be shaking? We molded it according to the characteristics of the son.

What was the idea behind the use of the spectacles with lights moving around the glasses?

Today you are being captured in CCTV cameras all over, you don't have your privacy at all. It was a kind of satire on general public being always under camera surveillance.

What are the subtle things you inculcate at the writing level?

If you look at the beginning of the play, the first and foremost experiment done was to replace the traditional folk instruments with kitchen equipments for music which suited the servants. At some places, I was not sure we were able to communicate it to the audience.

For instance, when he gets an asthma attack, the pump those people bring for him worked very well. We thought what name we should give to that pump was a concern, should it be methalyne gas, or Bhopal gas or laughing gas but then since that person has been characterized as money minded so we took the clue from there.

If you recollect when the inspector comes into picture he asks red or black and throws a coin into the air, Mangat Choudhary simply waves his hand in air and that coin automatically goes into his pocket.

He is more like a magnet to money, all he wants his money. So to justify what can save life of a man like him we exaggerate the entire situation of asthma attack, we used a mosquito spray rather than the actual asthma pump with Sensex written on it.

The idea behind 'Sensex' was that generally when we come across the term 'unisex' - it gets difficult for people to understand that it is for both men and women, so it was told to him that when he falls at the money matter, show the complete sensex thing that market is going up, sensex is rising. We are going towards a better future, we are developing, so this is the way he can gain consciousness that oh with rising sensex, the worth of my 1000 gold coins is rising too.

But when he faints because of a girl, he was told to cover the word 'sen' so as to expose the word sex. It was to reflect the lust of that man towards his would be daughter in law.

What made you use the pigeon when it was not in the original composition?

Actually the 1000 gold coins are repeated but in the end when the son runs away with that box, it was one

thing to blackmail him. He makes him agree on both his conditions. But in the end when the man tells his son that he would not bear the expense of son's wedding, another philosophical song starts, *'kuch bhi na le ja payega, raakh khaak ho jayega'*.

The pigeon flying in climax symbolizes our soul. No matter how much money you make in your lifetime, eventually the soul has to set free leaving behind the materialistic world. So I used the pigeon just to symbolize this whole concept.

In the end, my Special thanks to director Kanhaiya Kaithwas because he was a constant motivator and support in the journey of adaptation.

Interview with Lead Actor Vivek Shrivastav

In "apna rakh paraya chakh" you played the lead character of "The miser", how did you played this character differently than what has been done so far by many others.

When I first read the script, I liked the character. It was a challenge as to how to get into the character. I have done Moliere before also in my previous drama school, so I was a little bit aware how Moliere writes. There is a certain rhythm he includes in his text. I was attracted to the play and the character, but the new script written by Bhooshan Bhatt was quite different from which I read earlier. Since it was written differently it had to be played differently.

The translation introduced to me was based on muslim background. But the new one was much like an adaptation; initially it was hard to find association with the script.

I found it challenging to create humor; I even talked to the director about this, but he simply asked us to have faith on his vision. I knew director Kanhaiya Sir is a very good actor as well; If he says that he would bring out the humor in the play, he would.

So, finally I started the rehearsal with the character of Mangath Chowdhary. For



me it was the toughest character I have offered till now.

I am also thankful to Theatre Garage Project and Mr. Ashwath Bhatt, under whom I have had already worked for a long time on "Red Nose Clowning" and here again he was there for acting inputs. His training especially helped me to understand the form and provided me a process to develop the physicality for commedia dell'arte's characters.

In the beginning, I found it very difficult to adapt our director's process. But after few weeks I started believing in it. Slowly I started getting images of Mangath Chowdhary and could connect to a certain person rather than just doing it mechanically.

Most of the time you were bent and also there was a voice modulation in your Character. How did you work on these two things?

Whenever, I play a character or a role, I don't plan how I will play that character. Normally, I just read the text and start playing it without putting anything on. I keep myself open for the possibilities and slowly from the rehearsals or text I get certain instinct and images to play, I keep including them and it remains with me as a character.

As my director said, "the character is 60 year old, how could you stand straight!!" I wanted to let the posture

come to me rather making it. So in the first rehearsal, I lost my confidence but our actor-trainer Mr. Ashwath affirmed that according to the form and character I must bend in certain way and I surrendered myself. Further, He introduced some comic gestures and when I tried that, it became easy to blend them to play the character. The process was to plan and then adopting it in such a way that the plan becomes invisible or my own.

My co-actor Medha Aich suggested me to use the same certain speech pattern that I have observed, in which the person used to chew every word. I knew that I can't do mimicry, meaning I can't impersonate a person whom people already know; though I started with the observation but gradually I developed it further.

Any other supporting character, which fascinates you from the play

I liked the character lakhpatiya; the kitchen boy played by Sikandra Kumar. He used his body type in support of his character very well. The way he played it, was wonderful and the audience applauded him as well. In comedy the people who are low in status are more interesting. As I was the owner, whenever I used to beat Lakhpatiya, he was in pain and people were laughing at his pain.

Also I liked the inspector shaq, played by Rahil Bhardwaj. He used to

stumble, it is also a craft and Rahil used it efficiently to his advantage.

Above all, there were many improvised sequences, dialogues and actions developed by my co-actors that added unique humor in the scenes.

What was so unique about the Khanhaiya's Direction which made this production memorable?

As I have said earlier, I faced many difficulties during the rehearsals. But gradually I understood what he wanted and he too found ways to bring the things out from me. After few days he comforted me with complete freedom with his direction intact, like he simply marked what was working, what not, what to keep, what to edit etc. Also we were not in pressure as he showed complete confidence in us. Even if we were doing one rehearsal in a day, it was enough. So this whole experience was very unique.

Anything specific which you would like it mention about this production.

One thing is sure that the play "*aapna rakh paraya Chakh*" is a free adaptation by Bhooshan Bhatt with socio-political comments in it. And so Molier's work should not be judged with this play as except the plot rest everything is writer's own contribution. Molier was great and unique for many different reasons and this play is successful for it's own reason.

Interview with *Medha Iche*

Since your role in the play was not comical, how did you prepare for it so that it could leave an impact on the viewers?

In the play "The Miser", my role was of a girl named 'Mariana' (Bulbul). It was a new genre for me. Mariana was not a comic character, it was not a clown, though other characters had comic traits but mine didn't have any. So I went and asked Kanhaiya Sir to help me prepare for this role. He said I don't need to do anything because I already possess the characteristics required for the role, Kanhaiya Sir briefed me that the character named Marina is a very simple and soft spoken girl. She is good looking as well, so I just needed to work on my timing because other characters are

comic so for them the timing element is very important and I had to support their timing - give and take thing.

Secondly, I had very few dialogues in the play, which was challenging in a way as one needs to establish the character which was already established before my entry in certain sequences. In the beginning of the play they were speaking about my character - a sequence where Mitthu wanted to marry Mariana, so the presence of my character was already there virtually, if not physically.

There was a singing sequence, it was also a bit challenging as I am not a singer. So, Anjana Ma'am made me sing. I am comfortable with lower notes. But Ma'am increased my notes which helped me to broaden my limits.

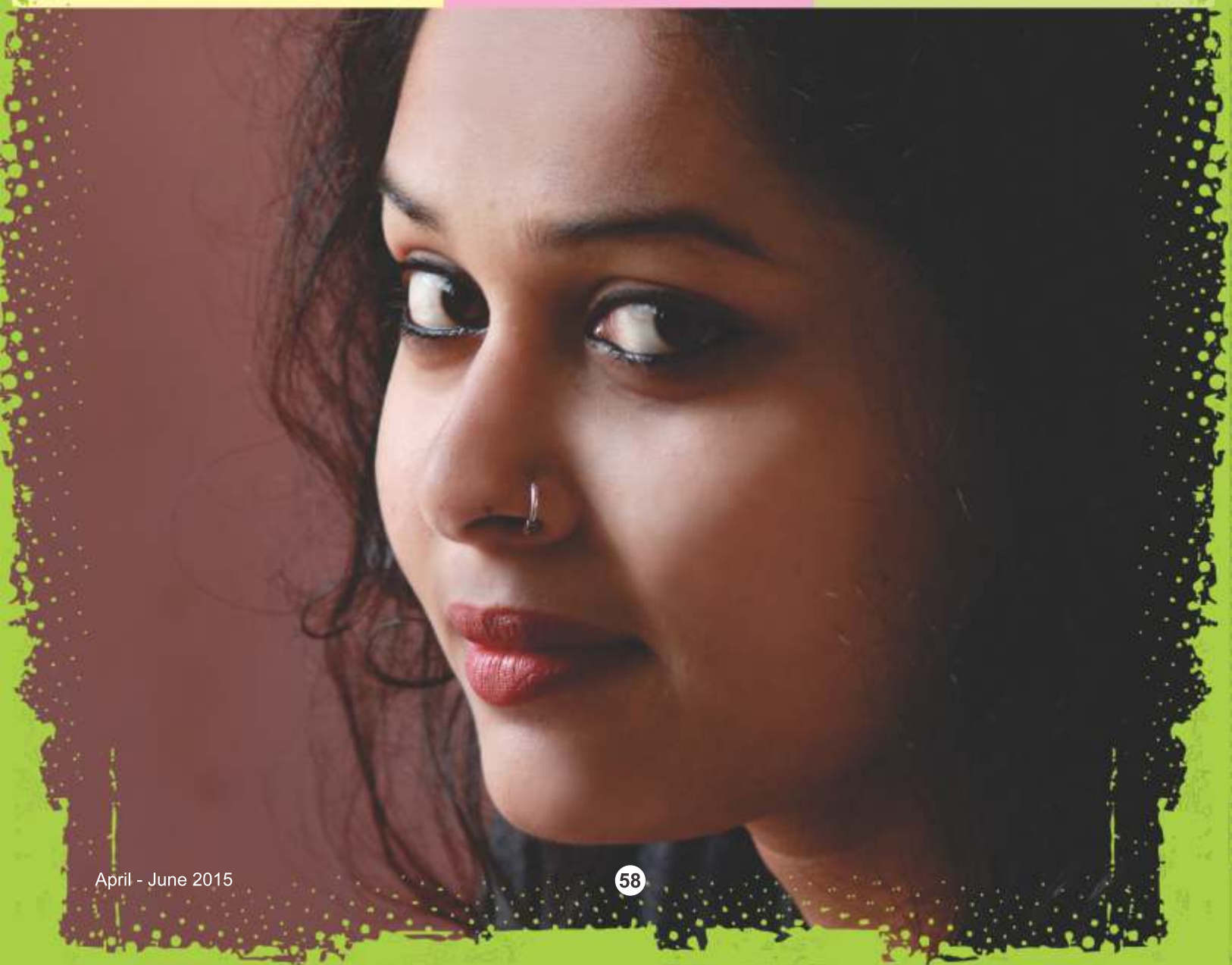
Talking about your performance, which sequence is the most memorable

in terms of timing?

There was a small sequence, a dialogue between me and Vivek, who was playing the old man. It is a little comical sequence where he says, "shaadi!" And I was like, "No...No.. I can't marry him." and I run to hide myself behind the other woman, so, that was very funny as the timing was very quick and swift.

Talking about the overall play and other characters, what are the remarkable things about the production?

First of all, the hair-do. Nobody does green hair color, which looks fine on the stage but appears funny if one carries it in real life. Also one of the characters, 'Lakhpatiya' which was a role completely opposite to my personality, I wish I had got that. I don't know if I could have done that better but the way





Sikander performed, everybody would remember that character. Even all of us would watch him perform from the backstage in anticipation as to what he is going to do and how the audience is going to react each time.

In this production, the thing I realized the most is, few activities or gestures we do in real life which is comic, seem to be meaningless and stupid. But it was during the process of this production that people had used more of such gestures and activities to make it more lifelike. Each activity, even if it is the stupidest or the most meaningless one, is not a waste, provided we store it in our memory for it to be used in the right time and in the right place in the parameters of acting.

Also, I remember we had a clowning session in which we were required to be shameless. So many new things were there for me, we had to lose all our inhibitions and just open up to act, we could be funny, we could be sensual. It was like breaking all these barriers through clowning. So it was a very interesting thing and I gained a lot of experience. These are little things but will help me in a long run. I even made notes from these exercises.

Could you tell us something more about your notes?

There was a certain exercise in which we were asked to collect any interesting

things from the property department and costume department. Ashwath Bhatt asked us to be in groups of three. He said the first group goes and performs a fashion show, wear whatever they like and as one comes and goes and once one enters the next one should be ready. So, we got barely 10 seconds to change and come back and go and then again change and we couldn't repeat any stuff.

There was an exercise where two people would hold a rope from both the ends and rotate it and the others would one by one skip through it. It was particularly to teach timing as it is the key to comedy.

Another exercise was the placement while performing. Where should I stand so as the whole group is balanced on the stage? There was an exercise where he would play a drum and we would randomly walk but face in a particular direction. We would walk wherever we felt like but we had to stand and then he would tell us if a person is standing at the right position or not. This gave us a sense of placement. If one person is standing here and the other is standing there - so where should I stand, so that it would not hamper the position of others. These are certain things that will help me in any play or in a group activity.

When you perform you also observe, so, what did you observe about Kanhaiya as a director and his

style of working with the students during the rehearsal of the play?

First of all he doesn't give any kind of tension to any actor, he would always say, "You don't take tension, all tensions are mine. You just do whatever you feel suits your character. I am there to identify." So one gets a lot of freedom working with him. Secondly, when he is explaining he makes an invisible map explaining where a thing or a person should be and then he quietly says, "Now do it." And as we perform he gradually suggests subtle changes that we require to incorporate in our performance.

In the making of the play, there were few improvisations which we did. So, I can say that he was also open for inputs from students. This was a very prominent factor of him as a director.

If you had a choice to play any other character which one you would choose?

I would definitely like to play "Lakhpatiya", the servant, because it was really interesting and being a servant, the status is low as compared to when you are playing a role of a posh fellow, which doesn't let you do wild movements as you are required to act more sophisticated.



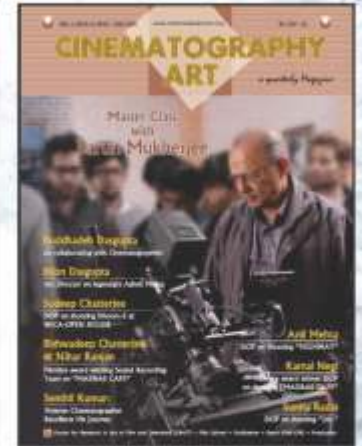
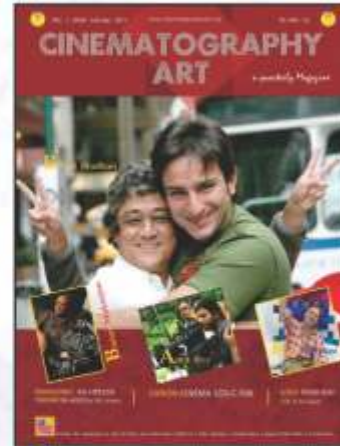


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