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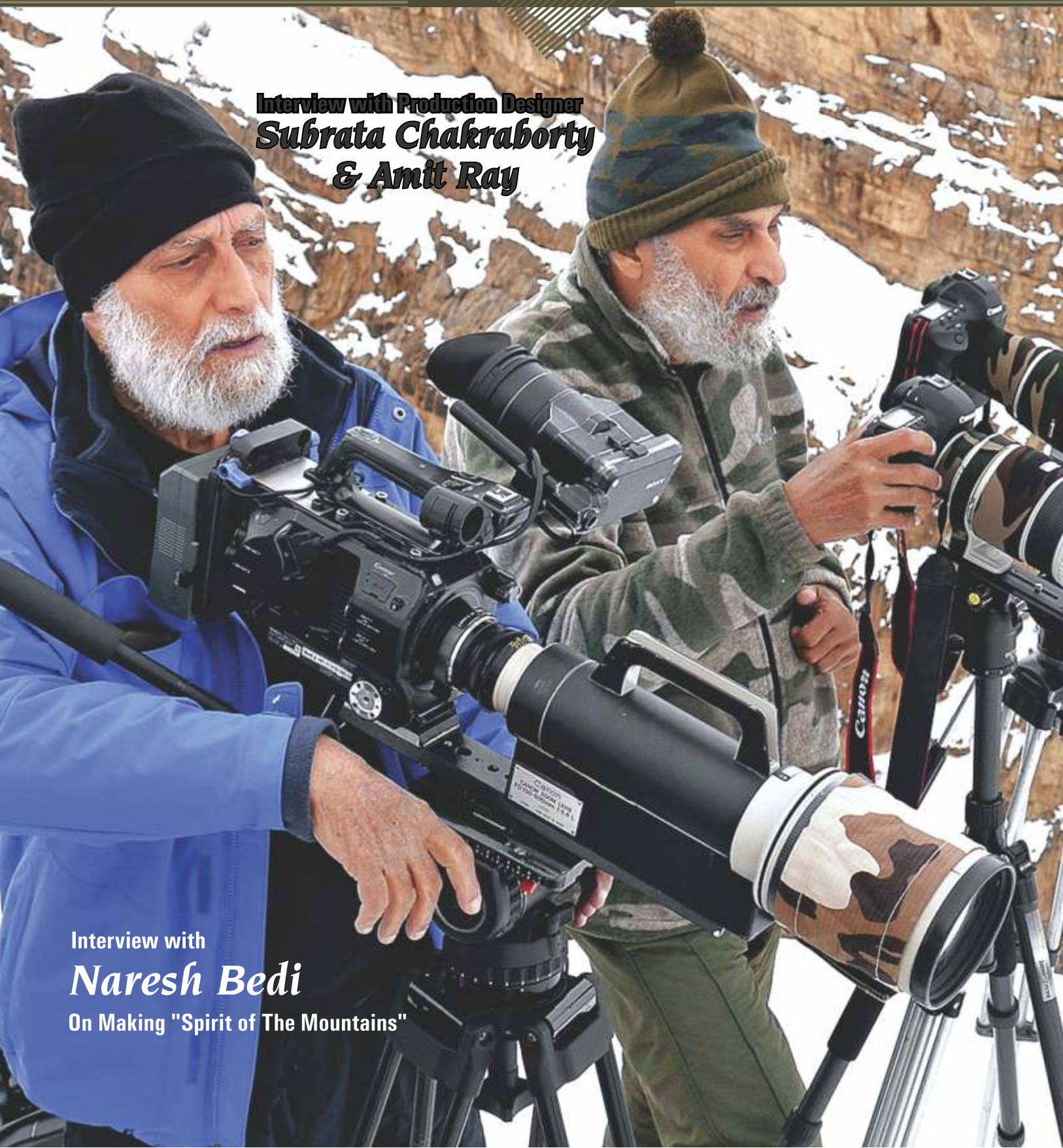


# CINEMATOGRAPHY ART

A Quarterly Magazine

**Interview with Production Designer  
Subrata Chakraborty  
& Amit Ray**

Interview with  
***Naresh Bedi***  
On Making "Spirit of The Mountains"







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## VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHER

24 - CATEGORY- INDEX	AWARDEE	SELECTION PROCESS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR HINDI AD FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR HINDI FEATURE FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR THE WEB SERIES IN HINDI LANGUAGE	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR THE WEB SERIES IN ANY LANGUAGE	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN TAMIL FEATURE FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN TELUGU FEATURE FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN MALYALAM FEATURE FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN KANNADA FEATURE FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN BENGALI LANGUAGE	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN MARATHI / PUNJABI / GUJRATI / ASSAMESE	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
COLORIST / DI ARTIST+ COMPANY OF THE YEAR	COMPANY + TECHNICIAN	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
SPECIAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR + COMPANY OF THE YEAR	COMPANY + TECHNICIAN	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
PROFESSIONALLY MAINTAINED "Light & Grip" EQUIPMENT RENTAL HOUSE	COMPANY	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
PROFESSIONALLY MAINTAINED "Cine Camera" RENTAL HOUSE	COMPANY	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
ASHOK MEHTA AWARD FOR THE ICONIC CINEMATOGRAPHER	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARD : CONTRIBUTION TO THE CINEMATOGRAPHY.	COMPANY / INDIVIDUAL	EDITOR'S CHOICE
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD		JURY
WEDDING CINEMATOGRAPHY	COMPANY	ONLINE VOTING BY AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER
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# INDEX

Interview with On Making "Sprit of The Mountains"



**Naresh Bedi**

Interview with Production Designer



**Subrata Chakraborty  
& Amit Ray**

Interview With



**Gauri Chakraborty**

Interview with Founder of GP-PROO



**Parthiv Goel**

THE LAST MAN



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**Satyabrata  
Rout**





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**JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023**

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## Editor's Desk

Greetings!

We are glad to inform all our reader that this Year during the Broadcast India Show, we will have Cinematography Art Award function on 9th oct 2023, 2nd day of broadcast india show. Pl visit our website [www.cinematographyartaward.com](http://www.cinematographyartaward.com) and do the needful.

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#### 24 - CATEGORY- INDEX

- \* BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR HINDI AD FILM
- \* BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR HINDI FEATURE FILM
- \* BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR THE WEB SERIES IN HINDI LANGUAGE
- \* BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR THE WEB SERIES IN ANY LANGUAGE
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- \* BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN TELUGU FEATURE FILM
- \* BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN MALAYALAM FEATURE FILM
- \* BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN KANNADA FEATURE FILM
- \* BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN BENGALI LANGUAGE
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- \* LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
- \* WEDDING CINEMATOGRAPHY
- \* POPULAR DSLR / MIRRORLESS STILL CAMERA OF THE YEAR HAVING CINE FEATURE

**Cheers!!**

**Naresh Sharma**  
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# Interview with *Naresh Bedi* On Making "Spirit of The Mountains"

India is home to rich wildlife, including tigers, leopards, lions, and rhinoceros, but what made to choose a snow leopard for your film?

In the past, our natural history films have been about rare endangered species, and they were challenging projects. Each animal posed its own filming problems and risks and was often life-threatening.

The snow leopard has a great aura of mystery; the mere mention of its name arouses curiosity. They are not much





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studied compared to other big Cats. The snow leopard can be extremely hard to find, let alone film.

Nobody knows their numbers in the wild because of the difficult terrain and shy, elusive nature. The World population is estimated to be between 4-6 thousand. Researchers believe there may be 400-700 snow leopards in Indian Himalayas.

Unfortunately, snow leopards are being killed in all 12 range countries, and their number is decreasing every year - many in retaliation for the loss of livestock and their beautiful pelts.

Before it is too late and species is pushed towards extinction, we wanted to make a more comprehensive film on the life of these charismatic big cats, the habitat of craggy mountain cliffs they live and hunt prey like Ibex and Bharal. We hope our small effort will help spread awareness among the masses about these little-understood big cats and how important are their conservation issues.

But how we decided to make the film on snow leopards has an interesting background.

After making films on Gharial, tigers and elephants, we turned to Ladakh for a more challenging project to film the unique wildlife of this World's highest region. This was during 1993-94; we made two films, one "The Forbidden Wilderness" about the Tso Moriri Lake situated about 15 thousand ft above sea level, 29 km long, and 8 km wide. The other film, "Desert in the Sky", focused on the life of Nomads of Chang Thang Plateau, a barren high-altitude desert.

Tso Moriri attracts migratory birds like Bar-head Goose, shell duck, terns, and large crested grebe to come and breed on its safe lake islands. We were working in unexplored areas and trying to record some rare breeding behaviour. I don't

July - September 2023

want to go into details about our challenges, but I can tell you that I and Rajesh, both brothers nearly lost our lives while filming these films. We feel proud to be the first to have recorded the whole breeding cycle of the Bar-head goose anywhere in the World. We were lucky to have the chance to film the Tibetan wild dogs and lynx for the first time, but finding and filming snow leopards proved extremely difficult.

Locals hated the snow leopards as they killed livestock and were trapped and killed in retaliation. Villagers took their kills away to feed themselves, and leopards were forced to kill more. The leopards became shy and elusive and avoided humans in the slightest danger.

When I saw the first snow leopard approaching its kill





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through the viewfinder of my film camera, I was shivering with excitement, having waited for two years for that rare moment. It was only the third winter our luck changed, and we were able to film some footage of this majestic predator and present these first glimpses to the World. But the charismatic snow leopards left me with the thought or idea of making a comprehensive film on their life. But how long do I have to wait?

During our 2014 visit to Pune, while interacting with a group of young wildlife enthusiasts, we met a young man, the late Chimay Rane, a wildlife enthusiast and budding filmmaker. He requested us to make a film on snow leopards in Spiti, where he was presently working and assured all help from the locals of Kibber Village. He tried to convince us that the terrain is much flatter compared to Ladakh and that sightings are much better. "Sir, only you, brothers, can do it with your passion and commitment as you did 25 years ago." It was a tempting proposition; we followed it up and made a recce trip in July 2014. The snow leopard did not oblige us during our two weeks stay, despite camping in higher valleys. However, we regularly came across several pieces of evidence of their presence.

Luckily, one of the camera traps recorded a few beautiful images of a female in front of the camera, and she rubbed her face on the ground to leave her scent and move on. These one-minute clips were quite encouraging and convinced me there was potential for a film.

We were aware of the difficulties that finding a snow leopard in the vast landscape would be a problem. However, despite all the challenges, we decided to try our luck to fulfil

our long-cherished dream of making an intimate study of these mysterious big cats. It was a humble beginning; we sank deeper and deeper and worked over five years.

**The trap camera clips were encouraging. Yet, this was only minimal footage. Did you plan to make an entire film from the trap camera footage? How was the rest of the footage shot?**

I used 3-4 trap cameras for months to ascertain the movement of individual cats in that vast landscape of Chicham and Kibber villages with deep gorges dividing them. Our camera traps placed beside their favourite scent-marking rocks, monitored over several months, revealed only 3-4 snow leopards in the area. They included one elderly male, which we named Karma. The team tracked leopards through the changing seasons, year after year. Progress was painfully slow, and there were many disappointments. Weeks and months passed without sightings, but we continued our efforts.

We made Chicham, a small isolated village, as our base. I was surprised that many elders had not seen Shan or the snow leopard. Working at around 14000ft altitude in a barren landscape with low oxygen was difficult in bone-chilling temperatures with icy winds. Despite good winter clothing, feet and hands become numb. Walking or climbing a few steps makes you out of breath. Sitting and waiting in a hide for Shan or other animals was worst as the body movements were restricted in a confined space of 3X3 feet.

We assembled a team, including a Dariya, a senior shepherd, Gompo, a teacher and some unemployed youths. Using their familiarity with the mountains and extraordinary



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fitness, we trained them to track the big cats, set up trap cameras, and use digital cameras in emergencies.

My first concern was the equipment because the technology was changing at that time, every broadcaster was looking for 4K content, and my existing film and video equipment had become redundant.

I couldn't afford to buy or lease high-end cameras like Red as it was still developing and also had a heating problem with the battery in the long run. Besides, they were too heavy to operate with a proper tripod, so we opted for lighter, smaller camera options like Black Magic, Sony, and other compact digital cameras. One day, I remember trying to film a herd of Ibex on the move, but I could not see it properly on Lcd ground glass. I asked one of the assistants to remove the jacket and put it over me like the old-time still photographer with black cloth. I managed to get two or three shots used in the final film. We couldn't use the Black Magic camera further, so we had to look for other options. I knew I was mixing different video codecs but I had few options. We worked with a small crew with essential equipment to save costs and could manage this long filming schedule.

**How did you transport your heavy gear and other logistics in these high-altitude terrains? Did you use yaks, mules, donkeys, and other animals?**

Transportation of cameras, camping gear and other logistics while moving camps to higher valleys was always a problem. I was surprised that there were no mules or horses in Chicham or Kibber. Our host Dorji told us he had a business trading mules and horses. He would buy them in the lowland and then take them across Parangala Pass into Ladakh's

Chang-thang for the nomads. He would make a reasonable profit and buy yak and pashmina wool in barter. The road network in the region has finished this age-old tradition. Now no one keeps them because of fear of losing to wolves or snow leopards.

Chicham has about 300 donkeys, three times the households. Villagers extensively use them for transporting various commodities of farming. Our team used them to transport our camping equipment from one valley to another. We had to ride them on a few rare occasions, but it was no fun. They were so small when Rajesh's had to ride, his feet touched the ground, and there was nothing to hold on.

I remember filming a sequence of local women collecting yak dung in higher valleys with my newly acquired Sony FS7. It was cold and windy I couldn't operate the camera or change lenses with my bare hands to make an effective sequence. Seeing the strength and vigour of these young women collecting dung despite cold and packing it in specially made sacks was amazing. The dung is sought after as winter fuel as it burns slowly, providing heat for a longer time. There was a sense of competition to collect maximum from neighbouring areas; otherwise, they had to travel to distant valleys where yaks have been grazing. I was surprised to learn that even this fuel collection is seasonal and regulated by the village panchayat. After loading their donkeys, they walk back about eight kilometres to the village. Unfortunately, I couldn't include this lively sequence of pretty women working so hard in the final film.

The yak is the most robust animal that evolved to live in cold areas and can survive on scanty vegetation. There are some wild yak herds reported on the Chinese side. But in





32<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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India, they are all tame and are kept primarily for their milk and meat. They are also used as beasts of burden, transporting goods across mountain passes for local farmers and traders and supporting climbing and trekking expeditions. They are left unattended to graze on high pastures and are moved to lower heights whenever required.

Villagers arranged yaks for us to ride when we had to do more climbing. They are sure-footed and often referred to as beasts of burden. Riding a yak or donkey without a saddle is not easy. We had to ride yaks out of compulsion. Maintaining a proper balance when yaks were climbing up or descending was difficult because there was nothing to hold on to or a footrest. I used to hold their long-neck hair. Riding yak is scary as they often walk on the edge of tracks of steep valleys. But any small mistake can be fatal. They can be unpredictable – on two occasions, the yak threw off Rajesh, but luckily, there were no serious injuries as the relatively flat ground was covered with thick snow.

#### **How did you tackle the fogging of lenses in cold weather?**

The lens condensation usually happens when the camera

is stored in a box with a warmer temperature and suddenly exposed to extreme cold conditions. I faced this problem quite a few times. I used to keep my camera out sufficiently before getting into action. The other problem was that the camera eyepiece often fogged up because of hot breath. At times there was no time to wipe clean and record the action I kept running. A pocket full of good soft tissue always comes in handy in such situations.

#### **How did you charge your batteries in those remote locations with no electricity around?**

The camera batteries were the real problem as they lost charge because of extreme cold temperatures. It was a severe problem. We had to buy extra-powerful batteries and kept some on standby for emergencies. We had foldable solar panels to charge small camera batteries but could not charge a battery which required 10-12 hours of charging. At night we have to keep these charged batteries in our sleeping bags to keep them warm. We had a runner boy who would take the batteries for charge and walk down for two hours to the village and would be lucky to charge them if there were no power cuts and the supply had proper voltage.



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Technically, the other major problem was keeping the camera on to plan or rehearse the shots, as even the fully charged battery would quickly run out. So I had to be extra cautious in keeping the camera on when everything was in place, ready to shoot. There was inherent fear of losing the battery charge when the action happened. This problem was more serious when I sat in a hide and needed to watch through my camera to keep a watch on animal movement. A usual small viewing hole did not allow me to look around and monitor animal activity as I could freely do with a camera.

To save the battery life, I had to keep them wrapped up in a down jacket. This was just too frustrating when sitting in a cramped space of hide in bone-chilling temperatures, with no body movement or making any sound like an opening thermos of tea sound that may scare the approaching animals was a real test of our passion.

**How did you keep the trap cameras' battery charged when they were left on location for weeks? How were these cameras switching on and off by themselves?**

The trap cameras we used were basic digital cameras with infrared sensors to detect moving warm objects like animals. These cameras could be programmed to record stills or videos of about one minute on memory cards. These cameras are designed with good battery life lasting several days, as the camera gets fired only when animal movement is detected. It has disadvantages once after placing a camera on the track used by snow leopards; its memory card was checked after three weeks. To my surprise, there was no animal image except a repetitive still frame. On analyzing, we realized that some grass was in front of the camera, which triggered it as it moved in the wind. On another occasion, we got just whiskers of snow leopard, and the rest of the card was filled with images of yaks moving in the area. We were lucky to get shots of snow leopard cubs; one of them was so curious that it licked the camera lens. The trap camera shots helped us bridge sequences for a better narrative. It is crucial to place the camera angle after carefully observing their movements or use of the place. Because of certain forest department restrictions, we could not use them so freely.

**However, I also saw a shot where the snow leopard licked the lens.**

Some animals are sensitive and will avoid the trap camera even though it is well camouflaged. But they accept it once it is left for days and becomes part of the environment. In the case of the snow leopard cub, perhaps it was his anxiety to approach the camera licking its lens.



July - September 2023

**Whenever you see a film on wildlife, there must be some interesting narrative. How was the narrative developed in this case?**

Getting a narrative for the film was always a major concern. I weighed various options of a film focusing on our expedition or the role of Buddhist people and religion as the saviour of wildlife in the area. But I thought the best option is to capture things as they happened and not make them sensational. My best option was to film maximum behavioural footage and then work out a narrative.

But capturing the vastness of the mountains and deep gorges has been a big challenge as their real impact of sheer size and depth was lost on a small flat screen. A wide-angle lens was not much help. We used almost 1000 mm telephoto to get a reasonable image of leopards as they maintain a safe, comfortable distance. With the day warming up, a heat shimmer caused another problem.

After identifying snow leopards with the help of a trap camera shot and their marking, we started categorizing our footage, a rough assembly. We got a few sequences of Karma, an elderly dominant male. That encouraged us to spend more time looking for him and finding any interaction with females.

The snow leopards continually roam their large territories. Depending on the prey availability, a male may have territories of 220 sq. km and females 130. However, some snow leopards can have as many 1000 sq. km territories in a poor prey base and desolate areas.

Finding snow leopards was one issue. But once you find them, they won't do much activity and most of the time sleep. Hence getting enough behavioural activity was the real problem. A sighting once in a fortnight or a month did not help much.

**I also remember that there was a commentary about the mating among snow leopards. Can you elaborate on that?**

Snow leopards are solitary animals. Males and females cum together for a few days of mating at the peak of winter between January-February and then go their ways. It was interesting to record how these cats find their partners in such a large landscape. Frequently left scent marks on specific points and rocks indicate if the female is ready to mate. Her calls are far-reaching in this wilderness, and the male responds and finds each other.

The second year we were hoping to film the mating and had told everyone in the village to inform us if they happened to hear the calls. One day we got the information and proceeded to spot and could listen to the calls emanating from the deep gorge, but we couldn't spot the animals, which may be on a cliff not visible from our position. Our team tried to locate it the following days but without any luck. It was only the third year after following Karma's mating calls that we could get a mating sequence, another important behaviour in the story of Karma. This reassured us that we should be building our narrative focusing on the life of Karma.

All the footage was sorted out into relevant sequences, and we tried to make a narrative by shifting back and forth



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between sequences. However, I was particular and ensured we addressed the right animal. As we spent much time filming or being present with Karma, he accepted our presence to some extent and obliged us to film some intimate behaviour at close quarters.

**Do you remember that there was a snowstorm in the film? How difficult was it to shoot that, and how difficult is it to keep your equipment and things intact?**

One day our trackers informed us about a snow leopard about six km from the village resting in a gorge. As we were leaving, we faced strong wind from the valleys below. I told Rajesh it was not worth going down 6 km in this bad weather. But Rajesh insisted that we have a sighting after two weeks, let's go and check it out. However, we realized our mistake in reaching the spot as the leopard was too far away. We did not open our equipment and decided to head back to the village, which was more troublesome because we had to climb a hill in knee-deep snow. It was exhausting; I was out of breath and had to stop after every few steps. By this time, strong winds turned into a snowstorm. It was getting difficult even to stand. We faced This rare situation and I thought need to be recorded. It was not possible to unpack equipment and have the proper shoot. I gave my small digital camera after making the initial setting to Gompo to take a few shots. It was a real storm, a terrifying experience, But some how after two hours of travel, we reached home safely.

**How did you use the drone in such a difficult environment?**

There were many restrictions on using drones in the Spiti Valley for security concerns. However, we got limited clearance to use drones close to our area of snow leopards.

We had with us Group Captain Ramesh Tahlan, a former Fighter Pilot of the Indian Air Force, helping us with this exciting job. I was keen to get some shots with the snow leopard's perspective of the mountains and deep gorges. But I

soon realized that drones, too, have limitations in capturing scenes as I visualized. However, with the experience of Tahalan, we could get some interesting shots. During the last days of our stay, it snowed in the valley; it was even better for us to have different landscape views with and without snow. Unfortunately, we lost the drone during the shoot as the battery ran out. The drone was high and not visible with eyes, so determining where it must have landed or crashed was more of a guess. There was panic. Everybody was sad about losing the drone with all the shots on its memory cards. But after a while, after having a hot cup of tea, we started working out its possibilities based on technical details and the last visual I remembered. It moved on right behind us rather than returning to base. We sent a search party of three young men to steep climb to the hill behind us, and luckily they could find it stuck in the snow without any damage.

**Since there are different formats, like GoPro Black Magic, and Sony, how did you decide to shoot a particular part in a specific format? As well as to mix it in such a way that it will not look odd.**

I preferred to shoot maximum footage in Sony format, but it was not always feasible. I had to give our team members Panasonic GH4, Gh5 and a similar camera to record whenever they found something interesting. I knew the problems of mixing different formats, but this was more of a compromise. I had a small window of liberty to recompose or crop images as we were shooting everything in 4K, provided its quality was good. In the post-production, we had to spend much more time on colour grading and not compromising on quality.

**In a relatively quiet area where you could hear the wind and a few hill birds? How many different wind sounds could you use to bring variation in soundtracks? What were the challenges you faced in designing the soundtrack for the film?**





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Most wildlife films are shot without sound because it is impossible to get clear sounds in a noisy atmosphere. We in India don't have sensitive ears for sounds as we live in a highly noise-polluted atmosphere. But the sounds are an essential part of the film.

We also don't have people who understand the intricacies of sounds for wildlife films. For example, there are so many types of wind sounds, and choosing the right one that is appropriate or justifies the scene is very important. I was very particular about having relevant sounds and recorded some wild tracks on location to support the visuals.

Getting any calls or mating sounds of snow leopards was a difficult task. I searched for them on the net and approached people in Switzerland and UK, where they have been in breeding programs but with no luck. Finally, I went to Darjiling, where we have a snow leopard breeding program, got permission and recorded actual mating sounds.

These sounds painstakingly synchronized with the original shots and made the whole sequence come alive. It almost looks like it shot in sync, which makes the difference. I had to turn to professionals in Bristol, UK, to do justice for the foley sounds and the final mix soundtrack.

**What about using instrumental music at certain parts of the film so that the overall feeling of the film can be heightened?**

The background music is a significant part of a wildlife documentary. The composers in India do not have much experience in this field. Internationally, there is some standard and style of music for wildlife documentaries. Therefore, I used one young British composer, Danny Rayan, a snow leopard fan willing to help us with music. Finally, it worked so well that I had to put music with the sequences, see if it was working, or send him back with my suggestions. He composed three times the storm sequence music with Ibex sitting in flying snow. Working with him was a wonderful experience; music added value to the film.

**How long is the overall film?**

Over the five years, we collected about 120 hours of material – editing was not easy for the young editor Rahul Malkoti with constantly changing narratives and new

material. But with his hard work and patience, we made two versions - Chasing Shadows (2X50) mins following our quest for snow leopards. It follows the narrative of our expedition and adventures and how we dealt with various situations.

The films have a good flow of sequences, interaction with locals and several sequences of other wildlife, which unfortunately got dropped in the one-hour version- Spirit of the Mountains.

This version focuses more on snow leopards as species. The engaging story of Karma, his decline and death and the new male Namka taking over his territory make this film ground-breaking and unique. Our films are the first of their kind, having an in-depth story about the life of snow leopards.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the people of Chicham, especially Gompo and his family, for extending their support, without which such a film wouldn't have been possible. There was full cooperation from the Forest and Wildlife Department of Himachal Pradesh and their field staff.

**Is there anything specific you would like to say about wildlife filmmaking in general ?**

India is the largest producer of feature films in the World. But the field of documentaries, especially wildlife and nature, is neglected. As such, films are time-consuming, require patience & commitment with specialized equipment and are expensive.

I can proudly say that our family has been keeping up with the tradition for the last five decades. No broadcaster was willing to fund an uncertain project to get enough content. So we decided to take the risk and self-financed the entire project.

Despite all the difficulties, we feel privileged to have realized our crazy ambition. Driven by passion and commitment, we were able to record much intimate behaviour. However, we wish we had more luck filming the close relationship between mother and cubs, but sometimes you end up Chasing Shadows. These films are being aired on NatGeor Wild, India.

**Feedback: [bedifilms71@gmail.com](mailto:bedifilms71@gmail.com)**





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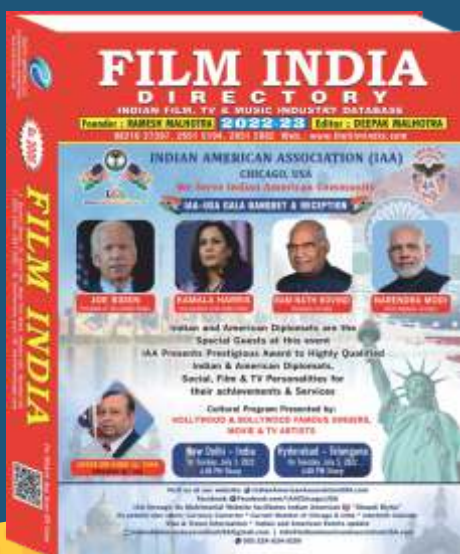
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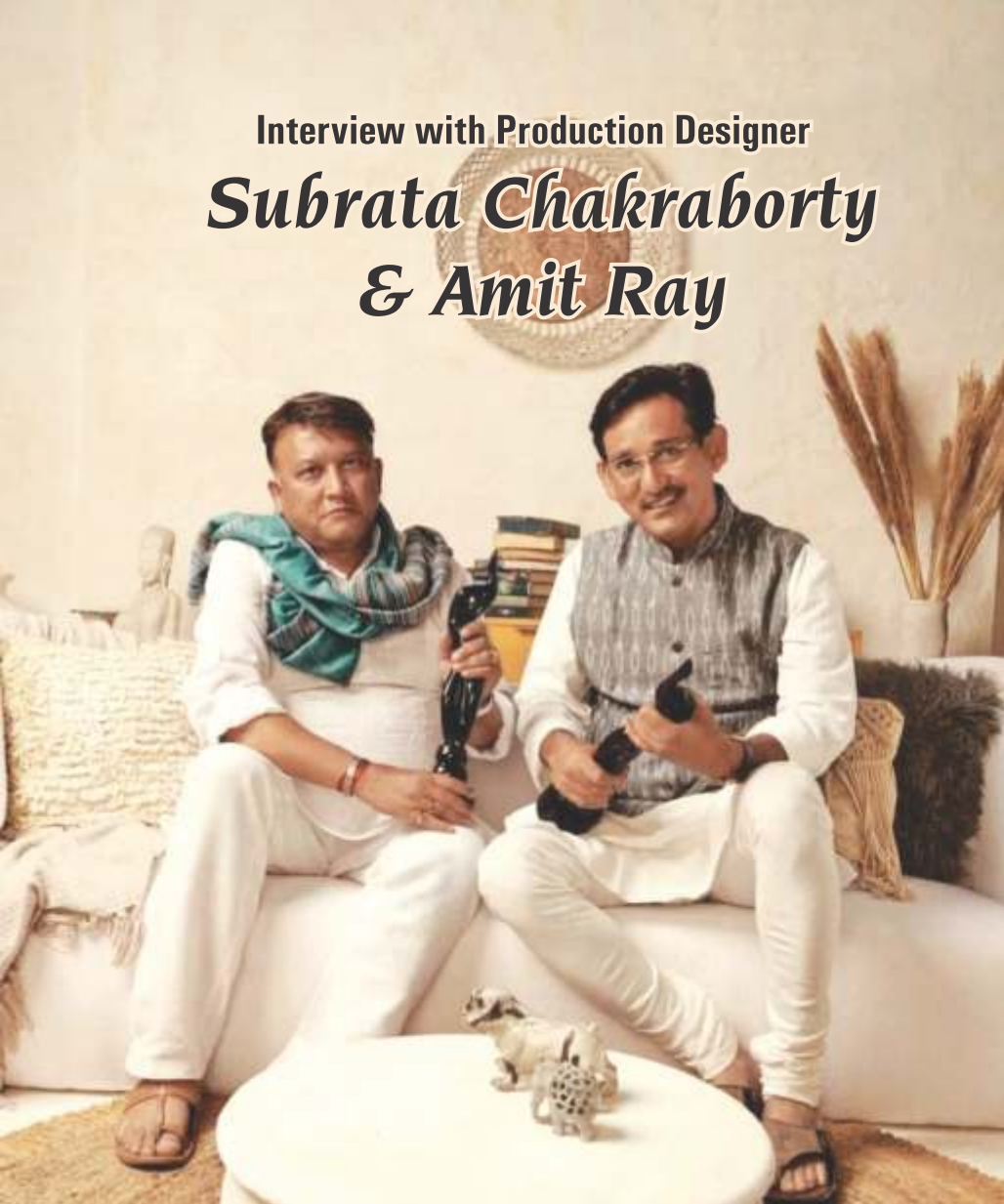
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## Interview with Production Designer *Subrata Chakraborty* & Amit Ray



### **How did you begin the set design and construction for this project - Gangubai Kathiawadi ?**

Basically, they were going to do a project called "Inshallah". Although it was difficult to say 'no' to Sanjay Leela Bhansali sir, still we had to due to a tight schedule, but he was offended that we left the project. However, that project got cancelled due to some reason; and Sudeep Chatterjee called both of us saying that we must not take up any project further because sir might call us. Meanwhile, we had already signed for Dr. Chandraprakash Dwivedi's "Prithviraj Chauhan". But suddenly sir called the next day when we were at YRF, asking us to meet him in his office. So we met him, and gave a fat script in our hands. He told us to

read the script and let him know how it is, while he waits outside. We both took around 3.30 hours to read and make notes out of it; and we saw sir still sitting outside the office when we came out. We were unsure about how to proceed till then. We told him that we had already taken up "Prithviraj". But he directly refused to listen to anything of that sort. He just said, "You only are going to do this project, and you have 15-days' time. Within that you have to do your research, accompany me to Kamathipura, make your sketches and show me the colors; and I know that you'll succeed." Sudeep da was smiling at our scene from a distance. It was a very big challenge for us. All of our team members are from Art College, and everybody worked on this together.

Sir and we visited Kamathipura twice; and later on we also separately visiting twice, all within that limited time span. we also sent my assistants there to gather information. Upon all these observations, we made our designs and miniatures of Gangu's 'kothha'. Then sir made a few changes to it and we finally came to a primary conclusion. Accordingly then, we started to build the set. But sir was very considerate. He knew our background, that we've worked on a lot of period films with Shyam Benegal, Samir Chanda and Buddhadev Dasgupta. Sir's house is only a few steps ahead of the red light area of Kamathipura on Grand Road. Hence the day our team went for recce, sir showed us where there were 5 theatre halls, where the horse carts used to be kept in line, where the 'chanawala' used to sell, where the 'band ka dukaan' used to be, the path he used to take for school, etc. He was just digging up his memory to showcase a minutely detailed picture of the place. We used much of his details in our set construction. Like, the band party house, the dentist's clinic, how people used to lie inside and outside the shops, etc. One more thing that helped here was, since we both had our schooling from Shantiniketan, we had to visit 'Sonagachi', Kolkata's biggest red light area several times during our college days. Those observations aided us a lot. Sir also agreed to most of the designs, which the drawing experts prepared along with us.

### **How did you design the interior of the train in the scene where she travels with her boyfriend to Mumbai for the first time?**

This was common for us because our first independent film had been Shyam Benegal's "Bose: The Forgotten Hero". Then it was "Guru", followed by "Rang De Basanti"; and we had also done 6-7 periodic projects with Samir da. So, we had thorough research on the type, style and color of periodic trains. For "Guru", we had gone to the archive multiple times for research. Also, there's a big railway museum in



# GANGUBAI KATHIAWADI

PRODUCED BY SANJAY LEELA BHANSALI &amp; DR. JAYANTILAL GADA (PEN)

IN CINEMAS FEB. 25, 2022



Calcutta named "Garden Reach", which we took help from. The old researches helped a lot here. The time zone was also similar - it was a narrow gauge train. The only new factor here was Gujarat.

## Was the train a set?

Yes. There's only one outdoor shot and the rest 99.9% is set.

## How did you design Gangu's home at Kathiawad?

The first scenes of Gangu's home in rural Gujarat were shot on the same set which was used as her 'Kamathipura kothha'. The brothel underwent a changeover and was made into Gangu's home. We had added into it the signature wooden pillars of a Gujarat house; wooden panels inside the rooms; and old props and 'dijas' were placed. Colors and lights were also changed according to the flavor of Gujarat. Sanjay sir always emphasized on enhancing the look of reality. Therefore, we made it colorful, as it

should be in Gangu's eyes.

## How did you deck up the Kamathipura streets?

We went to Kamathipura for more than a couple of times; and it is such a place where even today 10-15% of the running shops are from 1940s and 50s. So you get automatic references from the boards and signboards that are still there. You'll find wooden latrines there. Besides, we also had some additional research beforehand.

## How did you design the interior of Gangu's living space, as seen in Afshan's introduction scene and Gangu's bathing scene?

Whenever we visited Kamathipura with sir, he always talked in visuals. We just took notes and designed accordingly. Before the sets were put up, sir always discussed props, dress-up, texture and colors with us. Moreover, we already had close observations of the structures and formations of the 'kothhas', due to our

frequent visits to 'Sonagachi' in college days. There used to be rooms on all sides, an open space in the middle, and a bathroom at the corner. We kept it as natural as possible. We used bricks and 'paani ka tanki'. Inside the brothel rooms, we used 'kirdaan' - 'wardan' in colloquial. No heavyweight or expensive curtains were used. The bathing shot was so dramatic - we used 'paat ki kimtaan' through which Sudeep da took the shot. Also, they never bought 'purdah' from the market. They cut sarees into shape and used them as curtains. We also decided on a diluted color palette for the overall set. 200-300 old sarees used to come in bundles per day from 'Mangaldas' and the market behind 'Dharavi', and we used to choose 5 to 10 cotton sarees from them according to the colors we were going to use. There's a single color tone used for the curtains too. Some had borders and some didn't. There's a 'shamiyana' over Sheela mausi's royal seat, which also had a color code. The place was cemented there, and mirrors were stuck to the walls of the pillars -





they used old used soaps to stick mirrors onto the walls. Our design was full of such intricate details, inculcated on the basis of our prior experiences and sanjay sir's brief. Sir was very impressed as he went through everything - there was water inside the 'karappa', there was 'tulsi' planted in a 'dalda' container in the scene where Gangu throws a card from her balcony to Afshaan. That was the time when 'dalda' was used in every household. So we framed the thing in a painted color container to clarify the time zone and maintain the 'retro' feel. We needed to emotionally synchronize the 40s and 50s with today's era, keeping the social and the cultural time zone safe. Even if you observe the closed doors, we along with our painter team used rot iron, bamboo sticks, newspapers, etc. Floors at that time used to be made of 'karappa' with cement. We followed everything - the material that was used and how they used 'laaltem', etc. We used marble paper as wallpapers to make it look more age appropriate and beautiful. Moreover, sir instructed us to keep the weathering at 100% as we started with the color. But he also needed beauty in it.

**Did you have to redo any part of the set due to excessive natural weathering after monsoon?**

Yes, there were issues with colors and there was water leakage at a few places. But it was usual, as the set was

left susceptible in an open ground. Everything was rectified within 7 days.

**How long did it take to build the set and how long was it there?**

The set was constructed in 45 days, and it stayed there for more than 2 years. It sustained the COVID period, and two successive monsoons.

**Was the dumbbell exercise scene shot in the same locale by offering more height to it? How was the visible background designed?**

We had made a real 'kothha' with a real terrace on set, and every part of it was accessible. Sir often has continuous shots. Therefore he always emphasizes on building reality - his sets are never 'sets'. The terrace in that scene was the real terrace of Gangu's house, and the visible backdrop was the extension of the set itself. There was only one shot in which the faraway background was visible, and only that shot had the use of VFX for the distant backdrop.

**How did you design Karim Lala's house so that the cultural and social differences show but don't overrule the storyline?**

We designed his house keeping Bori Muslim community in mind. Karim Lala was originally a 'Pathhan'. Hence a patronized and sophisticated Muslim touch was required. A superior class was required to show in the

architecture and interior of his house. We used stained glass in the interior, with hand-painted colors. They also used to keep water reservoirs inside their house. We devised that thing in the backdrop of the scene, where Gangu has a discussion with him.

**How did you create the see-through backdrop in the 'qawaali' sequence during Afshan's marriage?**

Over 3 months, Subrata and I used to visit sir alternatively with hand-designed curtains. It had become a regular weekly job for us to make two 'purdahs' and try to have sir's consent. We had chalked out every shop at Bhandi bazaar - even the 'jaaliwala' shops. We had used every item that existed in the markets of Bombay. But every time, his answer would be 'no'. Hence we both became frustrated after a point, and finally decided to try the cameraman's translucent black cloth. We hand-painted on it and showed it to sir, and sir was elated to have gotten the thing he needed.

Actually, there's a movie in FTII on "Gogo" which has used this concept. Since both sir and Sudeep da are from FTII, they're aware of that project. In the film they had used a cloth and the camera went over it, and whenever the focus shifted, the backdrop became visible. Sir was headstrong about creating that magic again. We also experienced how brilliant it looked, once we succeeded in it. The whole background was visible along with the black cloth, which was transparent and printed entirely with hand-drawn designs. In fact, 90% of the props used in the film were hand-painted. We used stencils, and our artists hand-designed all the ads and brochures.

**The last scene of Gangu's procession is full of white and grandeur, with people showering paper sprinkles on her. Whose idea was it?**

It was sir's idea completely. There was this iconic occurrence in the USA



during WWII - flight had stopped and the soldiers sprinkled colored papers downwards. We used that reference in this scene.

#### **What was being sprinkled in the scene?**

Old newspaper pieces. 40 people were appointed for the cutting of newspapers on the first day, but it didn't suffice. After that we sent newspapers in around 20-25 bundles, to be suitably pieced in machines. The song went on for 5 days. 20 people were appointed to regularly clean the set at night and then again sprinkle during the next day's shoot.

#### **Did you bring any change into the set for the last scene?**

Yes, there were major changeovers at a few places.

#### **Can you give a few examples?**

The colors of some houses had been changed. The cinema posters and advertisement banners were changed according to the time period. During the poster tearing in the first scene, there were many posters below the one that was torn. But you'll see different posters and leaflets on the same walls in the end scene. We had 3-4 time periods ready with us in terms of props. Like we see gas lamps at first, then electricity comes, and then telephone is introduced.

#### **How did you design the car inside which the song sequence is shot?**

A- We found out the ratio of the original car, and increased our car's size maintaining that ratio so that it looked real. We made its cutout after the blueprints arrived. Then Sudeep da checked the camera axis, and whether the DOP and the director could sit inside. The car that we made was for the interior shots. All exterior shots were of the real car.

#### **Was the camera stable in the interior shots of the car?**

Yes, it was static. But there were springs under it. The audience gets a moving feeling due to the movement of springs. Moreover, the train platform used in the eloping scene is used for the car sequence as well. In Sanjay sir's project, we always believe that anything from anywhere in the set can come to use at any point. Sir has actually made a changeover of the Karim Lala lane and is now filming "Heera Mandi" there. He never lets people dismantle a set immediately, even after the shoot gets over. He strolls around with a cup of coffee and takes the feel of his sets like a baby. He enjoys himself and reminisces about each position and prop. Only after that, he advises to dismantle it. He would even change certain things in the set within the process, e.g., the Prime Minister's room. The same room was Karim Lala's pub before, which he later instructed to change into the Prime Minister's room. He remembers each artistic detail and always emphasizes on the complete utilization of money, time and energy invested. Whatever work you do on set, you need to make complete use of it - that's his motto. Even if he needs a 'purdah' in this film and he remembers a 'purdah' used in 'Padmaavat' which would be suitable here, he would immediately fetch it.

#### **Did you have a reference model regarding the look of the cafe where Razia's introduction and conversation with Gangu takes place?**

It was an 'Irani' cafe. If you still visit Kamathipura, you will find many such cafes there. One of those cafes was sir's choice, and we visited it because it's still there. Even if you visit Britannia or Giani's, although they don't allow rooftop seats now, you still get the flavor of it. The typical photo frames, the painted mirrors, the black-and-white floors - we tried to inculcate all of that in our set. We also hand-painted every glass in that cafe. However, the same spot was later transformed into the cafe where Karim Lala says, "Ab Kamathipura todnevala hai."



#### **How was instructions from DOP Sudeep Chatterjee during the shoot?**

We have read Sudeep da's mind already. We did "Padmaavat" together, and he was a colleague of our boss before we started independent work. So it's a long relationship, which is continuing till date. We've never had a clash with him. In fact, he has an extremely grounded personality. When we both worked as assistants under Samir da, Sudeep da was already a big name by then. We gradually started to work independently after Samir da passed away, that's when we got to work with him again. Not for a moment did he let us realize that we're juniors to him and worked as assistants before. This is a rare thing for a celebrity like him. He always encourages everyone and has excellent management quality. He knows how to extract the greatest ability out of his team. I've worked with many DOPs till date, but nobody in my knowledge is at par with Sudeep da as a lead. Problems do arise occasionally with other DOPs, but Sudeep da never demands anything that may depreciate our work.





Gauri (Rasgotra) Chakraborty after graduating from FTII in the year 1998 joined the Indian television industry. She was associated with DD Metro and Zee Telefilms during her early career. She was Associate Producer for Asif Kapadia's film, *Sheep Thief* (1997). She has worked with BBC WST on HIV awareness in India in 2006. Gauri has been a media educator for the last 17 years has co-headed a top media training institution from 2017-21 where she spearheaded the University's community radio station and directed training films for Commonwealth Games 2010, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau among others. She has been resource person for UGC refresher programs on gender and member of IAMCR and IAWRT. Gauri was the Festival Director for IAWRT Asian Women's Film Festival 2019. She is currently Professor at Times School of Media, Bennett University. Gauri shares the journey about her recently released book "Balancing the Wisdom Tree- Anthology of FTII women alumni" to Editor & Publisher, Naresh Sharma.



## Interview with *Gauri Chakraborty*

My FTII Senior Reena Mohan (Editing, 1982) suggested the idea to FTII about a publication on women alumni, and I was asked if it would be something I would like to implement. Normally, such publications, tend to tilt towards women's participation stories and achievements. My initial thoughts were about the prejudice and challenges that must have existed in the early years for women to enter filmmaking which translated into a proposal of tracing these journeys across the six decades. The idea also included recognizing each and every female student considering these must be nuanced narratives. Then director

of FTII, Mr. Bhupendra Kainthola accepted my proposal. The concept of the book also included not just monologues but dialogues or conversations among some of these alumni to create the context.

Therefore, the first segment of the book is called 'Conversations', where women alumni across specializations and batches are talking to each other. For example, Chandita Mukherjee a veteran, is talking to Hansa Thapliyal. Chandita and Hansa both at some point had worked together and believed in the same concept of films and how it can affect social change.

The second segment of the book is 'Reflections', which includes memories from different batches and through the sixty years reflecting on the common and collective memory as well as exploring the individual journey of selected Alumni. One of my most cherished parts of the book is that now we

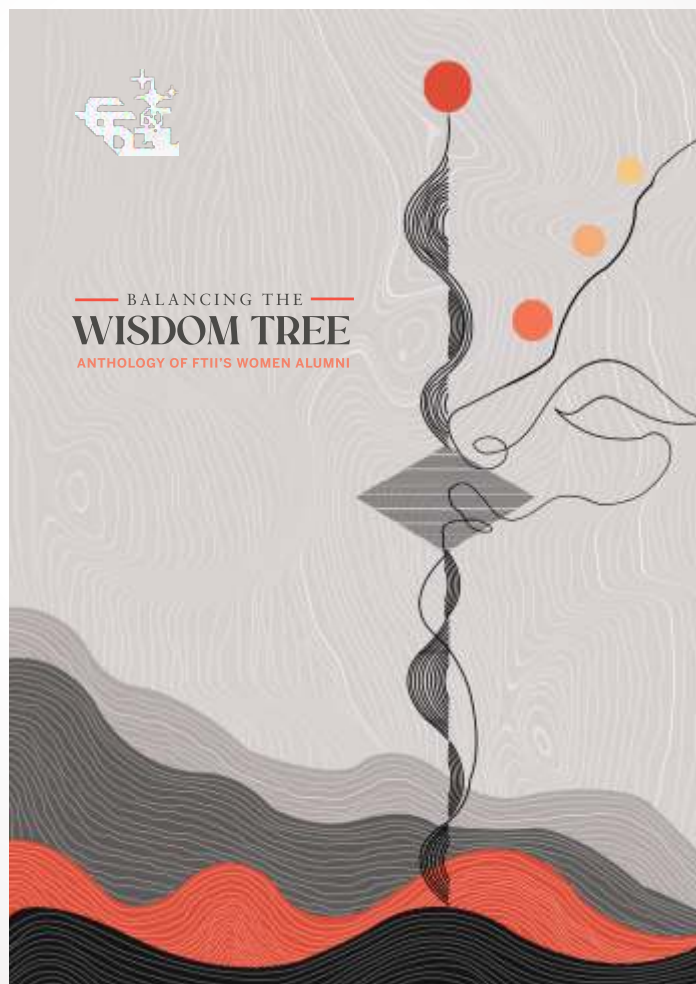


have 80 women either conversing with each other, or with the reader. But Who are these women? Where do they come from? Why did they get into filmmaking? What is the work they did? And for how many years? To answer these questions, I proposed the section of 'Bio Notes,' for which we first needed to have a list of all the women. I received a list from the registrar's office; however, it was important to reevaluate this list across six decades. We also floated a Google form and spread it across India, as well as abroad. Apart from that, because these are filmmakers, there was some acknowledgment of their work in public domain and digital platforms. Regarding the profile section, we requested contributors to share details about their work in 125-150 words. In cases where alumni who were no longer with us, or if their work was not in the public domain, I had to look through official sources, which lists their credits in certain films. Anuj Malhotra, the book designer has created a unique template for the same.

There are two ways to engage with the content of the book - one is to go from the front to the back, which is the normal way, and the other is to look at FTII from back to the front, which is to actually open the list of 503 women.

Through my memberships in different associations and my work as an academician, I know certain FTII women alumni. I initially called up the people I knew and checked with them if these are their batch mates. A person that I really enjoyed talking to and learned a lot from was Radha Saluja. She is from very early batches, and she was able to tell me about all the batch mates, which I later cross-checked. Parvati Menon, the first woman to graduate, gave me credible information about alumni around her time. These nuggets helped me. In some cases, international graduates were completely incommunicado. I checked with their batch mates and sourced pictures. Also, there is a single line to describe some alumni. I could have avoided that very brief information, but then I would not be doing justice to my commitment. Even if some women alumni had done limited work, or only diploma films during FTII, their contribution to cinema from 1963 onwards should be included as part of the mega narrative of women's colossal contribution to the industry.

As someone who acknowledges FTII changing my life, this



pro bono effort was my obeisance and respect for my alma mater. When I started off, I had no idea that this would end up being a document to refer to in the coming years. The book celebrates the point of view of women alumni from the legendary institution and seamlessly allows us to lens through their motivation, challenges, and choices. I will be glad to see that the work is discussed through alumni and other academicians and reaches the libraries of relevant institutions.

Feedback:medurga@yahoo.com





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Interview with  
**Parthiv Goel**  
Founder of GP-PROO

“

**Parthiv is a Delhi-based photographer and entrepreneur. While his day job involves running a chain of professional photography equipment stores in Delhi, he spends his spare time clicking wildlife, portraits, and concerts. Being the new-gen entrepreneur he is, he has scaled his father's business and recently opened India's largest Sony Camera Lounge in New Delhi. He's always up to talk business, photography, food, and bikes.**

”

**Y**our father has a well-known shop for Photo Equipment in Chandni Chowk. What motivated you to scale up and have three floors of a new GP-PRO store in Lajpat Nagar, South Delhi, when already many players are in the market?

Photography is my first love and this love affair started back when I was in school. So when it came to thinking of scaling up the business my dad had established, it wasn't just about opening another store, it was about making photography more accessible to our clients and to upcoming enthusiasts like me.

To be able to offer more to our clients in terms of a wider collection of equipment as well as a feel of the product before they buy it, we had to move to a bigger space. A bigger space meant we could show demonstrations, have an experience center, host workshops, and more. While Chandni Chowk is one of largest commercial hubs in the country, most people will agree that it has a space constraint.

And when we were thinking of unleashing everything we had to offer in the market, we couldn't let constraints hold us back.

That's when I thought of targeting other commercial hubs in Delhi, which in addition to space, had other benefits like easy accessibility, less parking issues, and being more well connected to the NCR region.

The first store we opened outside of Chandni Chowk was a Canon-exclusive store in Kamla Nagar. Looking at the great response of the Kamla Nagar store, we opened GP PRO in Lajpat Nagar - bang in the middle of south Delhi and with ample space to bring my vision to life; because in today's day and age, experience is everything.

**Today there is a lot of online purchasing happening, and since it is a pack product, you can't say, I'm offering you a better Canon Model than anybody else. Do you think that the sale of goods online is much more today?**



The online ecosystem is completely intertwined with our lives now. I completely agree that there is no escaping from online shopping. However, what matters is the customer segment we're catering to. I'd say about 90% of our customers are professional photographers, filmmakers, production houses, rental houses, and government institutions. Purchasing such high-end and sophisticated equipment is a very high-involvement decision.

The customer would like to come into the store, experience our wide variety of products, understand the best ways to use it, and ofcourse, bank on our exceptional after-sale service for the upkeep of their equipment. This professional equipment is also priced on the higher end and is a huge investment for our professional clients - which is why a hands-on experience works way better than an online purchase in this scenario.

The remaining 10% of our customers are amateur photographers who are buying slightly lower-priced products. We cater to them both through our physical stores and through our website. Honestly, most of our customers like walking in, because in addition to great equipment, GP PRO always has great vibes. They love to stop by and say hello.

**When I go to buy a particular lens, I have already made up my mind that I want a Sigma lens or Canon lens because it has certain technical features that I need, and this is the rough price. How does a physical person going to a store give him better confidence to buy a product?**

That's exactly the role we play - our job is not just to sell cameras, our job is to offer the best equipment a photographer can have to meet their needs. So when a customer walks in, they may have already done their research and have a few favorites in mind, but the wide collection of products available at GP PRO broadens their vision to the other kinds of equipment which they may not have come across or considered before. They

may then revisit their decision and opt for a product which will not only meet their current needs but also pave the way for future opportunities. Our team spends a lot of time and effort in understanding the customer's needs and selling them a forward-looking solution, not just a product.

**The top floor studio is used for workshops . How will these kinds of workshops help promote your business?**

The studio and the business are completely unrelated. Like I said, photography is my first love and I'm very passionate about building a close-knit photography community which is brimming with ideas and fostering new talent.

The studio is for the sole-purpose of providing an elevated experience to all photography lovers. There are hundreds of videos on Youtube which will tell you about photography, but photography is not a virtual subject. It observes life from a very close distance and is something which needs to be practiced.



This space in Lajpat Nagar was a great opportunity to create something which provided a platform for 1:1 interaction with experienced photographers and mentors. It started off as a small photo book library for people to come in and learn through books which we later expanded into a workshop space.

**With all kinds of product ranges that are displayed in-store and also on the online website store, I realized that 90% of the concentration is around still photography products, except Venice 1 and Venice 2. Why are you people still focused on the still photography zone rather than extending into the cinema one?**

We're gradually expanding towards cinema as well. You'll be glad to know that we're the official distributors for Aputure lights, which are cinema lights. Logistically we're situated a little far away from the cinema industries of Maharashtra, Punjab, and the South. Cinema isn't really thriving in the North right now and as of today the North is a still-dominated market. We're hoping once the film city of NOIDA ramps up, we can foray deeper into cinema. We have sold a few Venice camera pieces, but they aren't on display here.

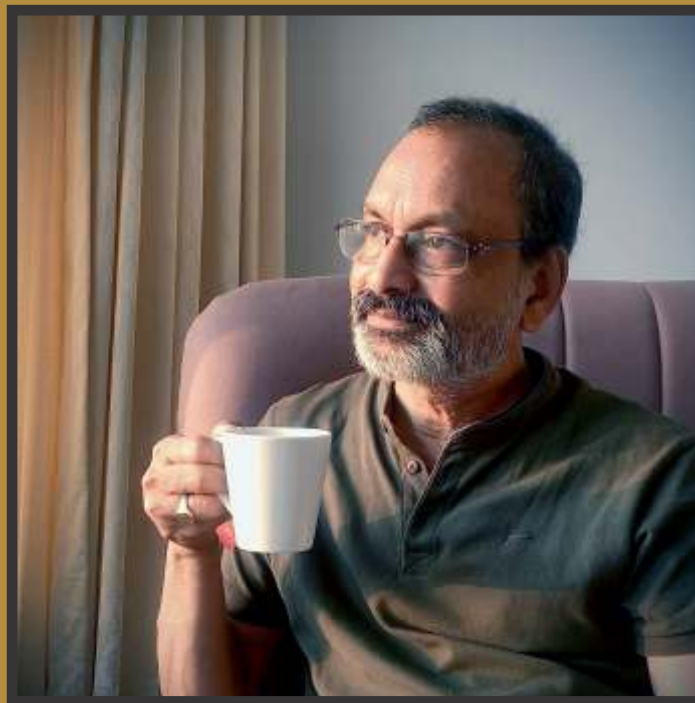
**You have a Sony showroom or lounge in the basement. Consequently, at least Sony could display all their cinema lines.**

Absolutely, we have Sony's entire cinema line on display here, except for Venice. We have some fantastic cinema cameras and lenses here including the FX 30, FX3, FX6, and FX9. The idea was that if a customer walks in looking for a 50mm lens, we're able to show them three varieties with the widest openings of say 1.8, 1.4, and 1.2. They may have read reviews about the 1.2 on the internet, but walking into the store and experiencing the lens is what will influence their purchase decision.

Ultimately, my expertise lies in identifying what my customer needs and offering them the best possible solution. □□□



## THE LAST MAN



Directed By: Satyabrata Rout

Samarth Theatre Group has created a unique space in Delhi for providing quality education for theatre. When I say quality education, it means many things which include inviting theatre practitioners from the field who have vast experience as directors or actors. I had an opportunity to witness their three productions. "Touch Me Not" brilliantly directed by Mahak Bhargava, a nonverbal students' play. "Chicken Tikka", a diploma production directed by Sandeep Rawat, the founder of the group and most recently I saw "The last man" inspired by George Orwell's 1984 directed by Dr. Satyabrata Rout.

Dr. Rout is one of the finest teachers and theatre directors of our times. His book on "Scenography" is the most outstanding book I have ever read on the subject. Though he has directed earlier many adaptations but adapting an international production in an Indian political context is always difficult, but Satyabrata did it effortlessly with his profound understanding of the theatre idiom.

Poster design is the most important part of any play which is highly ignored in India. The last man's poster makes you stop and think which describes the play in a haiku style poetry. The gesture of hand on the poster and man's face emerging out of shows how people in power-referred in the play as "Big Brother" are manipulating the public and their thinking and red blood eyes enhance this feeling that all the time you are under observation in some way or other in the Internet's time.

The opening sequence where people are searching with mobile phones creates a dramatic visual which sets the mood of the play. The black walls full of slogans and newspaper cuttings related to Indira Gandhi's emergency and other varied political events give you the political flavor of the play.

The opening lines of a political speech say everything when you hear these words from the diary where the protagonist of the play reads from his diary "War is peace, Freedom is slavery,

Ignorance is strength" which sounds funny but the satirical tone underlines the context that how the actual meaning in today's world is being distorted by our political leaders. It was interesting to note that how the Man's inner conscience - *Man ke Chokidar* is shown by characters wearing mask repeat the above lines in chorus by singing and underlining them.

Use of firebox, where Sumit Pradhan is typing and throwing into fire box is used symbolic. The way history is rewritten as per the current government's instruction is known to all of us. This unnecessary interference of the government is highlighted by an innovative dialogue sequence where you hear how the universal facts like-invention of airplane, when and why Taj Mahal was constructed is asked to replace by order of "Big B". It sounds funny when we hear that change it to-Taj Mahal was made by Big Brother in the memory of Country's martyrs. But its subtext is - one day our next generation may hear it and read it in the classroom textbooks.



During the play scenes are built wherein political events of our country like making of large statues and how the money is wasted are touched upon. Various political rallies which are named in the play as “*Nafrat ki sabha*” were worked out in detail with dialogue which sometimes makes people laugh but simultaneously make a serious point .

“Big Brother” caricature is introduced first as the pluck card becomes a brand on Cigarette / Liquor was an innovative way of saying that these people have converted themselves into big brands. “*Mera Desh Badal Raah hai*” chorus underlines and asks a big question : “are we really progressing” ? A catchy dialogue like “Hazar nuclear bomb cannot blast him” shows how powerful these political leaders have become in our country .

Dialogues like “we will meet where there will be light” give a subtle hint of torture rooms for people who protest against the government and laws. How media is used to build the brand of “Big Brother” when we hear that make a cover story for Time magazine's issue about big brother. The play also touches upon the current price hike of daily utility objects like tomatoes, onions and lentils and how the government fails to take corrective measures.

How the police machinery is used by people in power under the disguise of “Encounter” is also depicted in an interesting manner. The scene where they say how they are creating a new dictionary by having “No emotion only communication” and they want people to use the same words for a variety of emotions to express by adding a few adjectives as suffixes or prefixes. The actor elaborates with an example of how the word “Accha” can be used again and again to express different emotions like “*achan nahi*”, *bahut acha*, *bahut bahut achaa*”. It simply means destroying the variety of the ways people want to express in their own ways .

Happy song tunes like one from film “*Zameer*”- *Zindagi Hansne Gaane Ke Liye*, are used to emphasize that how people are engaged in frivolous activities rather than think about change and revolt is aptly highlighted by song's tune. And how our entertainment industry be it bollywood or any other wood can do that best is perhaps the idea of using this popular tune.

Futility of media is depicted by studio anchor show scenes and how they seek manipulated bites of local people was brilliantly enacted in Punjabi local- who says -*wadde wadde sarke la di aye, Metro pa dite ne*.

What makes common people happy by trivial things was developed in an interesting monologue scene where Brij Bhushan AAM AADMI says how – the gutter is build in the back side, Mall is build....is what progress is all about?

Most innovative scene of the play was where in pause mode you see one person eating and another one waiting for his leftovers to be thrown away so that hungry one can eat that leftover food .

The play is full of many comments and piggy riding over popular dialogues to suit the need of the situation like one from Om Shanti Om “*Itne shidat se paane ki koshish ki hai*, in context of acquiring the personal diary of the protagonist .

Objects of fishes, colorful long multipurpose duster for glass car dashboard were used effectively to create visuals without which the play will fall flat. The play is multi-layered with ample subtext being thrown in for most of the time. Most of the actors have performed very well in meaningful roles. “The Last Man” made with limited resources is as brilliant as any NSD production which is made with huge budgets.

by: **Naresh Sharma,**  
Editor & Publisher

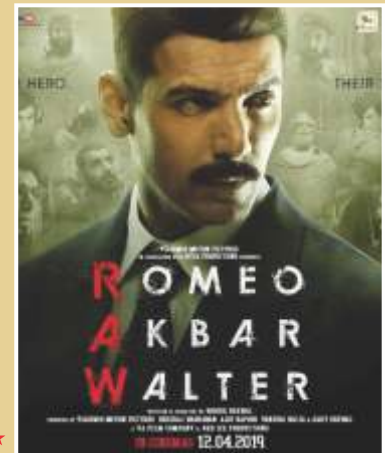
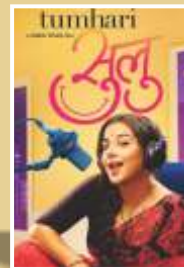


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# INDEX

DOP On Shooting USTAAD

04



***Pavan Kumar  
Pappula***

Interview with Director on Badhaai Do

12



***Harshavardhan  
Kulkarni's***

Interview with Technical Head of Camera Division,  
Futureworks Media Ltd.

18



***Nitin Yadav***

Interview With Costume Designer  
"Gangubai Kathiawadi"

22



***Sheetal Sharma***



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## VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHER

24 - CATEGORY- INDEX	AWARDEE	SELECTION PROCESS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR HINDI AD FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR HINDI FEATURE FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR THE WEB SERIES IN HINDI LANGUAGE	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER FOR THE WEB SERIES IN ANY LANGUAGE	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN TAMIL FEATURE FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN TELUGU FEATURE FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN MALYALAM FEATURE FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN KANNADA FEATURE FILM	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN BENGALI LANGUAGE	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHER IN MARATHI / PUNJABI / GUJRATI / ASSAMESE	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
COLORIST / DI ARTIST+ COMPANY OF THE YEAR	COMPANY + TECHNICIAN	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
SPECIAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR + COMPANY OF THE YEAR	COMPANY + TECHNICIAN	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
PROFESSIONALLY MAINTAINED "Light & Grip" EQUIPMENT RENTAL HOUSE	COMPANY	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
PROFESSIONALLY MAINTAINED "Cine Camera" RENTAL HOUSE	COMPANY	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
ASHOK MEHTA AWARD FOR THE ICONIC CINEMATOGRAPHER	CINEMATOGRAPHER	ONLINE VOTING BY CINEMATOGRAPHERS
EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARD : CONTRIBUTION TO THE CINEMATOGRAPHY.	COMPANY / INDIVIDUAL	EDITOR'S CHOICE
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WEDDING CINEMATOGRAPHY	COMPANY	ONLINE VOTING BY AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER
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## DOP *Pavan Kumar Pappula*

### On Shooting USTAAD

Pavan kumar pappula, a hyderabad based cinematographer, learned the art and craft of CINEMATOGRAPHY from CRAFT film school in Delhi. started assisting few cinematographers on various feature films in telugu, Hindi and in commercials.

He got the majot break second camera operator in big budget Hindi Netflix series called the rise of sivagami. he has shot many commercials, short films, corporate videos and documentaries. He narrates his Challenges to **LALIT RAO**, while shooting his debut feature film as cinematographer

**T**elugu film USTAAD, Director Phanideep and I have worked together on a number of short films, commercials, and corporate videos. Although the film's aesthetics and special effects are hard, he asked me to operate the camera when he was given the chance to direct his first movie.

USTAAD I worked as Independent DOP. The film is about a successful pilot, who was once a hot-blooded kid in his youth, is looking for his lost motorbike, with whom he spent his best moments in life, discovering his passion for flying and winning his beloved girl.

There is a crucial scene in the movie where the protagonist discovers his love for flying; it's a long and difficult scene for us to shoot where he chases the flight with the bike because we didn't have the big budget and luxury of hightech equipment, so we had to shoot in less time and use the indie style and give the maximum effect, and we had to shoot carefully because there are a lot of visual effects involved in it. The entire sequence takes place outside. Any cinematographer will tell you that shooting outdoors is difficult because we depends heavily on the sun's light, which changes drastically in quality and angle and must be matched for each shot. When visual effects are used in outdoor scenes, it can be more





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challenging because it looks unnatural and it is impossible to alter the light angle. For example, in the sequence below, which takes place on a hilltop and on a road, we shot it over the course of four days. In order to make the lighting appear natural, we divided the sequence into different segments and had to shoot each segment separately each day for four days.

We have tools and apps to make the life of cinematographers easier as technology has advanced over the years. I used the Lumos app to check the sun path for the specific day and even a month from this day where the sun will be, which made our work easier for the segments we divided. I also use Artemis Pro and Cadrage App for the digital viewfinder for the exact frame I would get, which makes my communication with the director easier and that ensured that all chief technicians, including the production designer and the visual effects supervisor, were on the same page of what was being captured.

For the protagonist Surya's house, we wanted to shoot in a real location rather than making a set though it's a easier for me to light it and shoot, we want his house to look real, so the director, me and production designer went to a small town and found the exact house we were looking for, but it was not a shooting friendly because it's a small house it was challenging for me to light it up and restricted me to find the good frames, and we have different timelines to shoot in the same, we have to show the difference in each time line ,that was a big challenging for me and the production designer, they did a great job there by using different wall colors and textures and propping. As a cinematographer I wanted to use different set of lenses and formats for the different timelines. I used



cooke s4i spherical for the period look and Atlas 2x anamorphic for the present timeline, the same frame from the same place gave me the different perspective with the different formats of lens and that gave me the look I wanted, For the





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lighting i wanted it look more real so i used more of practical light and simulated the effect of it with the little bit of boost in ambience light, so that later in post production, I can tweak here and there, For the heroine's house we didn't found the exact house we wanted so we used different houses for the different parts of the houses and make it look like the same house, that's even more difficult for us, we wanted have bright colors in her house and that reflects her character And there long balcony in her house we have multiple scenes there, that was a difficult location for me to light, we don't have practical lights there, so I asked for few street lights on the road to create a street light effect on their faces and i duplicated with few 5kw fresnels and gels, and i got some good contrast and rich blacks in the frame.

As the protagonist is pilot, we have a number of scenes in cockpit and passenger cabin, it is hell of expensive to shoot in a real flight for a longer period and difficult to get the permission from airport authorities, To shoot in real flight is hard to light and shoot also, so we decided to shoot in a set and we looked out for few cockpit sets that's already there in hyderabad and mumbai but we didn't like the sets, those were not looking real, so we decided to build a flight set in hyderabad according to our requirements, for that we saw different models of cockpits of real flights, simulators and made a 3d model of it, the most difficult part is we didn't want a static flight we wanted simulator kind of cockpit where you feel the real motion of the flight without





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moving a bit, we searched for the possible method to achieve that effect, we got to know the hydraulics will give the similar effect which can be placed under the flight set, but that's a pretty expensive method too so our PD came up with jugaad solutions and made manual metallic seesaw and with the help of few construction vibrators we got the similar effect, and we were happy, For me as cinematographer, it was challenging again to light and create lighting effects, I never shot in a cockpit set before so it was learning experience for me, i used no of Arri Skypanels s60c and s120cs to lit up the cockpit from outside and inbuilt lighting effects of Arri Skypanels helped me in creating the feel of the flight in the sky and i used few led panels in the cockpit for the ambience light, we had large

green screen to light, i used hundred of Multy 20 on a dimmer to evenly lit up, i used Atlas Anamorphic on Arri Alexa mini to shoot the cockpit to get wider yet claustrophobic effect, To get the in camera effect for the real flight motion and turbulence I tried and tested few methods by using different kinds of vibrators and few makeshift techniques but nothing worked out for us, and finally when we were mock shooting in cockpit i tried rhythmically shake the camera manually and we got the effect. All we had to do was adjust the effect to fit the situation.

We shot few scenes in a real airport for few hours, very few of the crew were allowed inside the airport, Director and me neither of us had the luxury of having as assistant there and we were on our own doing everything that reminded us our initial days of career where we shot short films with nothing in hand, even the director had hold a small led light during the shot, we had to be on our toes every second and get the scene properly

As we have the different timelines in the film i wanted to show the difference among them visually, so i used spherical and anamorphic lenses, they gave me the different perspectives, and i deliberately experimented with the aspect ratios, each time line had different aspect ratios, for example when the protagonist was kid i used 16:9 full screen format where you can see everything meaning he introduced to the world and experiencing, later as he grows as teenager the aspect ratio becomes 2.35:1 which is regular cinemascope format getting audience more into his life, the later stage of his more of his experiences so the aspect ratio I used was 2.55:1 vintage cinemascope which will make audiences go more and feel his life, Then when he becomes a pilot and the major crux of the film happens I used 2.76: aspect ratio where the audience feel they are with the Protagonist. As he grows the audience will go into his life and feel him.

**Pavan Kumar Pappula,**  
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Interview with Director  
**Harshavardhan Kulkarni's**  
 on **Badhaai Do**



**Why did you decide to make a film on lavender marriage?**

After my first film, I was looking for suitable concepts to bring on board, but nothing materialized as such. Most things offered to me by others after 'Hunterrr' were teasers or sex-based content. So, I was running away from all of that. That is when Junglee Pictures approached me with a project called 'Happily Married.' They wanted to make a series out of it, but I wasn't interested in the series. They again came back in 2018, with the offer to make the same concept into a film. The Producer & the supervising producer pitched me the concept. Just as a plot, two queer people- one gay guy and one lesbian girl getting married in a sham marriage, didn't really appeal to me - and 'lavender marriage' was a completely new term.

But while leaving the meeting, they told me a very crucial point that finally pushed me to say "yes". The whole life of the queer community revolves around coming out of the closet everyday, with the closet just getting bigger with time, and there's no end to it; while a heterosexual guy never experiences any such closet. This thought kept coming back to me. I could feel their loneliness and struggle, and that imagery of the sole closet. And I also liked the writing style of



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Akshat & Suman, the writers of *Badhaai Do*, hence I agreed to come on board.

**There's a stamp of 'you' in the film when it comes to dialogue writing. Were these dialogues prewritten when you received the script or did you receive a cinematic treatment, and the dialogues were added later?**

What drew me to the first draft was the way Akshat & Suman wrote the dialogues but overall I thought the script, the characters & their worlds needed to be re-imagined. So keeping the plot & the theme of a lavender marriage intact we rewrote the script with new characters & a completely different world. I worked with Akshat & Suman over this draft very closely so I guess my voice too crept in. But the way dialogues have been written it's completely Akshat's voice.

**You had two star casts in the film. What was your choice based on? Was it your association with Rajkummar Rao from *FTII* or was everything based on the characters' looks?**

Right now, there's a need of getting 'bankable' as well as good actors on board; and since this film is also bountied up a little more than 'Huntern', it also had to sit in this parameter. Raj is a very fine actor and he can also shoulder a film - he's apt for the kind of complexities present in the

character that he played. The character of Shardul is always scared about his own identity, and he's very cocky and stupid at the same time. Only a great actor could pull that off. There was nobody other than Raj that we had thought of, even while writing. On the other hand, I had watched two films of Bhumi by then, and I was superbly impressed with her. I loved her in the film 'Dum Laga Ke Haisha' - I watched it whenever it came on TV. I had also watched 'Sonchiriya', and it was an amazing performance for me - it was hard to believe that she's from Mumbai. Thus, I was sure that she could do justice to this character - the bold and feisty woman who's vulnerable at the same time because she always hides her sexual orientation which is a part of her identity. There's a facade of being aggressive and confident, whereas deep down, there's questioning every time. If somebody would have delivered the way the lines are, it would have been very boring - it would have just been the characters which we've already seen before. I sensed that she could be perfect with the vulnerability part also. That's why I had made my decision.

**You opted for a completely new face for the third cast - the girl from the northeast who plays Bhumi's love interest. How did her casting take place?**

This goes back to the writing process actually. This girl (Chum's character) could've obviously not belonged to the northeast. Basically, we were discussing the character and where her background should be when Akshat came up with this idea. Akshat had also written 'Badhai Ho' - it was his first film, where he had created this character Rene, who was also from the northeast. But then, everybody had gone in for the bankable thing, and they had ended up with Sanya. Hence, Akshat had always wanted to have a character from the northeast in his scripts, and it's a cool thing to do. I don't see many northeastern people in the western part of India, but they're there in Delhi, or Dehradun, and many other places. So, when he suggested it, I agreed at once, because it would add more color to the film and it would be a lovely way of normalizing the northeastern people in our world. They've never got enough representation in Indian films. Hence, this character was written as a northeastern character only. Also, there were so many factors that revolved around her just because she's from the northeast - a lot of comical things too. We could not change that. When we auditioned, it was going to be a completely fresh cast. But right now, after this film, Chum would probably be a known actor from the northeast.







**What are the senses by which a queer person can recognize another person of his category in the crowd? There's this interaction scene in your film, where the girls interact visually first before conversing like, "do you belong to my category"? What does your research say, in context to this?**

We had a consultant who's from the queer community - Manish Gaikwad. We had spoken to him, and there were several other friends also, who suggested it. There's this term called 'gaydar' - it's a combination of 'gay' and 'radar', and they've this highly strong 'gaydar' or intuition that does the sensing. That's where we took it from, but we didn't need to go deeper with this. In the scene, she just senses with her 'gaydar', and then there's this flirtatious smile in the end- it's like a cute first-meet scene of a rom-com where two people of the same sex fall in love. But to people's amusement, this happens in a laboratory when she comes for a stool test. Again, when she turns around and gives her a 'bye' gesture, there's a sense of attraction there. However, this 'gaydar' later becomes functional with Guru and Raj too - the lawyer can sense that this cop is queer, which is why he plays with him.

**Coming to actor handling, especially with people like Rajkummar Rao.**

**There's a scene with this dialogue- "Raksha bhi kar lete hai." Did you give any special instruction regarding his supposed body language or dialogue delivery in that scene? How did the chemistry between Rajkummar Rao as an actor and you as the director work out?**

As I said earlier, the script was very detailed. Everything was there for the actor to understand how and where it goes. But Raj had to have a certain body type because of the character's past - he wanted to be Mr. India. That was a big physical changeover for him. But because he was already built like that, it helped to develop the kind of body language needed for the character. It was a very alpha-male kind of a character, and he also had this beard which somehow helped him to hide behind the facade of heterosexuality that he posed to the world. He didn't want to come out of it. Moreover, Raj as an actor is very instinctive. As he talks or walks, he makes all the dialogues his own. He is very spontaneous as an actor - he lives in the moment. He improvised a lot while playing his character, and Akshat and I were always there. I'm never averse to improvisations unless it goes wrong with the character. So, I used to interfere only when the improvisation

went out of character. Otherwise, it used to be in character mostly- it would rather turnout better. So, I didn't cut at that particular dialogue "Hum raksha bhi kar lenge." It was kind of a proposal going on and both of them were inside their characters. It was Raj who improvised this particular dialogue during the scene. It wasn't written in the script. And when he said it - the entire set cracked up laughing after I called 'cut'.

**Every film of yours has a thumb impression of 'your' sense of humor, and it shows in this film too. You can have it in dialogues, of course, but it's even there in the picturization of your songs. How did you inculcate humor in songs?**

Correct. But as you know, lip-sync songs are one of the biggest challenges that a FTII student faces. It's because we get trained in a different kind of cinema. But then, we all try to make something palatable to a larger audience, a lip-sync song, for example. But we actually struggle - that doesn't come naturally to us. But I had to do one finally- and it was the first experience. My idea was that if we don't do a little more justice to it, it'll look like any run-of-the-mill song. Like, your film is running on a certain note, and suddenly a song comes in between - it suddenly sticks out like a sore thumb. This happens to a lot of films. But in works of filmmakers who've a great visual sense and song picturization sense, like Sanjay Leela Bhansali, it never feels like it's not their voice. So, it was all about bringing our voice into it; and it had to be funny because nobody is invested in the real marriage, especially the couple. Actually, when I had nothing to do during the lockdown and since I'm not much into social media, I got hooked on these TikTok videos- they were really funny for me and I just enjoyed watching them. Thus, I wanted to bring that whole thing like a sham, or a comedy, into the film. I even tried shooting it in 19 frames so that it looked like a TikTok Chaplinesque thing, which we didn't succeed in. But Vijay Ganguly



was the choreographer, and the way he came up with so many gags was simply outstanding. Everything just felt correct with the note of our film.

**There must be a lot of time and money invested into the love parade that happens at the end. Was it a kind of compulsion to bring up the scale, or was it the culmination of your story that would just fit into the storyline?**

No, the song wasn't made to increase the scale. It was there in the script itself. The whole motive was just to normalize and to get the audience into it. That was why the treatment of comedy was taken up. But suddenly, in the last 20 minutes, it just shifts its gears and we experience a beautiful emotional ride. When both of them seek out to each other's families, there's a kind of euphoria that was needed. The girls are now looking for a house for themselves, implying that the couple's going to separate. That's why the pride parade is done. There again, when a Guru teases him to "Come on this side, why are you standing on the border? Join us", all that he does is that he takes a mask and wears it. It was supposed to be a euphoric moment for everyone - like an anthem. But it doesn't end there. Our life doesn't end with a heroic thing wearing a batman kind of a mask. It comes back to the legalization of adoption for gays and lesbians. Therefore, it needed a big swell to bring the audience back to reality, and that was the writing style. It's all about how you take it to a greater level, which is why it was shot in such a way. Now, let me just shock you with the details - there were only 300 people in that whole pride parade, and we shot the whole sequence in just 6 hours. We were in dearth of time. Since it's a low-budget film, the flyover could be blocked only for 7 hours. Even then, there was a lot of chaos because the flyover that we blocked for one whole Sunday was one of the main connectors in that area. Therefore, we had to complete it in time. We were thoroughly planned to still manage that scale. We had 2-3 cameras and drones.

That scale was important to make it feel euphoric - to actually make you want to clap and celebrate with the whole thing. However, pride parade happens in Dehradun, and we had 50 people from the queer community who came from Delhi for the filming of the parade that day - to bring authenticity to it.

**Where exactly did you shoot it?**

On the Dehradun flyover.

**What is the people's reaction to it?**

While filming, people were doubtful if there has ever been a pride parade in Dehradun. But we had extensively researched, and there is a pride parade that happens in Dehradun every year. However, things changed

after the release. Yesterday itself, I got a big visual that this year a pride parade just happened in Lucknow too and they've used our posters and our style of balloons. They've dedicated it to 'Badhai Do.' Hence, that's an achievement - if the film can affect the masses, especially the community. It also matters a lot the way it impacts the whole view of the society - how the heterosexuals are looking at it. Many people have texted us that this film gave them the courage to tell their parents, and the parents also responded nicely - they realized the pain that their child goes through. Hence, it has worked both ways; and if your film can achieve that, it surpasses everything.

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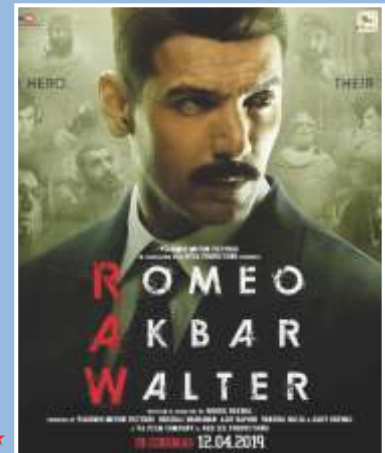
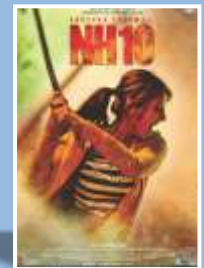
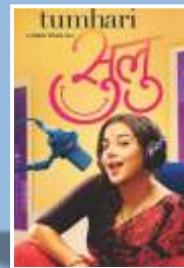


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# Interview with *Nitin Yadav*

Technical Head of Camera Division  
Futureworks Media Ltd.







### Why did you join FutureWorks?

In terms of career growth opportunities, FutureWorks is the number one VFX company to work for in India. Having been part of this world for nearly two decades, I've witnessed their continuous commitment to the film and television industry, and I am incredibly proud to be part of this prestigious organization.

I can honestly say I'm so impressed with every project we've delivered. It's fantastic to see how the company constantly grows, develops and produces innovative, boundary-pushing services to our clients around the world.

### Can you describe your role?

I am the Technical Head of the Camera Division at FutureWorks. My role has a wide variety of responsibilities, from training and upskilling my team, to overseeing the ongoing technical support for our global projects. Our shoots take place all over the world, and we work with clients such as Netflix, Amazon, Sony, Disney Hotstar etc.

Essentially, I'm responsible for ensuring everything regarding cameras and capturing footage runs smoothly. This includes enabling my team to reach their full potential and produce worldclass results.

### What's your day-to-day like?

My day-to-day priority is taking care of equipment technicalities to ensure we're providing the best service possible for our clients. I also onboard and train our entry-level attendants to get to grips with the basics and help more senior members expand their skill set when it comes to checking and servicing equipment. I am responsible for ensuring the items used for each project are in top quality condition, so it's crucial I act as a gatekeeper, meticulously checking my team's standard of work before anything is used with or around clients.

Another part of my role includes close collaboration with the Director of Photography (DoP) to create standard





operating procedures to ensure continuity across projects and achieve stellar results.

**What would you say is the most rewarding part of your job and why?**

It's hard to pick a single aspect because each individual element contributes to the final result. If I had to pick just one, it's being able to interact and work with some of the most talented DOPs in the world. The knowledge passed on and subsequent experiences are pivotal to using and introducing new techniques and pushing boundaries within the industry.

**What significant changes have you noticed in the VFX industry since you started your career?**

When I began my career 16 years ago, the VFX industry was only just starting to emerge in India. Since then, I've seen it flourish and grow from strength to strength. Now, every single shot can be improved with VFX. It also helped put India on the cinematic map, giving a tremendous boost to the technical side of Bollywood. I love being able to impress and delight the audience with the spectacular effects that are achievable today.

**What do you think the future looks like?**

Both for Indian cinema and the VFX industry as a whole, the future is bright. The huge growth and advances we've seen aren't slowing down anytime soon. With new technology improving VFX capabilities, sound edits and excellent plot lines, the difference in the quality of productions is astounding.

**Where do you draw inspiration from?**

Personally, I find the constant advances of technology incredibly inspiring—the potential that new technology unlocks is limitless. These developments enable us to become more efficient in the way we work, sparing resources and reducing expenses in the long run.



**Nitin Yadav**  
Technical Head.  
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# GANGUBAI KATHIAWADI



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A portrait of Sheetal Sharma, a man with a dark beard and mustache, wearing a blue button-down shirt over a black t-shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with a person walking in the distance.

## Interview with *Sheetal Sharma* Costume Designer "Gangubai Kathiawadi"

### **What was Bhansali's initial brief to you as a costume designer?**

I was unaware whether I was working for an Alia Bhatt film, or a Sanjay Leela Bhansali film, when I took the project. I had got a sudden call from Sanjay sir's office, and I had thought it might be a film under his production house. When I met him he just said that he's looking at the 1950s and 1960s Bombay, and he wants to make the film as beautifully as possible in the realistic form. He referred to Raja Ravi Verma's paintings for me to develop the film's color scheme; and just five minutes before he was about to leave he just added that "Okay. This film is about brothels and prostitutes." It came as a surprise to me, because I had presumed it to be a romantic film in Bombay's backdrop.

As I had also done "Manto", I could see a lot of similarities in their contexts - the space was dark and Manto himself talked a lot about the lives of prostitutes. Therefore I got back

to Manto and rethought what he saw when he was in Bombay. That became my first reference point. Bhansali sir wanted to showcase a version of the brothel which is beautiful in its regressive form - expression of pain in a poetic form. He explained me things from the point of view of ghazals and poetry. He had narrated the brothels with reference to Begum Akhter's music - the simultaneous existence of agony alongside beauty. We're always preoccupied with gritty and crass visuals of brothels in our head, but in this film they're depicted as Raja Ravi Verma's paintings - beautiful women sitting on a swing, three women sitting on a doorway, etc. There's always this Indianness, and every color is used in a diffused form. There's nothing in the film which stands out to your eyes, it always lets you feel connected. Nowhere did he show brutality, expect the situational ones that were needed to build the character in the way it was written.

### **Did he want to portray the brothel in both aesthetic and realistic sense?**

Yes, he has used a lot of floral prints throughout the film. You see all the brothel women in floral prints. Flowers are beautiful even when they dry or are kept inside books - the red becomes brown, and the pink becomes peach. It added to the color palette of the film.

### **Did he provide you with any not-to-do list?**

There's always a story happening in Sanjay sir's frames. He doesn't only talk about the main actors in the frame, but includes everything in it. He wanted to retain the old world charm of Madhubala, but at the same time he didn't want anything in the film to look black, deep green or deep maroon. If you consider Kamli's character, in spite of being in the business for 20-25 years, there's an innocence in her every time she smiles or talks, and there's also this pain in her eyes when she dies. Again,





when you see Gangu and Kamli together in the rope skipping scene, we behold a beautiful girl bond. If you connect this to a painting, you directly see a form of Raja Ravi Varma - the girls are touchy, and they sit with each other very hand-on-hands.

**What about the darker shades that are still visible in the frames?**

Yes, in the art or in the corridors; and that's intentional. When you see a woman walking in peach or green through a dark corridor, you automatically get a beautiful visual. Besides, you also emphasize on the whole essence of "Kaale Gulaab" in it. A lot of such poetic forms has been used throughout, like the song of her entry when she comes into the brothel. The prostitutes, for sir, represent flowers. No matter if they're thrown into the gutter or left to dry on a bookshelf, they remain beautiful - that was his sole point.

**Is there a different costume scheme that you took care of while designing for the flashback and the present sequences in the film?**

Yes, our film was already dealing with pastels and floral prints. But we were to get into the space of Kathiawad, which is very colorful, but nobody uses floral there. Also, when we showed the family and the entire Garba, it's a twilight. Therefore to get the Gujarat feel, sir decided to stick to maroon, bottle green, brown or mustard yellow. I also used



'ajrak' on everybody's costumes in the song- it's a 4000-year old textile, with geometrical prints. Hence there was a deeper color scheme for Gujarat, and there was this flowerish scheme for Kamathipura in Bombay. But overall you've to stick to pastel shades, because two hours of the film is only about brothels.

**How did you decide the color and style of clothes in the brothel sequences, especially for Gangu, so that she fits into the underdog character that she plays and also retains the aura of the star that Alia is?**

The scene where Alia stands outside calling for customers, was the first outfit I ever made for this film. Sir had only asked me to get what I think would be a beautiful scheme. I made two versions - one version of a slightly deeper brown with green; and the other of a dulled down mustard yellow with a teal. We were trying to crack Gangu's look first, so that the other characters automatically fall into place. The first outfit that I had tried on her became the film's poster- the one where she sits in a yellow and teal color blouse, and that's when sir had decided to stick to the English color palette in the film. He wanted to bring out in the film the elegance of the 60s' via prostitutes. Sir wanted to explore 'that' Bombay, when women started coming out in sarees, wearing sunglasses, holding a purse. Women liberation came in the 60s and in his viewpoint, these are also working women- just like doctors or engineers. They dress up and

sell their bodies, and he urges people to see it as a profession. Hence, there's not one scene in the film that you'll feel uncomfortable to watch with your family. In "Chameli", they showed Kareena in royal blue and red. There's also a stark difference in the color scheme of "Mandi" and "Gangubai"- "Mandi" too had everything bright, which Sanjay sir strictly completely abstained from.

We also had to stay core connected that these women are prostitutes, living in a brothel, and that's where a lot of inputs came in from the hair and makeup department. We had references regarding how women did hair in the 50s and 60s - the finger waves or the little curls, and how they wore 'gajra' on it. Keeping intact the 'gajra' and the waves, we had set it in a brothel. Thus, we added 'kumkum' on some and a slightly glittered 'bindi' on the rest, along with colored bangles. If the outfits were pista green in color, then the bangles would be red, yellow or green. The hair and makeup played a very important role in building these characters. Without the textured hair or the kohl in their eyes, without the small flowers they'll put on, or how that 'gajra' will hang, their look will be incomplete. He thought a lot on how to break the day to evening - in daytime the girls are casually together without any makeup, but in the evening they're all decked up with beautifully done hair and flowers. He arranged the whole thing deliberately, to show that these women live together as in a hostel or a PG accommodation. They do their



house chores together, and then in the evening they go for their work. The color scheme for every scene ranged from the casualness of a brighter color to the dullness of a muted pastel color.

#### **What's an English color palette?**

The Renaissance paintings always have a pastel color space. For example, you'll always see a beautiful rose-white pink instead of 'raani' pink; or with green, it'll always be a pistachio green instead of olive green.







**What was the main idea behind having white saree and blouse for the 'gharwali' phase of Gangu, while earlier gharwalis like Seema Bhargav wore normal clothes? Did you use subtle colors or special textiles which merged with the white, that the audience has failed to distinguish?**

Hussain Zaidi's book has only 25-30 pages on Gangubai's life. It's very brief, but the most prominent thing mentioned is that she wore a lot of whites and gold. Therefore we had to stick to white, as it's a real-life character. But we didn't know the textile that Gangu wore, as there's no photographic reference of her except the only old-age picture where she's about 60 years old. Hence we took cinematic liberty there- I could play with whites. Sanjay sir himself wears a lot of white, then Manto also wore white, and now Gangu also wears only white. I just tried to discover the reason behind white being such a substantial color - it can show power, angst, and agony and at the same time, it also

represents calmness. At first, I was like, "Sir, you're making my work so monotonous", and he would say, "How can you say that white is only one tone?" But I was still worried because it was about the lead character and also because, white isn't a very auspicious color in India - people still relate it to widows. Therefore every textile in India, when we talk about white, they don't have it. If I need a Banarasi, they'll have a peach or a light yellow one, but they'll never have white. At first I had taken it very easily, but sourcing white sarees gradually became the most difficult task for me to accomplish. There were 45 changes in the film, which meant, you should have at least 40 sarees. I researched a lot- how a 'khadi' and a 'khadi linen' as a textile has different whites; how a Lucknowey saree has different textures on cotton and on 'malmal'. We see Gangu wearing a Lucknowey saree in the first poster, and it was made from 'kota-dori' - a popular translucent textile. We don't generally see a Lucknowey embroidery on a 'Kota dori',

but we got it made specially. The fabric was a little transparent and had very fine stripes and checks on it, that helped in getting a nice diffused white. But when you see the clothes in real, it still look ordinary. It was Sudeep da's magic that added life to it. When Gangu walked out of the car in that white, it looked like a dream.

**What was your interaction with Sudeep Chatterjee about the color scheme and DI? Did everything go as planned?**

We had our first meeting at Sanjay sir's office. I had never seen Sudeep da's face before- I had only heard his name in various film credits and adored him ever since. He was the one who broke it to me that day, that my outfit would be tried on Alia. I had also showed him the colors. But the best part with him was that, he used to be a part of every color scheme meeting that Sanjay sir had with me. Sir used to call for discussions with Sudeep da, Amit da and Subu da, and I came in with swatches or colors I was going to



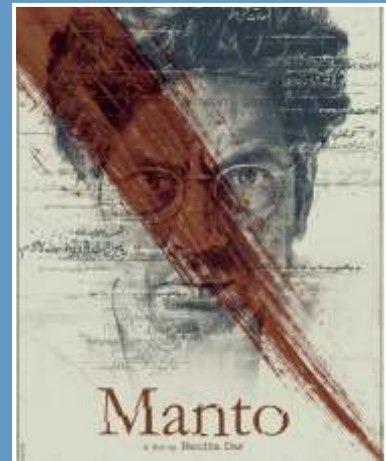
stick to inside or outside the brothel, or with the textures of embroideries that I planned to use. We were in sync with each other from beginning till end. After sir would frame the characters everyday and Sudeep da completed his lighting setup, Sudeep da would just turn up and tell me, "Sheetal, you've done a fabulous job. Look at these colors - they've put on life in my frame." I used to doubt at times if he's being real, because I was going pretty basic. They've made "Padmaavat" so grand and beautiful, and it's 'that' Sudeep Chatterjee complimenting me now, that "these prostitutes are looking beautiful".

#### What about the shift of colors during shoot?

We never used the prints the way they had come. We did 'chae-paani' and potassium dips to the textiles, so that their colors fade away. After the dips we scrubbed them with sand paper, to get the required texture of the fabric. If there were 300 women in a brothel scene, each of their outfits was treated with potassium and sand paper scrub. I didn't want anything to look fresh in the frame. When you put the fresh garments into chae-paani, a slight beigeness develops on the fabric with the aging of the clothes. On top of it, there was scrubbing on every outfit. It resulted in a bobbly texture, with its smoothness lost. Though we had fixed color palettes for every scene, the potassium dipping and scrubbing actually helped in the natural desaturation of the colors. Also, Sudeep da's diffused light setup on the roof which completely covered the entire set, had already given the frames the Raja Ravi Verma quality; and it was Subu da's and Amit da's unified opinion that the brothel would be blue in color. Therefore when I saw the film before and after DI, there were negligible changes.

#### How did you decide Afshan's costumes, to give him the required run-of-the-mill look and matching him opposite Alia at the same time?

I haven't gone completely periodic with the look of this character. Afshan



in the film is a 'gali ka tailor'- he belongs to the real world; while Gangu looks slightly more matured - she's 4-5 years elder to this guy. Thus we kept a casualness in him - his hair's like a Dev Anand fan, and there's always a slight bend in his body when he sits. I completely avoided the high waist pants and tucked in shirts that was popular in the 60s. I just kept it easy breezy - his kurta has a flow, it never sticks to the body, and it's translucent. Gangu's attraction to this guy since his entry scene is mainly because he doesn't belong to the brutal world. He looks romantic in the film. During the song he wears maroon- it's the color of love and the color of blood; while she's in pure white maintaining the contrast.

**Afshan has different costumes when he takes measurement in his entry scene, compared to when he's in love later. What factors did you keep in**

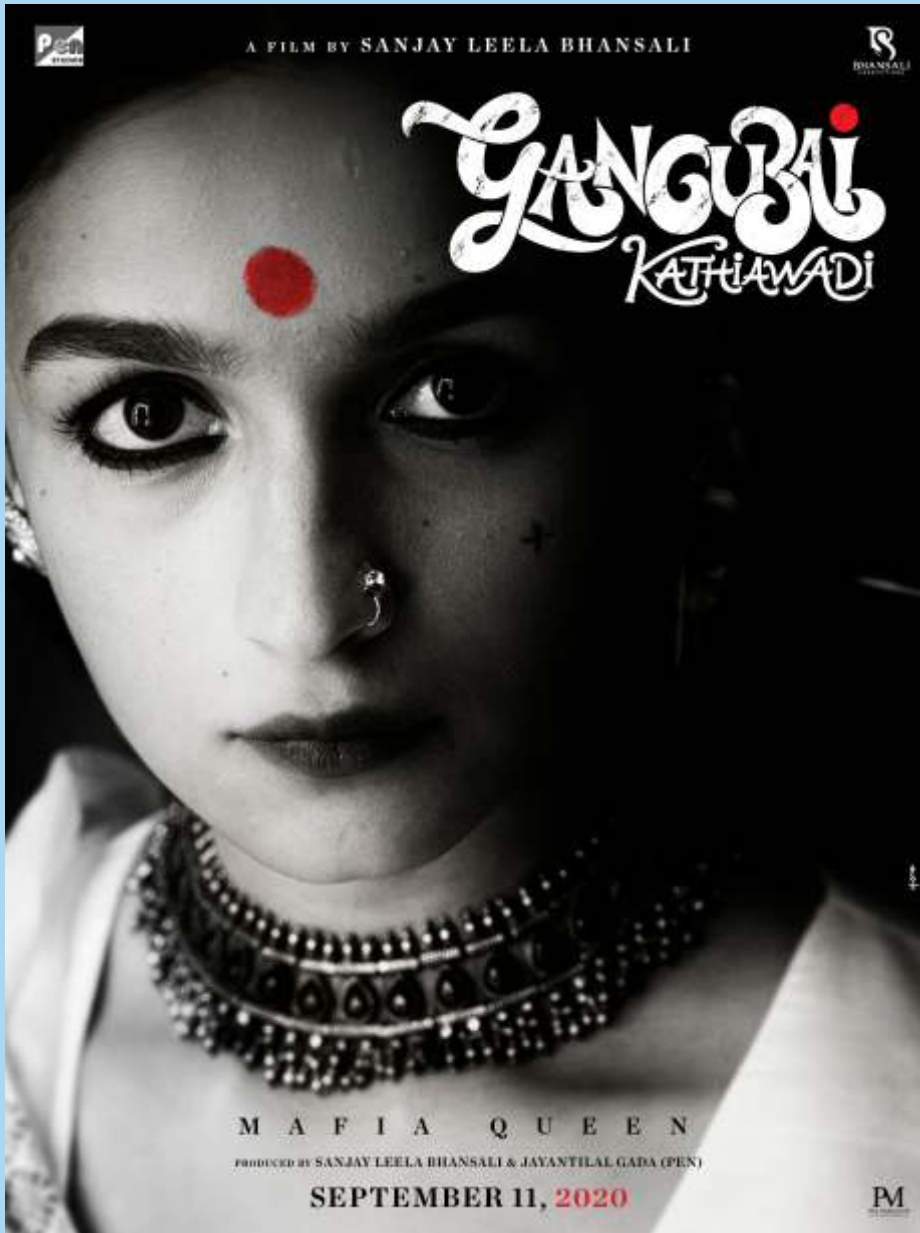
#### mind to keep the difference noticeable?

When Afshan walks in for the first time, you see a sweet handsome guy in a translucent white 'malmal' kurta, who Gangu gets induced to. This is where Gangu's poetic explanation concerning the choice of "safed" comes in. Both of them are in white, and he also sells white to her. But she's the madam of a brothel, whereas this guy's a common man who comes in like an angel in her life, spreading happiness. Thus this scene is dominantly white - to show calmness, and the beginning of a beautiful chapter in both lives.

#### How did you decide the costumes for Razia Bai as a transgender, maintaining the aura of the character and keeping the man versus woman streak intact?

Sanjay sir's only instruction was that he wanted Razia Bai to look like a





royalty in her. She also wears glasses and heavy jewellery. She's territorial and overconfident. It is the restaurant scene where Vijay Raaz comes face-to-face for the first time, and you feel the power scare in her. It just shows the social difference between a commoner rising to power and a prevalent queen.

**What are the factors that you took care of while designing the film's costumes, so that it doesn't dominate the frame but still looks realistic and aesthetic?**

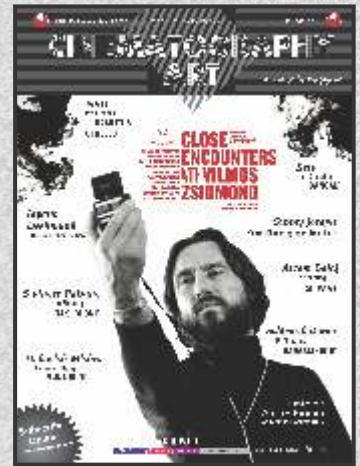
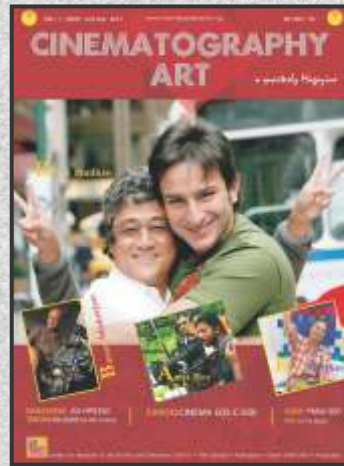
For Gangu, white was my sole inspiration. Therefore it was Madhubala and Meena Kumari who I looked upon as references - their hair texture, the braid that they wore; but we also maintained the feel of the 'madam of a brothel' at the same time. We took a little liberty there- the lip color which she wore, the 'kajal' in her eyes, and the gold tooth to portray her obsession with gold. Despite being a brothel woman, she's elegant in the way she carries her purse, or puts her 'pallu' on her head and tucks its end into her blouse. There have been some 2 lakh videos of young girls of 16-17 years wearing sarees, which I've been tagged on in Instagram. It is such a nice thing to see saree getting back to fashion, with the film being able to connect to everybody. Despite being the story of a brothel madam, people have accepted it so beautifully.



powerful lady. Firstly, for powerful women in the 50s and 60s it was all about saree; secondly, she was an MLA of Kamathipura; and third, she's a transgender. Unlike we usually see transgenders in sarees, coming and clapping, with a wig on their heads, sir strictly wanted Vijay Raaz to look like himself. He has such a menacing personality that every time he comes on screen, you can't move your eyes from his face. We didn't use any wig on him. It was a 50s bob-cut kind of a hair; and I had decided 'garrara' on him. It's about a 26-27 year old girl versus a lady who has been winning elections for so many years. Therefore I stuck to garraras to dig out that opulence of







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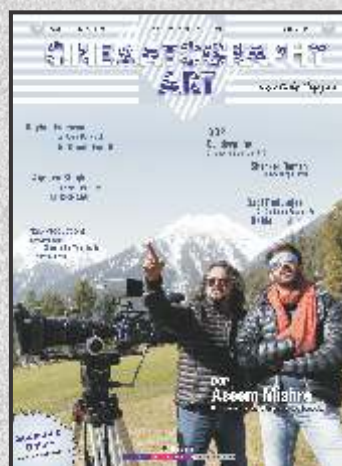
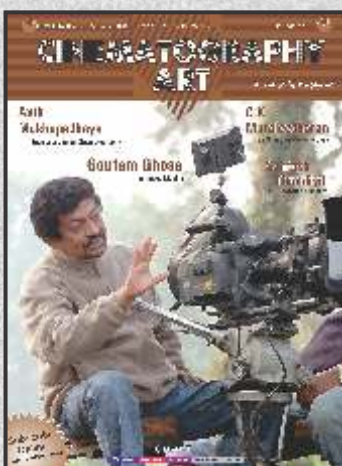
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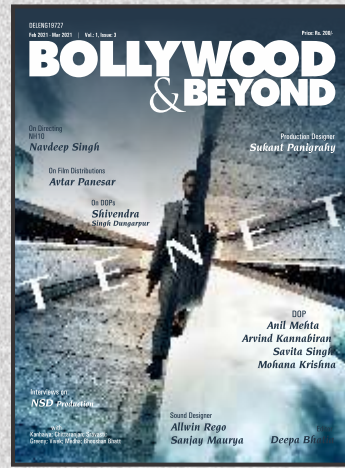
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