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CINEMATOGRAPHY ART

a quarterly Magazine

Wildlife Filmmaker
Nallamuthu

Interview with DOP
Modhura Palit

Interview with DOP
Amitabha Singh

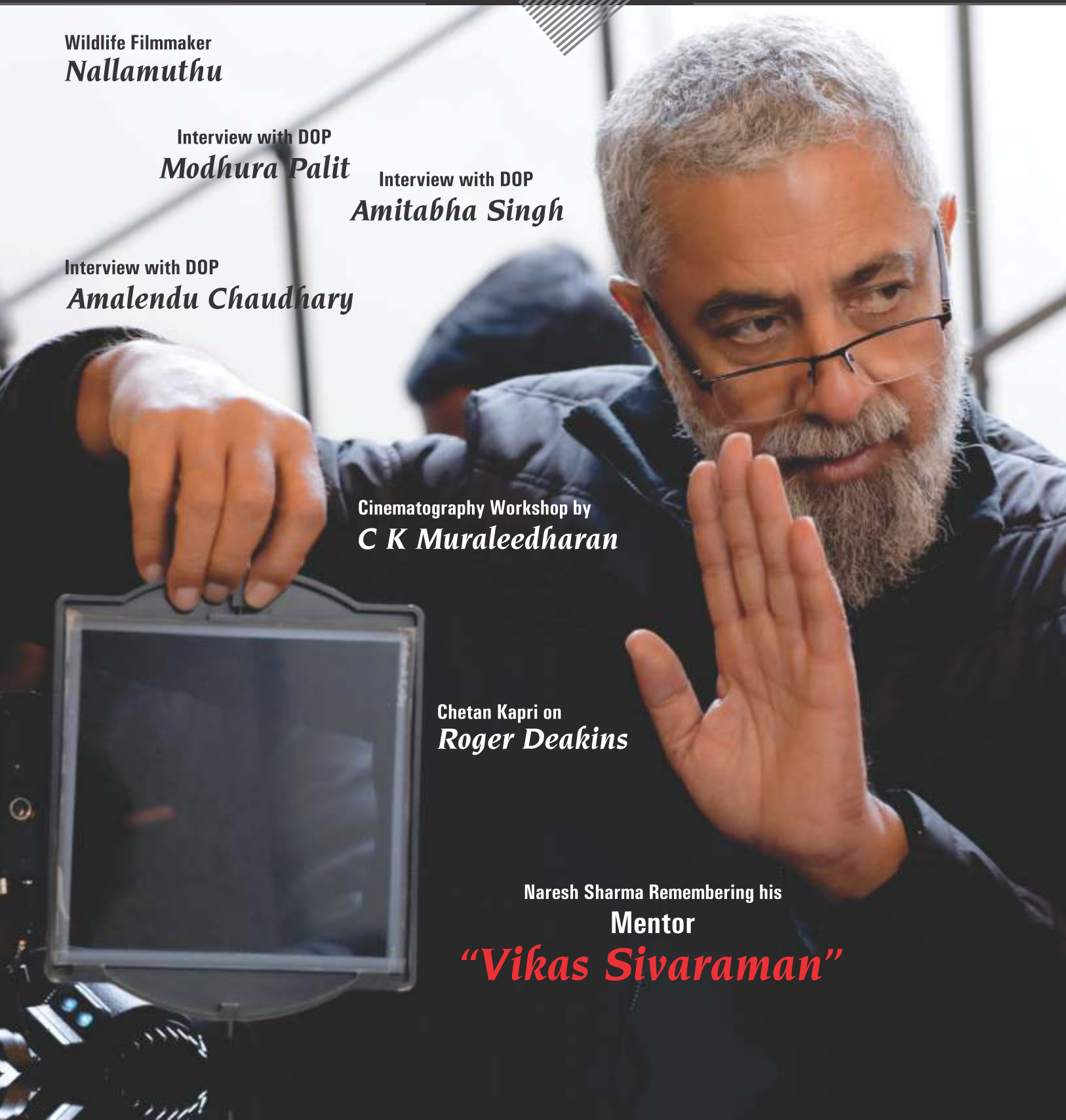
Interview with DOP
Amalendu Chaudhary

Cinematography Workshop by
C K Muraleedharan

Chetan Kapri on
Roger Deakins

Naresh Sharma Remembering his
Mentor

"Vikas Sivaraman"





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Editor's Desk



Greetings!

In this edition, we have various distinguished cinematographers talking about their work process and experiences. We have a discussion with Sudhir Chaudhary about his work in various films, such as "Ujda Chaman", and the challenges he faced while working on certain projects and how he overcame them. Amitabha Singh offers insights on shooting "Panchayat", a series that is loved by everyone. Subbian Nallamuthu shares his experiences working as a wildlife cinematographer and director.

We also got to interview Saumyananda Sahi, the whizz kid on the block! He gets candid about shooting "Ghode Ko Jalebi Khilane Le Ja Riya Hoon". Aseem Mishra talks to us about working on one of the most loved movies of 2021, "83". Supratim Bhol shares his work experience as well on "Black and White".

We believe in encouraging and recognizing great works done by women cinematographers as well. Modhura Palit, winner of the prestigious Angenieux Special Encouragement Award at Cannes 2019 talks about her working process. We also interviewed Reshmi Sarkar about her recent work on "Sher Shivraj", a Marathi big budget film.

C.K. Muraleedharan, an established DOP who has worked on films like "3 idiots", "PK", "Lage Raho Munna Bhai", conducted a workshop at CRAFT Film School. One of the participants recollects his experience of attending the workshop. Apart from cinematographers, we have added a new section in our magazine called — "Masters of Theatre Lighting", where we have interviewed Souti Chakraborty in this series.

Mentors matter a lot, as they help you grow and become better at your art. I recollect my experience of working as an assistant to my mentor, Vikas Sivaraman, who is still among the top 10 cinematographers of India. We also have Roger Deakins, a prominent international cinematographer who is known for his work in "No Country for Old Men", "1917", "Blade Runner 2049" among various others. Chetan Kapri, FTII cinematography student, discusses the lighting of an innovative scene from Blade Runner 2049.

Theatre section has been moved to our new magazine — Bollywood & Beyond. However, we still have one review — "YKL" directed by Hema Singh.

Hope you enjoy this issue!

Cheers!!

Naresh Sharma

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Interview with photographer

Stephanie Cornfield

Stephanie Cornfield likes the adrenalin. As the LA Times photographer who covers Cannes film festival, she's living it. Stephanie has attended all major film festivals. She got an award in Venice for best portrait of the actor Andy Lau. Selected as one of the best photographers in Cannes in the section "Behind the lens", her photographs have appeared in international publications such as 'The Guardian', 'Le Monde' and so on. Stephanie Cornfield had private sessions with personalities such as Alejandro Iñárritu, Matt Damon, Denis Villeneuve, Jack Nicholson, Kirk Douglas, David Lynch, Sydney Poitier, Shia La Beouf and many others gaining entrance to the Hollywood stars homes. She had a particular encounter with Iggy Pop backstage, vibrant memory of her rockstar photographer's days. In India, she has photographed 'Kumbh', the gathering of holy men in India. Now, she has made Mumbai, her new home in order to break into the other showbiz 'wood' "Bollywood". She really likes the challenge as she is out of her comfort zone. She spoke to film critic Lalit Rao (FIPRESCI) on 17/05/2021 during a Zoom session for 'Bollywood and Beyond' magazine.

How did you decide to work in Mumbai? How did the idea of working in Mumbai begin?

It all started in Cannes in 2012 when Anurag Kashyap presented Gangs of Wasseypur. Some PR person sent me messages. I thought ok since I was planning to live in India. I thought I will check it out. At that time I had no idea of who Anurag Kashyap was. When I came to the Indian pavilion, I was introduced to him, I thought I could ask him his number to show him my work as it was my plan to come to Mumbai for work. Back in Paris, I watched his movie Gangs of Wasseypur. I realized who he was and how talented he was. So once I reached Mumbai, I told a producer friend that I met Anurag in Cannes and she kind of discouraged me like this guy is too busy, it will be very hard for you to get in touch with him. Nevertheless, as I don't take no for an answer. I managed to track him down. The rest is history.

How difficult or easy it is to work with film stars?

It's the actor's profession to strike a pose which is easier. To direct a director is more challenging. When the person you are photographing surrenders to the camera that is the most interesting. The film director most of the time is in control.

So it is interesting to try to provoke, to enter into another process.

What does the typical day of a professional photographer look like?

As a freelance photographer, when I work on a movie, I work every day depending on the length of the movie, or maybe for a few days here and there. Otherwise I would work for a film festival covering generally for LA times or some other outlet. Most people don't know the backstage story. It is real work. You wake up early in the morning. As I'm also doing private sittings with the people, I have to have the feel of the movie because I have an interaction with the person I am photographing. It is not that I am on the red carpet. I have a particular connection with the person. I do my homework. I watch movies if I can sometimes. I do some research and do the location scouting. It takes a lot of time. It is not just the glitter. When I am in Kumbh, I work particularly in at night as I am very fond of working during nights. I work with concentration. I completely dedicate myself for a period of time.

Does gender play any role in the photography business? Does it matter that you are a male photographer or a woman photographer?

I can see the difference. For example, there are a lot of women who are working on the red carpet. But to do the same kind of work that I am doing which is private sessions with either the director or the actor, we are very few. Sometimes it happens in the film festival is that I am the only one. It can be an asset.

What kind of equipment do you use to click your photos?

I have always been a Nikonist. I use Nikon. I like the tone and the sharpness of the lens. I have also used a panoramic camera called Noblex 50. It's a film camera.

Personally, what do you consider photography to be? Do you consider it to be a science or an art? According to you what is photography? A science or an art?

I think it is important to master the technique but it is more important to have a vision, to have a feel, to study photography, discover the great photographers, watch a lot of movies to develop the aesthetics.

Apart from taking pictures of famous people, stars you have also worked with ordinary people. Is it easy or difficult to work with common people?

When you do portraiture of different faces embracing different cultures, it is as interesting as taking pictures of artists. You do it in the same way. Either you are interested in the person because you have a feel or maybe you want to tell a story. It is the same process. There is no difference between strangers and famous people.

We are living in an age where everybody can have an access to a camera. What needs to be done in order to make photography more popular among school children and young adults (college students)?

I think some workshops can be organized and renowned photographers can be invited to tell about their work. They show their pictures, explain the background stories. I would tell them to just do it. That's the best way. It is like making a film. It is by doing it more that you learn the craft. The more you do the better it is.

What kind of atmosphere do you encounter at big film festivals such as Cannes or Venice ?

As I mentioned before there are backstage stories related to these film festivals. Basically, most of the times when you are a journalist or a photographer you are invited to junkets, round tables if you are privileged, lucky then you get a one on one session which is amazing. For the photographer, it is not that you have the whole day to shoot. Sometimes you have two minutes, sometimes you have ten minutes. Being LA times photographer I am lucky. Sometimes I have thirty minutes which is incredible. When you get thirty minutes, it's like luxury.

How are all photographers treated in general at Cannes film festival ?

I have done a bit of 'red carpet' but it is not something that I like to do. I love to do what I am doing that is 'private sessions'. To be on the red carpet, it's like an army of photographers. It is crazy. They would be physical. When you are alone, you are your own boss. I believe journalists probably have a much better treatment in comparison to photographers. They are more VIP than photographers. When you work for big media then you have some consideration. But journalists have a better treatment I believe so.

Which great photographers do you admire and why ?

Firstly, French photographer Henri Cartier Bresson. He is a maestro and has a great sense of composition. Secondly, Raghu Rai an Indian photographer who was a protégé of Cartier Bresson. I was lucky enough to literally bump into him during Maha Kumbh in Allahabad. I was taking pictures early morning at dawn when I saw him, I was amazed by his energy he was running ! He's an inspiration with so much passion and drive. Then American photographers incredible for their documentary pictures, Willy Ronis, Bruce Davidson and William Klein. I would also put French photographer Guy Bourdin for his sense of composition and mastery of aesthetics working in fashion.

How can you not think of master Helmut Newton ? Anton Corbijn a rock star photographer like I used to be, he became a film director and I love his film 'Control' about the life of Ian Curtis who

was the lead singer of 'Joy division'. Then Martin Parr for his great wit and sense of composition. I would classify certain photographers as rebels. Firstly, Diane Arbus, the queen. She was taking portraits of unusual characters. I would also put French photographer Antoine d'Agata who is now part of the Magnum agency. Nan Goldin and Larry Clark. He is an incredible photographer who took a lot of pictures of youngsters, skateboarders. He's very hip.

What message would you like to give to people who would like to enter the field of photography?

Same thing "Just do it !"

What have you been up to and what are your future plans ? What is your next project ?

I had a solo exhibition "Beyond The Imaginary Line" of my Indian documentary pictures in Berlin in a gallery called Z 22 for few months. I had a special collaboration with a cinema owner Michel Enten. We are doing an exhibition together "Nomadic Mirrors" with the collaboration of the Fellini Fondation in Sion, Switzerland.

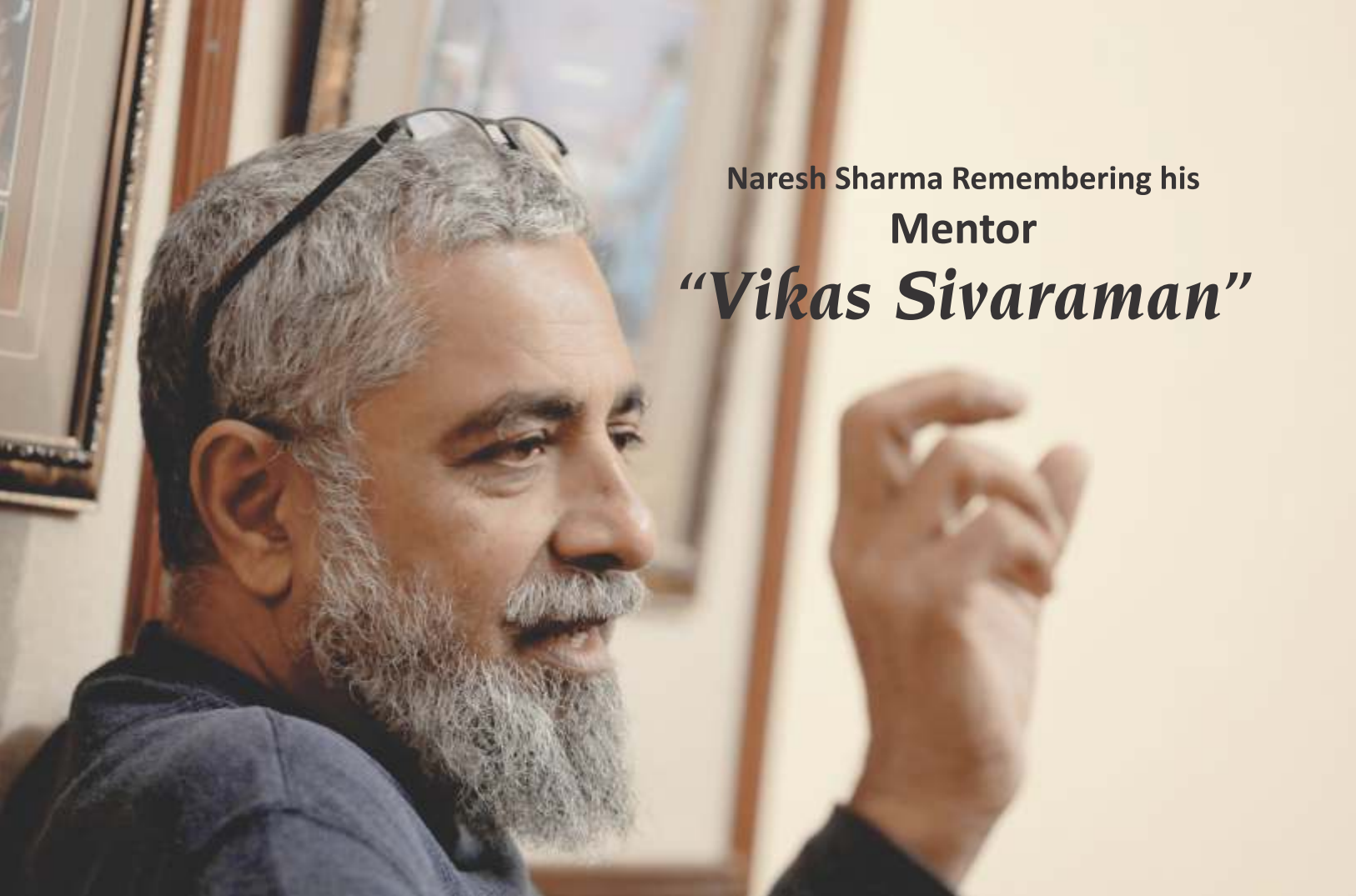
I will be covering Cannes for the Los Angeles Times. I have some projects to work on French films. My life is a complete improvisation. My only plan is that I don't have a plan. I am currently in India where I made more of these documentary pictures and planning to work on some movie projects there.

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Naresh Sharma Remembering his Mentor *“Vikas Sivaraman”*

In February 1994, I finished my graduation from FTII, Pune in Cinematography and went to Bombay. Every day I would go and make 4-5 calls seeking appointments with DOPs. While making constant attempts to meet various cinematographers, one day through the reference of Amol Gupte, I came in contact with Vikas Sivaraman. Despite having two regular assistants, he accommodated me on a rotation basis. At that point I had a pocket size spiral diary, in which I used to scribble about what I learned on the shoot. Although the diary was lost a long time ago, I still remember everything I learned.

Among the various lessons that I had jotted down in my spiral diary while working with Vikas Sivaraman as an assistant, the very first thing would be punctuality. You always have to be on set before the call time. Another thing I noticed about him was how to work quietly. I don't remember him ever shouting or making a noise, spoiling people's peace of mind on set. Rather, he would sit quietly behind the camera and give instructions to people and

everybody would follow it. The lightmen, gaffer and the assistants would understand what he's trying to say just by his gestures. He knows how to respect one's colleagues. It doesn't matter if he's a senior lightman or an assistant, I have never seen him humiliating anyone.

My first day of assistantship was for a Pepsi/Coke commercial for the Bangladesh Market, directed by Prahlad Kakkar. There was a very small corridor, where the model would come from the side and lift her bottle at the corner of the corridor. So, he lit up the long shot first and then the close up. Behind it, there was a T-shaped kind of an open space with an opening on the left and right, along with a backdrop. For me, lighting up the background was fine and understandable. Obviously, there was a backlight — a very subtle one, and some fill from the top satin cloth that bounced in the corridor. Key diffused light was placed on the left side of the frame at the extreme end of the corridor. This was a small set, and there was a wall on both the sides of the corridor. To go for a

closeup, I realised that one can modify the key light position up to 5-10 degrees, if the position was not perfect in the long shot due to space restriction while keeping the same intensity, direction and quality of light.

Hence he finished the long shot first and then we went for the closeup of the model in the corridor. Since the wall could be removed, as it was not required in any other shots later, he cut the cloth of the wall on the left of the corridor and put his key light from the same left side with an acrylic diffusion material by moving it around 10 degrees inside through the wall which was cut to put the light, in order to get a better feel of the key light. I wondered why he cut the cloth because it wouldn't be there if it's needed again. But then I realised, this is exactly the reason why he took the long shot first, so that it wouldn't be required later. It never struck me that the wall could be cut when it's of no use. As a student we would think ten times before cutting off the wall, as we had never done such a thing during our learning days in FTII. Moral of the story was, if a

light must come from a specific position , you must find ways to do it.

In another commercial, we were supposed to start the lighting but there was a problem in setting up the three phase connection by the electrician, and Mr. Sivaraman was waiting for the light connection. Almost 45 minutes had gone by but the light connection was still not on. That was just a tactic of lighting people to pass time and he knew it. So, he called me and said, “just go and supervise the three phase connection, otherwise, it won’t be done by evening ! ” I actually found the truth in his statement when I went and they were just casually fooling around. When I sat on their heads, it took less than 10 minutes for the connection to become active! This would have consumed at least another hour had I not been sent there by him because lightmen are lightmen – they do the same job everyday and there's nothing new and exciting for them. Even if it was a small thing to supervise that connection, I wouldn't have bothered to do it, had he not instructed me. It was a precious lesson as an assistant. We are never taught what an assistant is supposed to

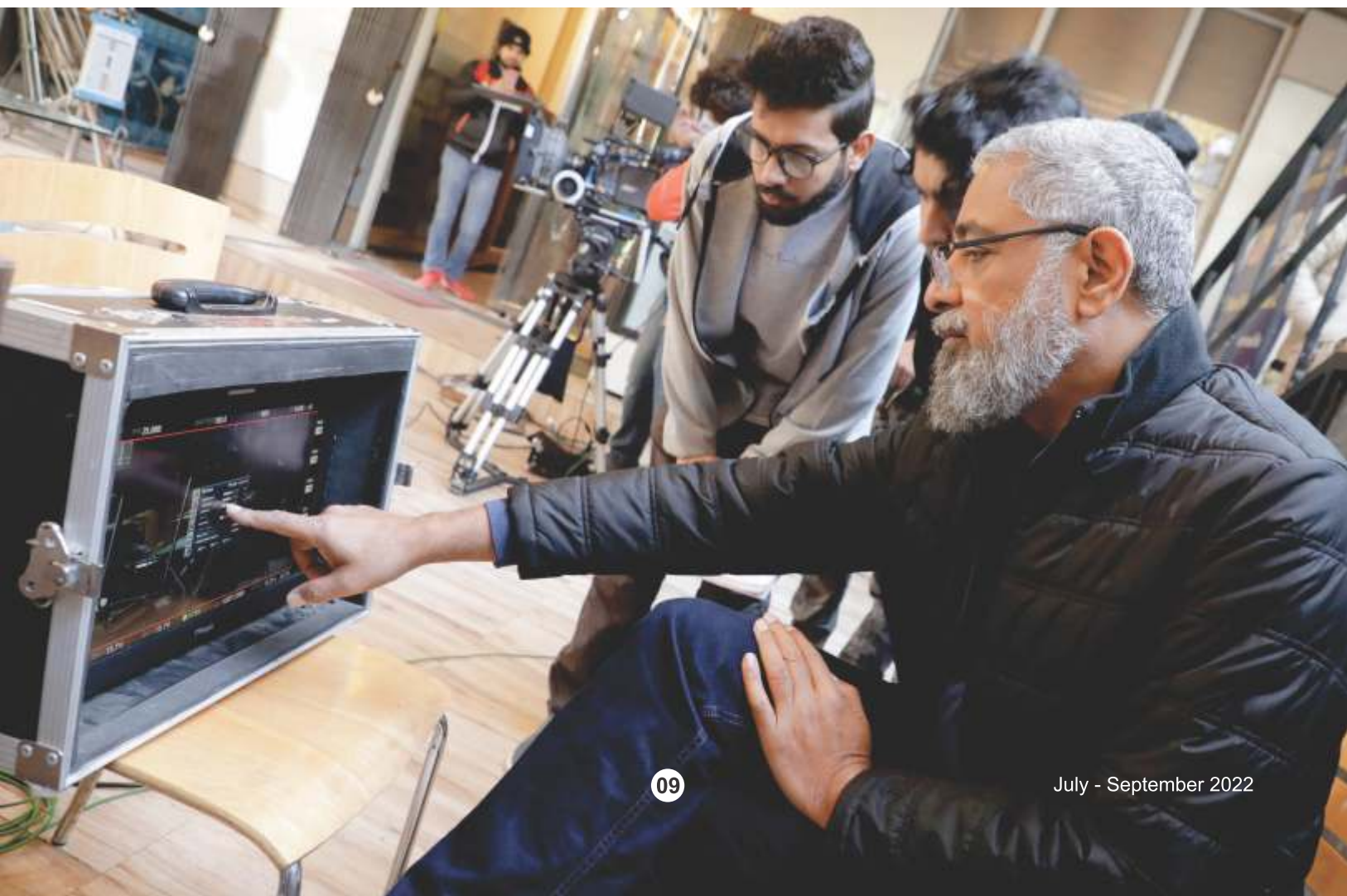
do on the set after passing out from FTII. But he, as a master, had guided a newcomer like me regarding the importance of time, that each minute on set counts and you shouldn't waste any.

On another Occasion, we were shooting with model turned actor, Arjun Rampal. It was a scene where a horse was supposed to be drinking water near a small lake, and he was to keep hold of the horse. The camera was set up, and it was a little far away from the truck where all the light equipment was stored. Since enough daylight was already there, we did not take out any light. However, Mr. Sivaraman felt that a small fill was needed for the face of the actor. He needed a thermocol, for which he looked at me and said - “Thermocol”. I suddenly remembered that we had thermocol in the truck but I did not bother to bring it along. Like an onlooker standing there, realising my foolishness, I rushed and came back with the thermocol within 3-4 minutes, and held it to the face. It was a small thing but it made me realise, if you're not responsible about your duties as an assistant, a lot of time gets wasted. Had I been more alert that we were shooting



outdoors and might need a thermocol to bounce the light on the face of the character, I probably wouldn't have had to run and I could have easily delivered it immediately when asked. These small things made me a more sincere and responsible assistant later on.

I remember this particular incident from a shoot in Dhaulpur with Palette Communications. Sanjeev Sharma was the director and Pooja Batra was the model. We were to shoot under a very strong light in the hot summer . Generally, most of the time as assistants, we were busy cutting the glare of direct sunlight hitting the lens. It was a shot where a crane down would happen and at one point direct sunlight was hitting





the camera, so I was trying to cut that glare with my cutter. We had this standard mindset — “cut the glare”. But he just looked at me and said, “Sharma Ji, glare is required.” Then, of course, I removed the cutter. However, I kept thinking “why didn't he cut it?” It was later on that I realised while discussing with someone else, that glare is kept at times to enhance the feeling of the strong sun and screeching heat.

There was another assistant, Dean Affonso, under Mr. Vikas Sivaraman from whom I learned a lot. For example, if something is hanging and interfering in the frame and needs to be removed, before I could even think of going up and clearing it, Dean would climb faster than a monkey, clear it off and come back. By that time I would still be thinking about whether I should do it myself, or should I ask a lightman to do it. Therefore, having an efficient assistant on set is very important for a cinematographer, and it took me time to understand this. You can't always wait for a lightman to do it, as he will do it at his own pace and

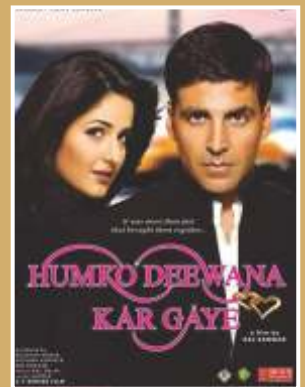
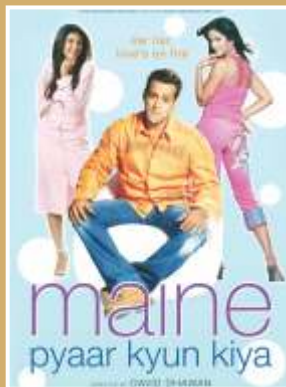
might waste a lot of time in the process. You really have to be alert all the time and be as quick as possible in executing what's immediately required, without wasting any time.

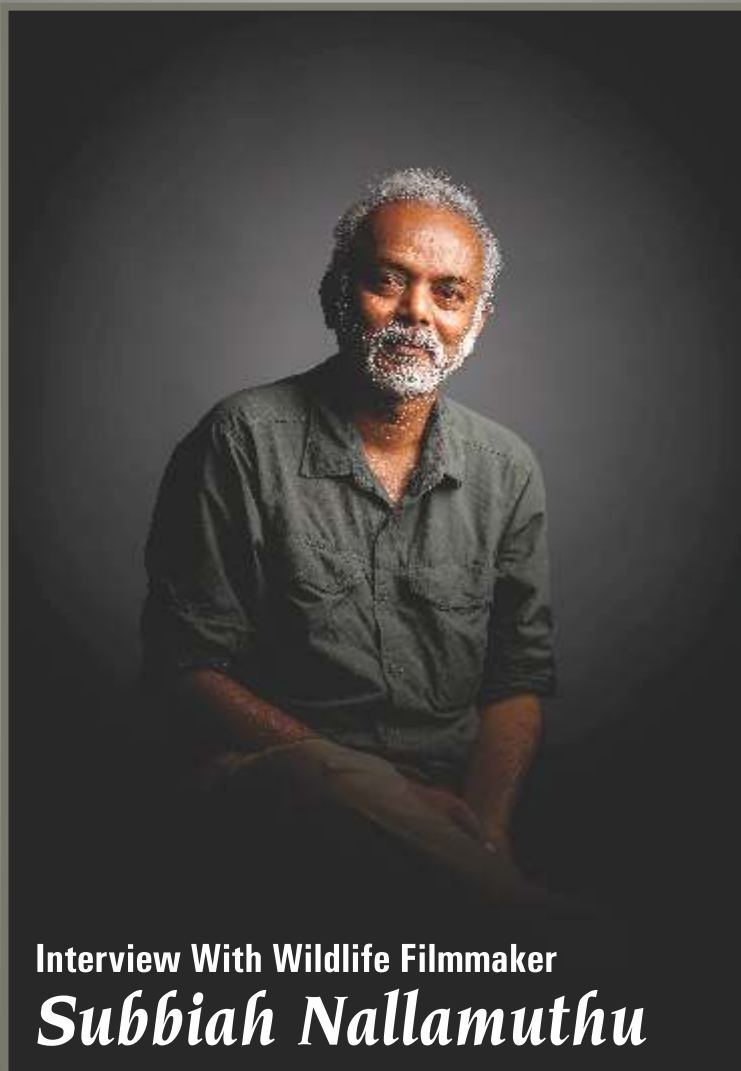
I also picked up how important it is to employ people who are efficient at their work, rather than people who are lazy. Shaukat, Naidu and Dean Affonso were highly efficient, which made his work process fast and that was one of the many reasons why he was sought after in the advertising industry. Fast does not mean mediocre work because one has to be fast. He was always very meticulous about his work. If a light needs to be controlled, it needs to be controlled properly. Hence you'll notice a lot of black cloth hanging around on his set, which is absolutely required.

If you ask me what is the most peculiar thing about Vikas Sivaraman as DOP, I would say, when he used to tell his assistants where to place the light, 99% of the time its position wouldn't change. He was absolutely clear where and which light would be placed and what would be its quality and intensity. By avoiding to shift light from one position to another, he saved time. I've seen many cinematographers experimenting with positioning lights on the set, but he never did that.



Important Films of Vikas Shivaraman as DOP





Interview With Wildlife Filmmaker *Subbiah Nallamuthu*

How did you get into filmmaking?

I was always interested in films from a young age. Subsequently I did a 3-year cinematography course from FTIT Chennai from the 83-86 batch. The whole idea was to pursue fiction. But due to some difficulties, I took up a job in Sriharikota, ISRO as a high speed cameraman. The Centre had extraordinary camera equipment at that time and it turned out to be a good place for technical learning. Simultaneously, I also continued working the film industry.

While documenting in ISRO, how did you develop interest in wildlife filming?

This ISRO centre used to fabricate rockets stage by stage, test fired every week. We were required to make a visual documentation of it and pass it onto the engineers so that they could examine and study closely. Also, this rocket station is

near Pulicatlake, with large colonies of water birds like flamingos and pelicans. Our job was to go and shoot flight trajectories of flamingos and pelicans - their landings and take offs, which were made into flip books with precise photographic sequences to aid the scientists in their study. Later I joined the Developmental and Communication Unit of ISRO in Ahmedabad who were involved in making programs with socio-developmental issues. Later I worked in the Films Division, Delhi which specialized in documentaries. So surprisingly even though I was interested in fiction, I was somehow veering towards non-fiction and liking it.

I later started working with a young company on India's first ever 52 part environment series commissioned by Doordarshan covering diverse environment related issues, shot across the length and breadth of India. "Living

Nallamuthu is an award-winning wildlife filmmaker from Chennai who has had the pleasure and privilege of working with some of the industry's best producers and networks such as National Geographic Channel, BBC, Discovery, Channel 4, Animal Planet, Doordarshan etc. Since 1987, he has made a range of films, including 11 series and 55 documentaries, most centred on Indian wildlife. Nallamuthu has dedicated the past fifteen years to filming India's forests, producing some of India's most iconic wildlife films, including one on the legendary tigress Machli titled 'The World's Most Famous Tiger'. An alumnus of FTIT Chennai, Nallamuthu's ability to add a theatrical touch to factual storytelling and technical skills combined with a poetic visual style have won him several awards, including the prestigious Indian National Film Award. Nallamuthu has served as Jury on different film festivals, including as the Chairperson on the non-fiction Jury panel of Indian Panorama 2021

Film critic **Lalit Rao** (FIPRESCI) explores his vision and style of working.

on the Edge" went on to win the Panda Award. But despite a prime Sunday slot, it didn't reach out to as many people as it should. This was followed up with a travel series called the "Great Escape" which took the audience to adventurous locations. Later on I worked on a one of a kind travel series that took the audience to offbeat places called "Off the Beaten Path". BBC offered us an Indian version of Top Gear called "Wheels", again a first automobile show of India. We also did the first ever reality show called "Hospital" detailing medical emergencies and cases in AIIMS, Delhi. It had real patients – it was gritty and emotional. Each series was unique and demanded my complete attention. Through all these "firsts", I got an opportunity to evolve new patterns, ideas and concepts.

I also got an opportunity to work with international crew, especially since thanks to my ISRO training, I was well



format of feature films along with 35mm simultaneously. It was the time when HD got introduced in India, and I got an opportunity to shoot India's first HD feature film called "Dharm". India at that time did not have HD cameras. One guy managed to get a second hand body but there was no lens! We hired the lens from London, and I shot the entire film through the viewfinder. There was neither a monitor nor a projector to see the rushes! By then, Prasad Lab had started the first VFX in Bombay, where I did colour correction from, and then they released it in CANNES. They also converted it into a 35mm film and the film won a National Award.

How do you decide the subject for a wildlife documentary on which you'll shoot for 1-2 years?

With experience, you get to know what sells in the international market. As an Indian filmmaker there's no platform in our country where you can show wildlife films apart from PSBT and ministry. But they pay only 10 to 15 lakhs for it, which is actually a small amount to make a good film. At the end of the day you need to recover your money. Since the investment involved is quite large, if you want to do a serious wildlife film (because you need to follow your species for at least 1-2 years), I had to think long and hard on which species from India

versed with latest camera technology and liked new challenges. I graduated to working as a freelancer.

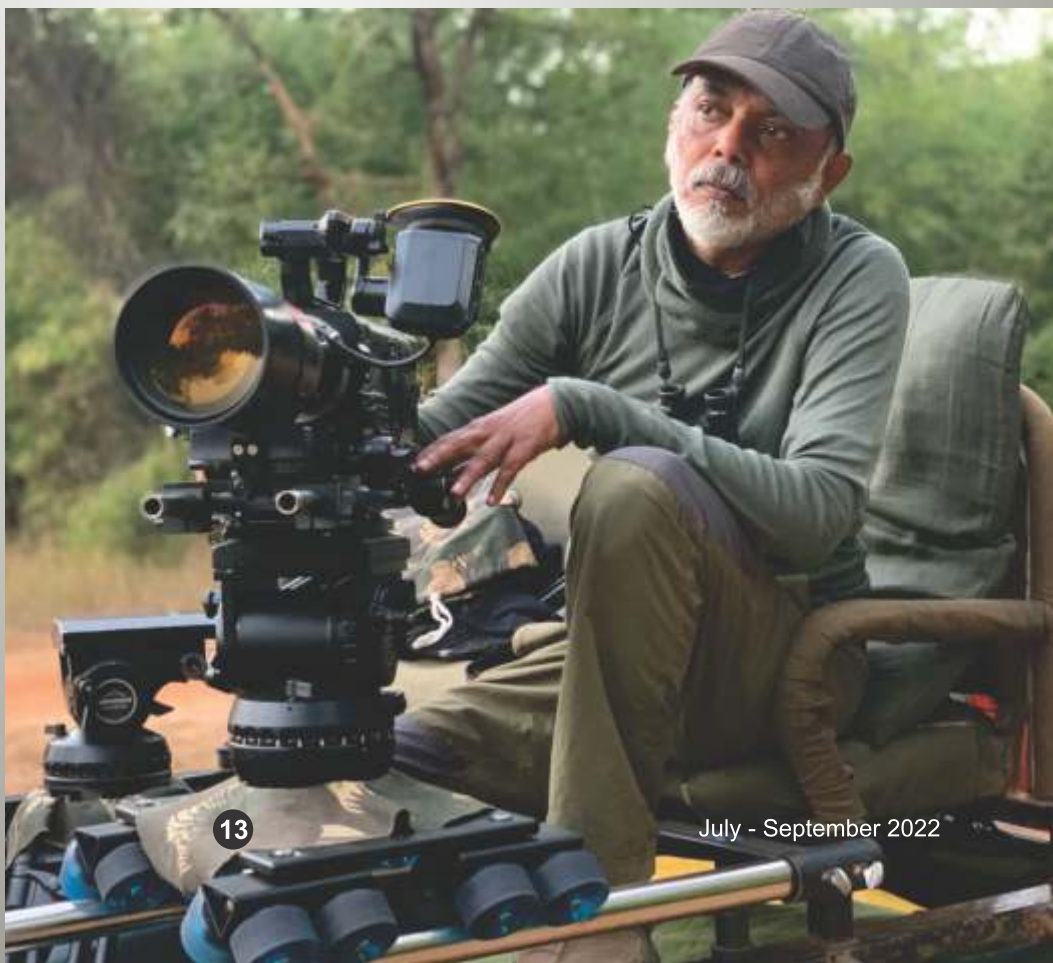
I was keen to work under my own steam, with own ideas, structuring, visualizations – things which one can't do while working under someone else. This is when I decided to try out my ideas that I had while working on the first environment series and work independently as a cameraman-director.

How did you get your wildlife documentaries commissioned?

None of them was commissioned by any channel. Till date I've produced 6 documentaries on my own.

Did you put your own money into it?

Yes, I put my own savings in the beginning or took a self-finance, to produce my wildlife films. But then the CANNES had started accepting digital



would sell worldwide. I believe that tigers sell as a species – they are magnetic and India specific although quite difficult to track. Forest fee in India is about 20k rupees approximately, and international TV stations accept only high end camera specifications, so altogether you spend 30- 40k rupees on a daily basis from your pocket; and then you spend 100 to 200 days on shoot, which is very expensive.

How risky is it to shoot a tiger?

It isn't risky. We're not allowed to get down from the jeep, so it's quite safe. They are very safe animals and they hardly attack if inside the jeep. Moreover, we shoot in National Parks. The only problem is to get a great story about tigers. We're only allowed to shoot in the tourism areas within the tourist time and that too, while being surrounded by a hoard of 30-40 tourists. We don't get a full day to shoot, and within that limited time you've to complete your shoot.

How much footage do you need to have in order to build up a story?

Earlier, when I started, wildlife films were behaviour based or personality based. As a result, there were fascinating visual or human stories but it did not hold any charm for me. I was interested in following specific characters, getting to their lives. Therefore, our whole idea was to get a story and that story sometimes takes 2 years to be made. If a minimum of you are following a tiger from the age

of 3 months, obviously you'll see them grow up, become independent and separate from their mother. This normally takes 18 months time. Hence to build this story, one has to shoot for several months, ranging from 10 days to 25 days a month depending on the sighting. And you have to keep following until you get a great strong story. So it can be anywhere between 100 to 200 hours

How do you manage to figure out a story from the huge quantity of footage that you gather over months?

You start a film with 2-3 tentative stories in your head. For example, if a tigress has three female cubs, you know that when they grow up they'll try to fight and win the territory from the mother. But how the mother is bringing up the three of them, who out of the three is the most dominant one, and how the dominant female cub is trying to chase the other two, and finally fight with the mother and get the territory - that is where your story lies. If the daughter wins, she gets the territory and if the mother wins, she'll chase the daughter away, or allow her to settle somewhere nearby. So there're always a lot of questions and each single character has great potential. Then after you've followed them and have about 60-70% of your story, you narrow it down to one story and drop the other storylines. At the end of the day you'll have 100-200 hours of footage and you just have to narrow it down to a rough story. You can't use all the footage.

Do you edit the story in segments while shooting every day, or do you shoot the whole thing first and then set a story?

I shoot alone with a driver, because we use some long lenses and there's no space in the vehicle for an assistant. Everything is a single man operation - right from changing the camera, mounting it, charging and loading the battery, as well as finding a story because I am there alone on the forest. Secondly, I shoot in full 4K RAW, and you can hardly see the images on location or at night. Hence after you come back you spend most of your time in keeping backup, because while shooting at 4K and 60fps you end up collecting 500GB to 1TB per day. I have an editing assistant who helps with the backup, conversions, assembling the shots and storing. Once the story is narrowed down, I go back and see the entire footage, assemble the story in my mind, select the relevant footage day wise and bring it down to 20-25 hours. This exercise keeps happening – of bringing the footage further down to 10 hours, 4 hours, 3 hours and then finally to 1 hour.

You shoot at 60fps, as you said. Is it because of the slow motion you need?

Yes basically it's slow motion, because that is what they want. They mostly ask for 60fps nowadays, because you don't know what will happen when. The animal may jump, leap or run all of a sudden, so you have to be prepared for it with 60fps. Secondly, these images have a



shelf life. If they are captured at 60fps, then they can be run for 10 to 15 years. That's why the general norm is to shoot at 60fps.

Do you not shoot at 24fps normally, the way you do otherwise?

Yes we do, if there's a static subject or a basic landscape. One more reason to shoot at 60fps is because we are using tele lenses in a vehicle and we want to avoid wobbling. But sometimes when not much happens and animals sit quietly, I go back to normal frames. But mostly one needs to keep alert for speeds and motions in animals, so I stay at 60fps.

In terms of technicalities, what are the other precautionary measures that you take besides using high frame rates?

As a cameraman you should always carry everything that you may need while inside the park, because you're spending 30-40 thousand everyday without an assistant. Thus if you've to come back all the way to get an equipment you lose time and money. Also, don't shoot everything you see. Say, if a tiger is sitting comfortably for 1 hour and you keep shooting it, you're going to lose valuable space in your camera card; and you'll also need more space in the harddisk for backup. Unlike other cinema forms where you've 2-3 assistants, everything here is one person job and it's all done manually. One thing that's really important for a wildlife cameraman is that you need to get into muscle memory mode since you there is not help around. The second important thing is changing lenses. I shoot mainly with manual lenses, which is why I don't keep an assistant. Suppose, if I'm shooting something at 300mm, the assistant or the focus puller would have no clue what I'm shooting. That's because there's no monitor and even if you have one, you can't set it in a small jeep. That is why it's a one man's job. There's no point even having a director. Therefore you direct, you shoot, and you're the one to put it together. That's an advantage of being a wildlife cameraman.

Does BBC, Channel 4 or NatGeo discriminate an Indian filmmaker from a western filmmaker in terms of monetary grants while commissioning his film?

They don't commission wildlife films to Indians. 1 out of 10 might have a commissioned project. But even if they



commission, someone will be there from the producers' side. Our people shoot and give it to them and they edit. So that's clearly a camera operation job. However there's little competition here, simply because the profit is not that big. The risk is more in terms of investment and getting a story, and selling it. That is why there are not many wildlife filmmakers or producers in India. There are freelance wildlife cameramen, who shoot for others. Also, you need to have an international storytelling style. There's always a preference for foreigners because their way of seeing a story and their perspective is definitely different from Indians, and these films are 80% shown abroad. What happens in my filmmaking is, 80% of it I go with the story and they have 20% editorial right to alter it out. Because in the end I don't want to give only an Indian perspective to the world. You need to listen to them and give them the required freedom, to convert it into a universal film.

As you say they have 20% right to alter things: Suppose if you've made a film of 1-hour and they want to change certain things, what changes can they bring into it after they have the final mixed version?

Basically, there're different angles and perspectives in seeing a specific

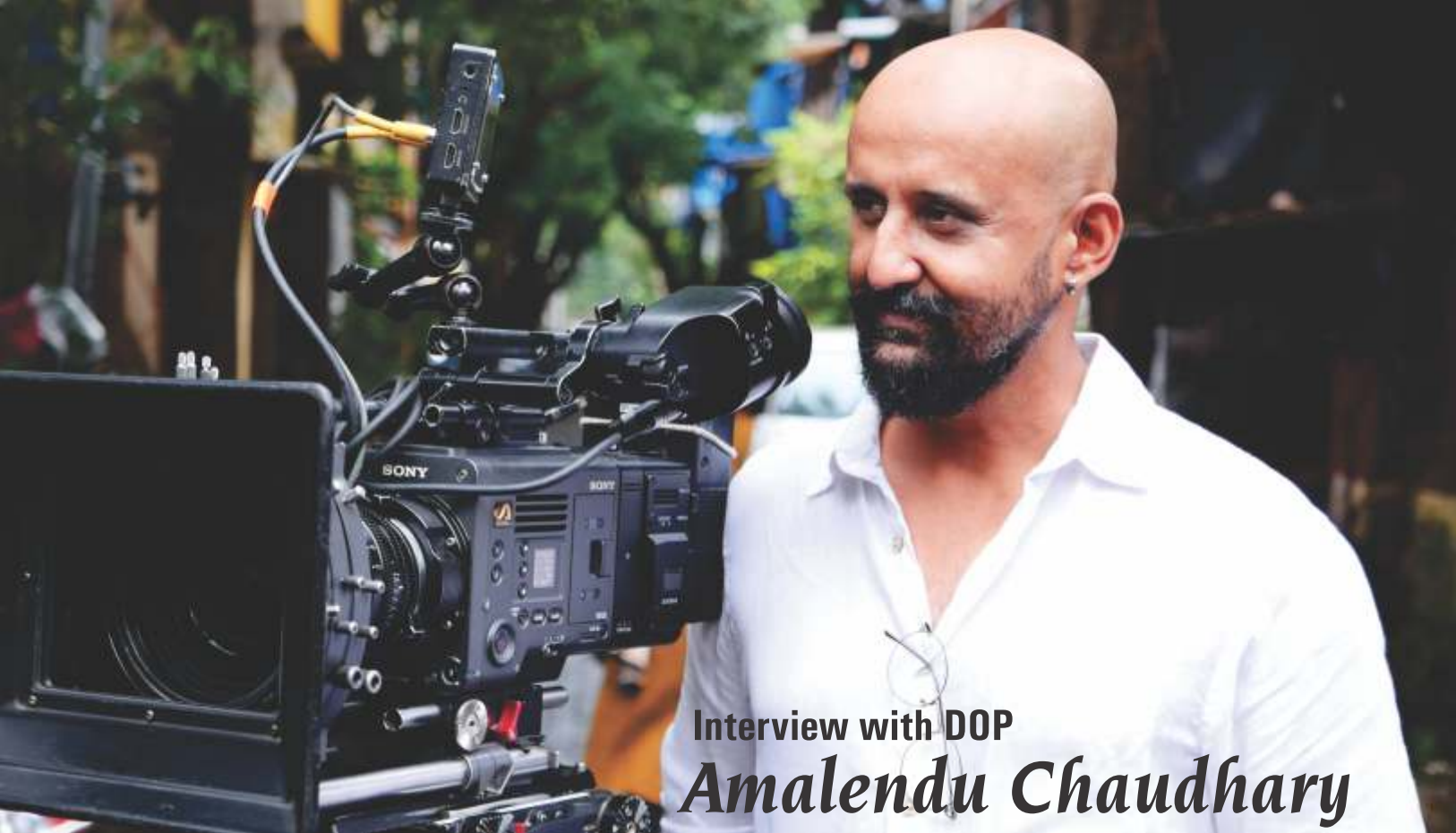
story. I don't do issue-based or science-based films. I do character-based films. My perspective, my interpretations, and my stories are very clear. I follow one character throughout the film - it's one character in one story. 80% of my story is fixed - you cannot change the real story. If I follow iconic characters and everybody knows the stories of these characters, then you cannot interpret, but otherwise it's your choice. Like in case of 'Machli' and her daughter, how I portray Machli is my perspective. I might say that she's a world-famous tigress, whereas to them, she might just be the most photographed tigress. It's all an angle of perception - you just need to give them that freedom to see, because at the end of the day it's for a universal audience.

Do you think there is any other species in India which has not been explored enough so far, but has a potential to be popular abroad?

Yes, of course. If anybody is ready to fund then there are subjects. But there's no fund. Even the government doesn't want to fund environmental films, neither do they want to promote them. You have channels for everything, but there's no channel for environmental films.

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Interview with DOP *Amalendu Chaudhary*

What's your approach towards the cinematography of a scene or a shot and how's it different in an ad film as compared to a feature film?

My lighting doesn't start from the 'world go'. If it's an ad film then it becomes easy because the ambience is limited as the time is less in that case. But if I have to break down the lighting pattern for an entire film, my source of inspiration would obviously be the script and locations. I would also figure out the genre of the film, and that's how I go about it — step by step.

How do you light up a scene for a feature film? Do you light the whole scene at one go, or go shot by shot?

I always go shot by shot. Once we do the recce and the location's confirmed, it always stays at the back of my head. When shooting for a particular scene begins, I always keep in mind where the source light would be. I always remember the angle from which the key light would come; and then it's the intensity and content of a scene that always suggests to me to give a specific mood to it. The emotionality of a scene or the goal behind it has to be conveyed to the audience through my lighting. I always prefer to prepare the sources and

get the ambient light ready for the scene and then light it up further shot by shot.

Which of the directors that you've worked with goes well with your approach towards the cinematography of a film? What do you expect from him?

All the directors I have worked with have been pretty good. Each one has his own vision, although a little blurry at times, but after discussions and initial recce, things start falling into place. The director briefs you about the time and mood beforehand, after which it's your responsibility to make it look the way it should. That is where your taste and aesthetics come in — where to keep it dark or bright, regardless of whether it is night or day. Also, it has to go with the entire look of the film. It should never be the case that a perfectly shot scene is being followed by a seamless one. The most important task for a cinematographer is to maintain consistency in the composition of the scenes. The lighting for each location or scene should be consistent and it must not change its tones drastically. Few scenes might produce superb results due to factors, such as location or art direction or costumes or it might be a combination of all these that at times

fall into place. However, that mostly isn't the case. Thus, to maintain it throughout, the look of the entire film must be clear in your head. The film shouldn't get swayed away from its decided path owing to your carelessness, unless you want a deliberate change in it. It's about trying to decode the director's mind and work towards enhancing the vision and take the film to another level.

How do you get the idea of what the director is exactly looking for when he demands a particular look from you?

I ask the director if he has any reference in his head — if there's a film, painting, or perhaps a photograph that they want their film to look like. It's obviously not mandatory that whatever he says at that moment is exactly how it's going to be executed because references are often from Hollywood or from international paintings which usually have different contexts. But it's very important for a cinematographer to be able to read the director's mind, and then bring in your own aesthetics in order to take it to a level that compels the director to conclude that the results look even better than what he expected. That's the job of a cinematographer. However, I personally don't give any

references from my side, especially before locations are finalised. Referencing is very easy; you can download anything you wish to and just show that you want this, without even figuring out the motive behind it. And even if that matches, it might not work in your context due to unmatched culture or architecture. The mood, the tones and the composition greatly depends on the context. One has to be very clear about these factors. Then once you get all the location photographs in your hand, you can start thinking of your lighting and composition. Because if a story is set in Bihar, it would look entirely different from, say, if the same story is set in Mumbai, Ooty, or the Andamans. Therefore, only after the location's finalised, the story slowly takes a form in your mind, after which you discuss it with the art directors, the production designers, and the costume designers. Then only you can come to your first conclusion regarding how the film should look.

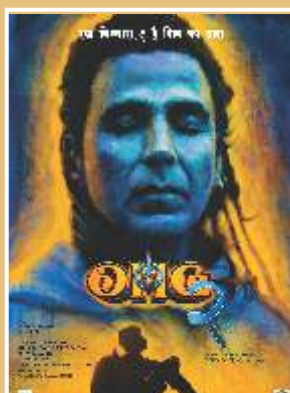
What do you brief to the art and the production department?

I don't give any brief unless it's needed, because the director briefs everybody; and each of us come with our own narrative. But when required, that is, if I need a change in cinematography, I explain to them how my lighting's going to be and the colours that they plan to use might not look good on it. For example, if a room is of a yellow and reddish palette, but I have to light up the scene in a bluish tone, then the red will not be visible. In such cases I let them know, so that they choose accordingly. It's because the way they visualise has to be homogeneously incorporated in my work too. The makeup and costumes, the production design, and the art direction of a film directly depends on the cinematography – if the lighting's suitable, the value of their job increases too. In fact this is why cinematographers receive such respect on set – it's his responsibility to take the work ahead in all visual aspects and bring the director's vision to reality.

When you go for close ups, each stitch can get blown up to a large proportion. Do you ask the costume

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Important Films of Amalendu Chaudhary as DOP



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designers to tone down the reflectance of the cloth if you find extra shine on it?

No, I don't generally change it. I check the entire palette before the shoot, so that's never needed. Every costume designer has his own aesthetics, and there must be a reason behind that shiny thing if he does it. If I have any doubt, I may simply ask

whether it is okay with the director. If yes, then it's always suitable for the scene. Whether or not it's visually appealing to me, I'll incorporate it in my work because the character demands it in some way. But I do see to it that nothing looks odd. I just balance the composition according to the need so that everything looks nice.



Do you recollect anything from your shoots where you really had to think how to resolve an issue while lighting up a set or a location?

Though I'll not label it as an issue, but Chhichhore's basketball sequence was really challenging. Because of the logistics we had to light up the entire basketball court for the phantom exposure, and we were shooting at 300 fps. I had to punch those many lights and it continued for 4-5 days.

There was a top light source and a frontal glass window that were visible in the frame. Were those the two main sources of light in the scene?

Yes, those were the two sources. But apart from that, in the wide source it was lit up cold. It was not a daylight source, so I had avoided warmth. I had kept white lights, which was basically the light source seen in the wide shot prior to it. But there was a simultaneous juxtaposition of the chess scene – there were intercuts between the chess match and the basketball one. Therefore, I had kept it warm for chess, and for basketball, it was white as in neutral.

How does genre affect your shooting style in terms of camera and shot taking, like in "Stree", which is of a completely different genre?

Genre affects everything. If one aspect of a film is lighting, then another is camera movement. But the factor on which even these two depend is the treatment of the film. This is a factor that goes hand in hand with the director, and it's the first thing that's decided in your initial meeting with the director. You see, "Chhichhore" is a very dialogue oriented film, apart from the climax. Whereas, "Stree" is full of ambience and mood, there's always a backdrop of horror with some emotions portrayed directly, and some in a subtle manner. The lighting and composition that's suitable for "Stree" can never be used for "Chhichhore", and vice versa. The camera treatment also differs, e.g., whenever Stree enters, there are random unsteady movements of the camera. We had used a Steadicam and drone for that. Nowadays, there's a multicam setup and different cameras that are used together. In "Chhichhore" there are always five to six actors in front of the camera, so I used master anamorphic lenses for depth.

For DI do you prefer to work with a particular person or use a specific machine, or it could be anybody or anything as long as it serves your purpose?

I've worked with almost all the top colorists in India. But I get along well

with Ashirwad and Makrand Surte — they both are lovely people and one of the best talents in India. If you've got your source right, they'll definitely enhance your results to another level. But for every film you obviously cannot get these guys. It's not possible to get fixed people for all your projects, but that shouldn't affect your perspective as well as your output. You should possess such control over your job.

Does the machine make a lot of difference in terms of colour grading?

It does make a difference, definitely, but not very much. It has just come about recently. There was only optical transfer when I did "Harishchandrachi Factory" 12 years back, which was on analyzer with Mr. Prabhu sir grading it in the Prasad lab. Also, these machines get updated in regular intervals. But the image that gets captured in your camera during the shoot actually sets the quality of it then and there. It can obviously be enhanced, you may balance it later in digital, for which you need machines.

What efforts did you put in to make "Harishchandrachi Factory" look like a period film?

It was a small-budget Marathi film of the time. But what's interesting is that there were only two camera movements in the film — one when the camera comes into the Dada Saheb Phalke's house, and another when the first film is projected on screen. Apart from that there wasn't even a pan or tilt, the camera was static all the time. It was tough for both the director and myself, because the frames at times looked peculiar.

Why did you decide to have the film in static blocks?

Because that changed the entire look of the film. It added a vintage feel that wouldn't be there if we used modern aesthetics. It's not like we wanted to portray it as an old film, but it just felt right to retain the simplicity which we used to have at that time. Also, the way the script was written and actors performed helped that type of framing.

Considering that a production has the budget to offer you any camera brand you want - ARRI, RED, SONY or CANON, which of them would you like to work with and why?

I've already worked with all the major brands, except Panavision, but I always go with the story. Before we used to have different stocks that we chose according to the story, but now we choose the camera according to the story.

The camera as a body also has a variety of elements to it — if you go handheld or if you want it compact, you use a certain camera; if you want a different kind of contrast or feel then you can have a different camera with different lenses; if you want a sharper image you can go for another specific camera. Hence you can choose what's better for you. For example, "Nude", a very small budget film of about 1.2 crores that I had done was shot in only 18 days. For that, I needed a very compact and non-expensive camera. I had shot it on RED Dragon with ultra-prime lens. Nobody uses it now, but a few years back everybody used to work with it.

Therefore, how you use it is as important as the decision of using it. Like for "Chhichhore", because it's a story about friends, there was always a group of people in front of the camera. Thus, there had to be some depth in the images — they could not look flat, which is the reason I shot it on anamorphic master prime lenses.



Is the large format the need of the hour, or is it a gimmickry on behalf of the camera companies?

I think I'm nobody to conclude on this. Everybody in the market is pushing their boundaries to create the best possible outcomes. But large format definitely makes a difference to the image quality, like good projection systems do. If people buy these expensive INOX tickets, they must get back something worthwhile. It's a journey where the way towards the reach is still in process, first it was 2k, then came 4k, and now it's 6k. Let's now see what comes next.

Do you feel any difference when you watch a film shot in large format and another film shot in some other format?

Very rarely I can make a difference. You can definitely feel the change of perspective, or the sharpness. It all depends on the kind of projection you're watching it on. It's your creative choice.

Interviewed by: Naresh Sharma
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Interview with
Mayank Chachra
 On Cine Equipments Business After Covid

How do you see the market sales of the Chinese equipments in our broadcast industry?

China is basically the leader in the technology sector at the moment, and we're very much used to its big brand products. There are a couple of companies in India who are making good products now, but we still follow the big Chinese brands. However, things are getting better in the post covid situation. The product sale is getting much better now, as compared to the last two years, when even the wedding or the filming sector were not able to withdraw. It was due to the restrictions in traveling and accommodation, in case of films and weddings. But people have once again started investing in new deals and products. A lot of new brands with new products are coming up, with exhibitions opening again. We were unable to attend exhibitions for a long time, but we've attended around three exhibitions in the last two months, and we have a few more in the upcoming months.

Are the Chinese companies making special efforts to refurbish the business that deteriorated during the Covid, especially in the Indian market?

As I've worked with a couple of Chinese brands, I've seen a lot of changes in them since the last two years. But still they're more professional in business, which is why they've raised the prices to resolve their own problems. The average Chinese brands say that the price has increased from the suppliers' side, as there has been a hike in price for all kinds of raw materials. Thus in my experience, that's not a big difference for Chinese people. They always do things which make their image better, but even they might have their hands tied at the moment - I'm not sure about that. But if we compare the current price with the price at which we bought from the company before Covid, the price is now at least 10 to 15% higher.

What is the reason behind the continuous increase in their prices, since the customers would actually like the prices to be decreased?

We've discussed this issue with most Chinese brands, and they've stated the reason that the prices for the spare parts come decided from the suppliers, which is why there's a visible increment in the price of the chip, battery, PCV, label, and everything else. However, I'm not sure about what exactly happened there. But as they say, the price of raw materials is already higher than the price at which they used to purchase before. I often receive texts from companies that next time the price of the product will be 2 to 3% higher, due to the chips' price that's already up in the market. So that's the reason, I think, there is a surge in company prices. But it really becomes tough for the distributors and importers to materialize the rise to our margins in the market, to match the price from the previous one to the current one.

As they provide subsidies for travel and participation in various exhibitions at times, do you notice any extra efforts from the Chinese government to promote their companies in the Indian broadcast industry now, especially in the Broadcast India exhibition?

In the past, the Chinese government was helping all the Chinese brands. Whenever they participated in an exhibition, they had to register, get their dates, and submit their entire plan to the Chinese government. The government, in return, would give back 50% to 100% of all the expenses that they incur in the exhibition. But the current covid scenario in China does not allow its people to move out since the government has posed strict quarantine restrictions - nobody can move inside or outside the country. There's a lockdown going on in China right now. I'm planning on going to NAB in April. When I saw the NAB exhibitor's list, I didn't find any big Chinese brands. I enquired from various Chinese companies if they're going to the NAB show, but they won't be able to attend it because of the government's denial. If anybody travels out of China, he will face a lot of restrictions while coming back. However, they have their own European and US teams, as well as some influencers. They're just setting up deals with their own local distributors and influencers to help promote their products in their booths. They already have booths there, however, they're not allowed to travel.

As the Chinese companies count to

10-15% of the stalls there, will the non-participation of the Chinese brands affect the Broadcast India show?

Before the current restrictions, the Chinese believed in the idea of having their own booths and representing their companies themselves. But now most of them have been keeping distributors or dealers in India to attend their booths in their absence. They'll just be supporting them, reducing their own travel cost in the process. They'll be putting that travel cost into the distributors' exhibition costs, so that they attend the booths and sell their products. A similar situation is going on with us - all the big Chinese companies are hiring us for their product sales. We are, right now, in discussion with them and that's the reason I'm so certain that they won't be able to attend the show physically this time. However, Chinese booths will definitely be there, rented by Indian distributors.

Do you think they'll have their independent booths the way they used to have earlier, or will they promote local distributors to increase space for their products in the BI exhibition this year?

I've been in conversation with a couple of Chinese companies regarding the upcoming exhibitions for the past 3 months, and I know that they've cut down their budget for exhibitions. They're not planning on having big booths this time. Every Chinese brand is focusing on the online market now. As most of the sales during the covid days were run by online giants like Amazon and Flipkart, the Chinese are asking us to go to the exhibition, and they themselves are investing more in the online market for advertising and sponsorship of the products. You make your online e-commerce things, and boost the online sale on the online portals - as simple as that.

In comparison to big online giants like Amazon and Flipkart, how do you see the market scenario for independent distributors? Does this affect their business?

I'm not sure if that'll affect their business. A lot of big giants are there, willing to acquire the market for sales. As far as my team and I are concerned, suppose, we have tied up with Flipkart and Amazon, and we have a couple of dealers in the offline market too. We

have different price and sales strategies in both offline and online markets. We're spending bits in both - we promote our marketing strategies using both platforms. But if you talk about the Chinese brands, they're actually exhibiting more in exhibitions, giving greater leverage to the distributors to book bigger space for them there. But as per my knowledge from the last few months, everybody's focusing on the online market right now. They're also encouraging us to put more efforts into the online market.

In India, when it comes to higher priced equipments - like LED lights or drones, people still prefer to get a physical contact of the product from a shop before buying it - a kind of reliability gets in there. As this one-to-one faith is still there in the Indian market scenario, what would you like to say on that?

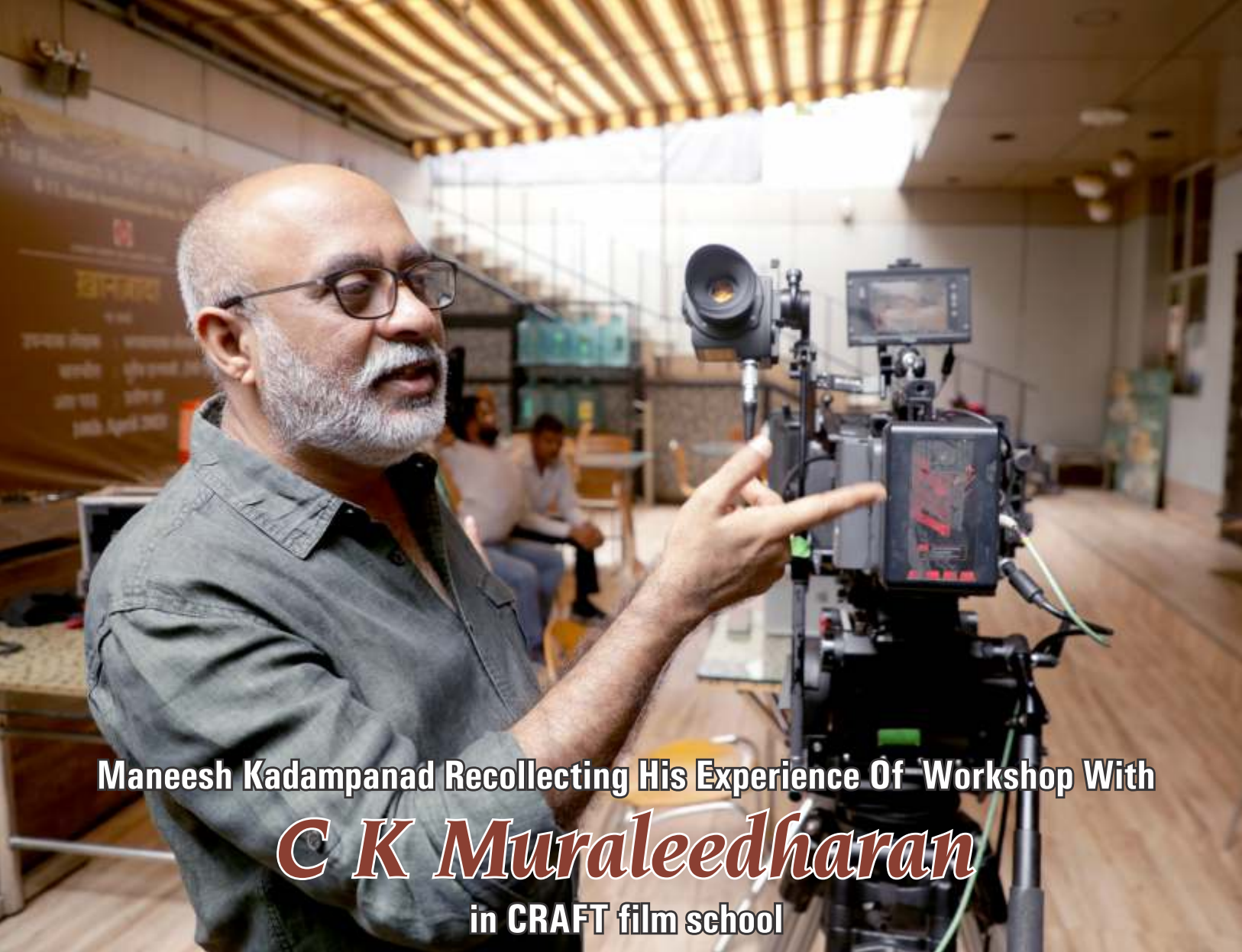
It actually exists. A photographer always likes to visit the retail store or offline camera store, and touch the products they would like to buy. They always go through a hands-on appearance of the product. However, in my experience, more than 70% of people who visit offline shops before buying, start to examine its perks and compare its price with the online market once they're done with their physical inspection. An individual will actually buy from the shop only if he's an old customer of that shop or if he has faith in the shopkeeper. So, that's the reason why a normal person goes to the offline market nowadays. He opens Amazon or Flipkart, and comes across features of replacement and return, which he knows the local shopkeeper won't provide. It's because the shopkeepers follow a

general rule that once you buy the product and it's opened, and you've used it, you cannot return it, according to the company's policy. But Amazon and Flipkart have written policies for returns. Suppose, if someone buys one of the three variants of Sony, and figures out that its resolution isn't good, he can opt for a replacement; he buys the product, he does photography, and after 2-3 days if he doesn't get the thing that he needs, he goes for a return or replacement. Amazon has a really easy policy for that. In fact there's a big fight between the online and offline sales now - the big camera or the electronic brands, or the trading of a particular section of the cameras, are investing both in online and offline markets. But strategies of both markets are different, because online the company has 14-15% fees for the listings and everything, therefore we give a little less price there. The online players basically run on just Rs.1 or 2 to max Rs.10 profit - they just clear the stock to have a big turnover. But the retail shop owners have a lot of expensive things to take care of - they have their own shop, employees, etc. Hence he keeps his own margin, and that's okay because it's normal for people to keep profit. But the online giants play on very minimum margins just to clear off the product. Thus, people nowadays opt for the offline market only on grounds of good relationships. However, once he's dubious about the prices, he switches to buying the products online, which affects the offline shopkeepers too.

Interviewed by: Naresh Sharma
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Maneesh Kadampanad Recollecting His Experience Of Workshop With
C K Muraleedharan
in CRAFT film school

First and foremost, I would like to thank CRAFT Film School for providing me with such a wonderful opportunity to attend a workshop conducted by a renowned DOP, C K Muraleedharan sir.

In the beginning of the workshop, we were introduced to Arri Alexa cinema camera's functions in detail. As the workshop progressed, it made me realize that along with the technical knowledge, artistic perspective is also equally important for a cinematographer. On the first day, we discussed the basics of cinematography and lighting. We went through a small tilt and pan exercise, which gave us the opportunity to handle the camera by ourselves. Moreover, we did a shot breakdown of a small story which we made up on the spot. Muraleedharan sir also explained how the shot division needs to be done, and taught us how to draw a floor plan and lighting diagram. After successfully completing it, we ended the first session by executing the shot breakdown which we had done.

We began the next day with a focus pulling

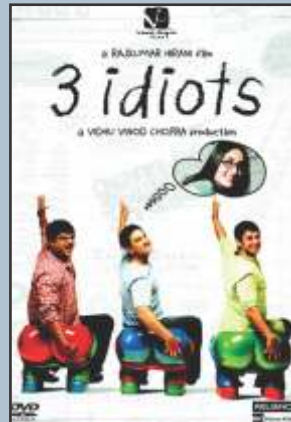
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exercise on Alexa. As we got more familiar with the set up, sir made it a bit more challenging by giving us a more telephoto cine lens, which made us realize that we have a long way to go till we reach perfection. We also did tracking and following shots with characters and lighting, which was a great experience. We got to know the importance of management skills on a set as it was our first time working with professional lightmen, and sir made it easy for us by demonstrating and explaining tools like laser pointers and walkie-talkies for communication. We used ND filters and field monitors as well. Among various exercises, we also lit up a tight corridor, within a limited time which was the most challenging and fun part of the entire workshop. We concluded our day with a chat with C K Muraleedharan sir in which he cleared all our doubts related to Cinematography.

Day three started with a product shoot under the guidance of Muraleedharan sir, where we learned how to deal with reflection and different ways of utilizing it to enhance our product. We also did different lighting and composition, which showed us how complicated a small chocolate commercial product shoot can be and how to get it perfectly done. In the

Important Films of Muraleedharan as DOP





afternoon PPT presentation session, he shared some of his experience and lighting situations he had to deal with in movies like Panipat, 3 idiots, etc. He also introduced us to some of his techniques which he used in these movies. The change in mood made by lighting was explained by showing and discussing a scene from his movie in which he shot a dramatic and romantic scene in the same location only by changing the lighting.

Having the opportunity to learn and communicate with him inspired me greatly. Like him, I come from a rural part of Kerala. He gave me a glimpse into a future I might achieve if I follow his footsteps and keep up my hard-work. □□□





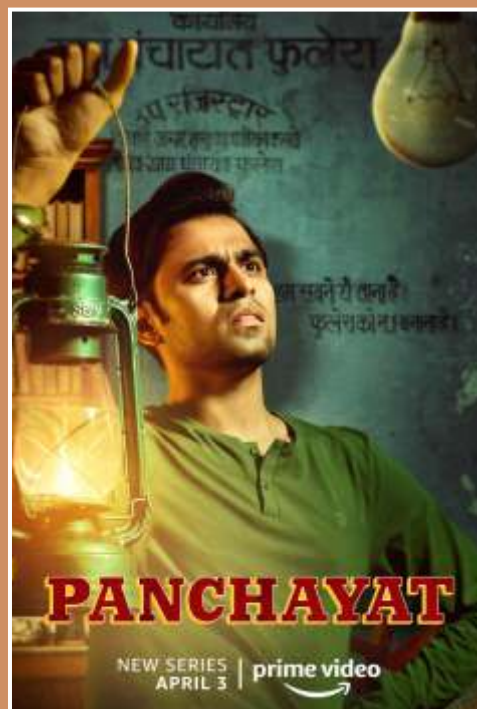
Interview with *Amitabha Singh* as DOP

How did you choose the location for the panchayat?

While on recce we looked for 4-5 villages according to the requirement of the story. The building of the Panchayat Bhavan was thought to be set in the outskirts of the village. A physical separation was required between the houses and the panchayat building; and this happened to be the only village where the panchayat was constructed outside. We had been looking for a real panchayat building to fix our location. But this building had an extra room, therefore we had blocked off the door of one room. Our story required only two rooms, which was a major consideration while identifying the location. Another important consideration was to find a place which allowed high quality sound, because we were to shoot with live sound. Also, this village had an access road which led to the main road. As a result there was no disturbance of traffic or noise during the shoot, apart from the sounds from the village which had to be controlled. We were actually lucky in a way to have got an interior village situation, and we managed to shoot it in one location. The total geography for the whole of 8 episodes that we did, was not more than 500 metres. 90% of the location was in a very limited area, which made us productive in many ways. Only for a few locations like the bazaar and the D.O office, we had to go a little away. But otherwise, the entire village was in one place.

What was your approach for lighting in daytime and at night, especially when you know that there'll be no light at

“



”

night in the village area?

Basically I believe in an idea, and I feel that reflects in my work too. I feel that cinematography should be invisible, and that's the key principle I try to practice. The audience should never be able to feel the presence of any lighting. Therefore, to get that we completely depended on the available lights whether it was night or day. Wherever the location was, we recreated the lighting as seamlessly as possible, considering the existing light which was there. One challenge which the location offered to us was that its facade was east facing to a zero degree accuracy, i.e., the sun would rise exactly straight on us. The face of the building was completely front lit, till around 11 or 11.30am. Only after the sun went overhead, the face used to come under the shadow - hence that used to take half a day to shoot. It had come as a challenge for us, because half the time the building was in light and for the rest of it, the building was in shadow. The shadow used to affect the characters standing in front of the facade. However we tried to merge it seamlessly with the natural light. Moreover, we shot the whole program in transition of seasons. We started to shoot in February and kept shooting till May. Hence naturally, the quality of light differed and we experienced many patches of rain and clouds in shoot. We faced the summer sun, and then many scenes were split like that; some scenes were partly shot in winter and partly in rain. The quality of light changed completely. There were some scenes where I used certain lights like HMI, but of course it was still visible. There was no other solution. So you can figure out artificial light, especially in outdoors.

When the marriage preparation goes on we see half of the part has a shade where people are sitting, and the rest has a bright patch of light. Did you use artificial light to boost up the scene with soft daylight?

That particular scene was critical in several ways. It was shot between 4:30 and 5:30 in the afternoon, hence there was no way to balance the light under the shade and outside. Therefore we waited for the sun to become a bit soft

and under control, and the exterior was brought to a certain level. We used soft natural HMIs to elevate the light level inside to produce a balanced state. However in some of the later shots, it had become evening already and it's kind of dull comparatively.

How did you manage the light setup in such a congested situation in the interior scenes?

Interior basically means the scenes inside the panchayat house or in any of the houses. The day interior scenes had a lot of limitations for us. One thing in overall that we had to keep in mind was the blanket challenge; and we were shooting from two cameras - both RED dragon, almost all the time. Right in the very beginning when I had conversation with the director and the creative team about this series, we had decided to have two cameras in an argumentative way, i.e., both the cameras wouldn't shoot the same thing. The idea was to basically have two different angles to the same scene, and there would also be two different magnifications. Therefore we always had two cameras, and the cameras were at 90 degrees from each other all the time. It was a rare case for the two cameras to shoot at the same axis. It was a challenge for us to keep the camera in different axes all the time.

Whether we were blocking or designing the shot or lighting it, having two cameras at 90 degrees meant that the room available for lighting was even narrower and smaller. More over during day shoots, there was no scope of putting up any light on the ceiling. We wanted the frame to be wide enough, which practically meant that either we were to bounce strong HMIs on the ceiling patches which were not in frame, or have some sort of soft light coming from one of the doors within the structure which wasn't in frame. However the biggest issue, especially in the panchayat bhavan, was that it had many windows. Therefore we were to control the light outside the windows - by using NDs or nets. Then as I said, there were two cameras and both the cameras looked in different directions - both looked at two different windows. Controlling lights outside the windows was, according to me, one of the biggest challenges that we had to face in the interiors. As we got a very limited ceiling space available, it largely bounced HMIs off the ceiling or we used some HMIs with a soft box from a distance, hidden inside a room, of which either the door was invisible or was partially visible. Therefore, light was controlled in this manner.





Due to the bi-camera set up, did you face any kind of challenge in DI in terms of matching the skin tone?

Yes, definitely. We faced many difficulties at the DI stage. No two cameras were identical.

Were both the cameras of the same model - the RED dragon?

Right, they were of the same model, same vendor, and same generation - everything was as close as possible in terms of their tech-specs. It's only when you come to DI and start bringing the images in the desired creative zone, that those kinds of differences between images begin to appear. As we started color correction, we realised that one of the cameras had a distinct green cast to the whole image as compared to the other camera. Matching them, naturally, had limitations to it when it came to balancing skin tone and other tones in any frame. That was a difficulty that we faced.

What was the number of effective shooting days for the entire 8 episodes?

We shot this over 57 days approx.

What was your brief to the costume, makeup and art direction departments, in order to get what you want?

The essential creative brief was that our story should seamlessly blend with the village. My creative interaction with the art direction team was at a very functional level, because most of the structures were as they were. We couldn't do anything with the color scheme of the things because they all have a standard color scheme, like the Panchayat Bhawan had a standard color, and the water tank had a standard color scheme. Everything was from a very real space - most of the houses that we shot had people already living in there. The biggest exception in terms of art direction was the Pradhan's house, because that house really belonged to the Pradhan of

that village. The original structure did not have that 'verandah', which we see in the series. But including that veranda, which was the idea of the production designer Tarpan Shrivastava, became a masterstroke.

How did you manage the verandah there?

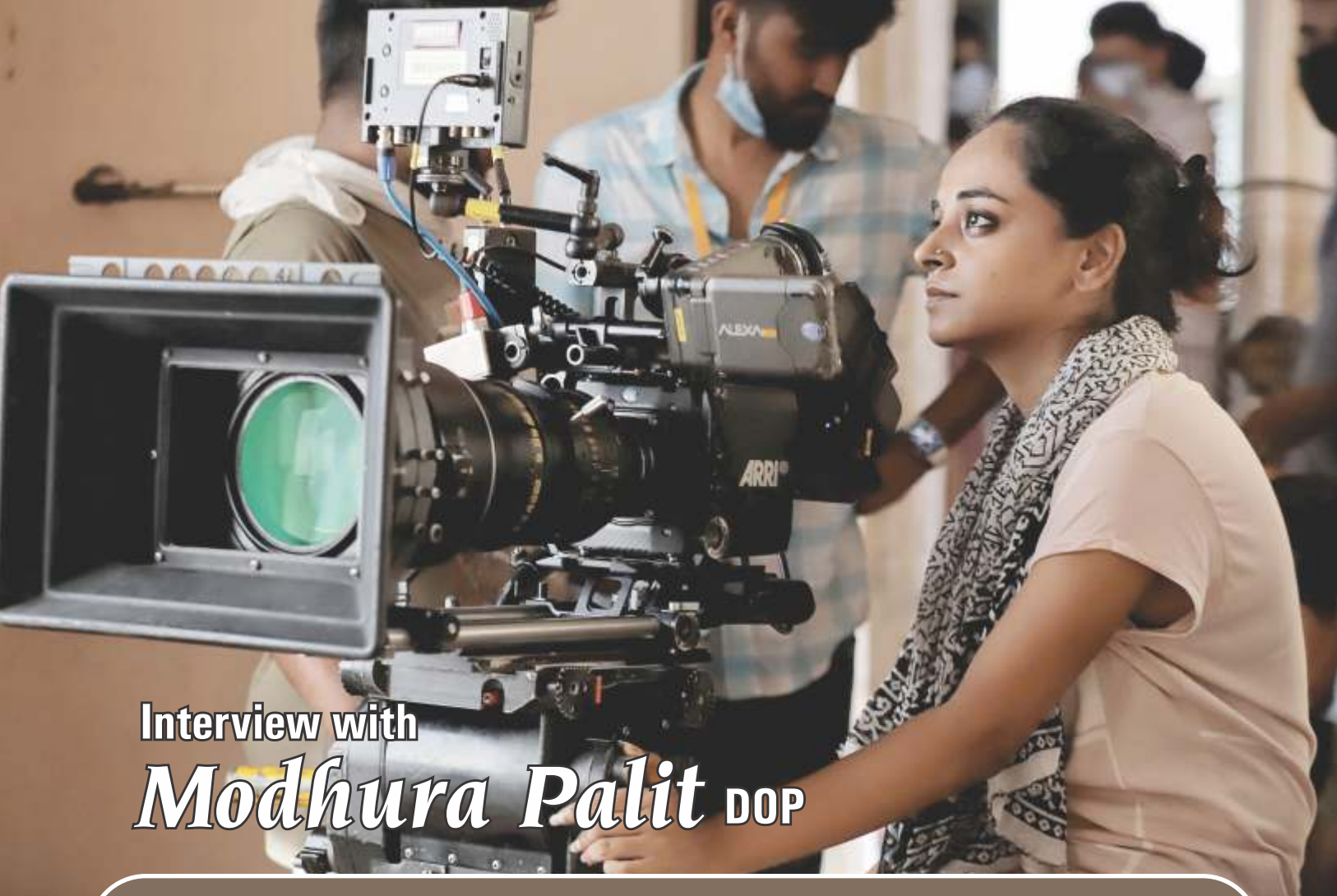
It was just added to the structure. Earlier it was in the green zone, then we brought the whole thing into the warm zone. So that was a major variation done to the original color of the house. In terms of costume, most of the costumes were as close to reality as possible. My only suggestion to the costume team was to avoid narrow stripes or very fine weave, which might give some sort of jittering especially when they are in motion.

Lensing plays an important role, whether it's a rural look or a modern one. What kind of lenses do you choose and why?

Creatively speaking, drama is not larger than life. It is everyday life - as a village person would look at an event unfolding in front of his/her eyes. And if that person has a Handy Camas he/she witnesses something, everything depends on how we choose to capture it. The kind of lenses we used, and the distance we maintained while looking at such a scenario. That has been more or less the creative approach according to which the scenes were thought of, conceived, played out, and shot. The whole idea was that the images should not stand out. Every tool of making the images was selected or applied in a way that it remained as invisible as possible.

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Interview with *Modhura Palit* DOP

Modhura Palit studied cinematography at the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata. Member of the Indian Women Cinematographers Collective (IWCC) as well as of the Eastern India Cinematographers Association (EICA), she is part of the Busan Asian Film Academy (AFA), and she took part in the Looking China Youth Film Project in 2015. Modhura is the first Indian to receive the Pierre Angénieux Special Encouragement Award at Cannes 2019. She has been working on over 30 short-films, tv, documentaries, corporate films and feature films. Her work includes a wide range of films that have been both critically and commercially acclaimed. She is known for her masterful visual work in films like *Ami O Manohar*, *Kishmish*, *Naxalbari*, *Ek dua*, *Rikshawala*, *Kacher Manush*, *The PaperBoy*, *Aator* etc. *Watchmaker* – experimental feature film Modhura shot is part of Dhaka University film studies curriculum. She has also done ad films for Decathlon, Metro Dairy, Haldiram's, Janalaxmi Small Finance etc.

Film critic **Lalit Rao** (FIPRESCI) explores her vision and style of working.

What's your primary approach towards cinematography once you take up a project?

The whole approach depends upon the world of the storyline and the essence of the story. Every film is unique and has its own language. Once I get the pulse of the film - its pace, rhythm, visual signature, mood and how the story progresses, I decide on what is going to be its look, feel or shot designs.

Because every film is different, there's no single formula to design its shots. It completely depends on the mood of the film and mostly upon how the director visualizes it. It is then my job to translate; and if possible transcend; that vision on screen.

Do you feel that shooting an ad film and a feature film has a different outlook from the perspective of a cinematographer?

Yes, to some extent. In ads it's all about the shotlist - you tell a complete story in a very small duration. Usually it's very fast paced edits. You don't have to have direct action-to-action. It's concise in choosing shots and you have no option but to take up only the shots that are necessary to make the audience understand your story and the product in minimum time. But in a feature one has their own pace and mood. There are extra shots at that are used just to uplift



the film's narrative. Obviously there's a great deal of difference in duration—one is 90 minutes plus and the other is maximum one minute. Therefore, the whole process of shot division, narrative and storytelling changes completely. Ads are mostly about choosing crisp shots that would help deliver your story to the point, and making every shot that you take look amazingly beautiful, especially the product and the factors leading directly to the product. While a feature is more about the establishment of mood, emotions and character development, for the sake of which shots that directly do not aid the progress of the plot might also be included in order to enhance the subject motive as a whole.

Ads released in the past one decade do not often seem glamorous. Is there a change in the style of cinematography in ads nowadays?

It's more of a perspective. The ads during that era were shot in accordance with what glamor was during that time. As times change, so do styles and fashions, and the understanding of what is considered glamorous. But yes, the lighting design has definitely changed in the past one decade. It has become more stylised. There is something that is always called the ad look. Which changes from era to era. The look and feel of the ad films look very similar to each other because of that. It also creates a time signature also I think. Though I personally find it slightly weird,

because of a certain tonality and lighting scheme that have become the “norm of an ad”. If you pick up shots from different ads, you'll see the similarity in terms of color palette, contrast and lighting scheme. And I'm guilty of the same. Maybe years later that'll be known as the style of an era.

From the ads and feature films that you have shot, do you recollect any challenging moments from the shoot where you really had to sit down and figure out what the problem is and how to solve it?

Yes, I've actually faced a lot of challenges while shooting independent features. For example, one happened while I was shooting a web series.

During the shoot, I was in this huge construction site which was quite far

away from Kolkata, and we were to wrap up the shoot that day itself. We were on commission for one day. There was a rain machine and I had with me 140 KWS of lights, and effectively all of that was required. But then we realized that one of the generators had stopped functioning, so we were left with the other generator that we had bought for the rain machine. As a result, I had to light up that whole space in 12-13 kws of light effectively, because we couldn't be pulling more power; but rain was required. I had realized that I couldn't do this - I only had 13 kws of light in this huge zone, which was almost a 100x100 block of unconstructed building. Therefore, me and my gaffer had to sit back and decide how to light up the space using only 13 kws of light, so that it would look dramatic yet can be effectively done. Thus, it was a huge challenge for me and the whole team. We had to decide how to pull the cables into that huge zone so that there would be no drop of power and yet the shot looks good. We didn't want to compromise visually. It was amazing and fun, and we learnt a lot that day on handling emergencies.

What exactly do you understand by 'stylized lighting', when you come across the term?

Actually, I asked myself the same question. It's because there is no definition to it. We have to understand the reason behind each kind of lighting first, rather than just using terminology like this. For somebody it might be half light that is stylized, whereas for somebody else, a very hard backlight



with a nice fill might be stylized. For me, personally, stylized lighting means lighting that is not realistic or logical in the realm of the story, but dramatic; and maybe makes the space look larger than life. Cinematic, and effectively creates a visual embellishment. But it is completely open to interpretation. And that is the beauty of stylized lighting.

The film that you've shot; "The Watchmaker" states that it is inspired from German expressionism and noir. What were the elements that you used in your lighting that were inspired from these?

Actually noir is also derived from German expressionism, and German expressionism is all about creating an abstract or absurd space, which doesn't exist in reality. Both noir and German expressionism have always been signified by high contrast images - hard highlights and face lights with no diffusion and the generous use of shadows. If you look through the images in 'The Watchmaker', you'll notice a lot of unspecified shadows and non-specific lighting. We tried to create a space where there is no logical source of light but it creates the ambience of being in a space which you believe to exist, in spite of the space being absurd. It is like, I won't tell you exactly what or where this space is but I'll help you create it. I'll just give you breadcrumbs that will let you create this imaginary space in your head, which you would like to believe in.

What were the requirements in "The Watchmaker" that made you use this style of lighting in the film?

If you ever watch the film, it's a highly experimental and absurdist film where three hypothetical characters come and they are inside a room, having a conversation with the presence of a fourth character which is conscience - nobody sees that character except the

audience. They talk about hypothetical situations - like for one character time doesn't move, for another time moves backwards, and for another time moves forward. The film deals with abstract concepts in an undefined setting. Is it Kolkata? Is it India? Is it abroad? The location's not specified, and neither is the time. Therefore I decided to implement a style which compliments the absurdity and experimentalism of the film. There was no other way to justify the theme of the film, if we didn't provide hints in the visuals.

Another one of your films "Ami O Manohar" has been shot on the Iphone. Why did you decide to shoot on a phone and do you think shooting on phones is a good option?



Ami O Manohar talks about the lonesomeness of a city and for that we wanted to show our protagonist in the hustle and bustle of busy Kolkata streets. Shooting in Iphone was a logistical and also economical choice for our independent film. It was the mobility I needed to merge into the crowd and make the city a character. There are shots which are long, 10-12 minutes long, while the artists are moving in the city. Shooting on Iphone gave me that mobility to create that dynamism in the shots, also I wanted to use the grainy tone for the look of the film. Because the city and the camera are like a subtle character in the film. They are the silent observers. Phones definitely give one the freedom of movement and dynamism that is

difficult to find in full size cameras and that is majorly because of its physical size. But the sensors are still not at par with cine cameras. phones can be used cinematically if the image politics so demands in a film, to maybe have a shot or two from a very critical angle or shooting in restricted areas, but it's still now a viable alternative to a cine camera.

Do you prefer to have your colors produced at the time of the shoot or do you manage it later in DI?

Shoot must be as close to correct as possible. DI is not a magic tool. If you don't have information in your image, the DI cannot create them magically, in which case you'll have to use VFX to create the details in it. DI is an enhancement tool. I opt for DI at the

end and give my colourist the best possible raw footage to work on and set the colour and correct the things that couldn't be controlled during the shoot. So I try to shoot as correctly as possible, having the coordination of my production design and costume department. I light in the colour temperature I want to see my finished product. I feel that it always helps me in DI more than doing unplanned shoots.

Does DI help a cinematographer when it comes to a special look?

Yes, it does. But if I have a specific look in my mind, I'll obviously finalize it before shooting. I'll not decide to change a whole sequence into red tinge or warm overtones suddenly after shooting; I always decide such things before shooting. It's because a lot of factors such as props or costumes would depend on it. Moreover, if I don't have the required colors in the frame during the shoot or if not even a proper bit of light falls on the characters, I'll not be able to enhance those frames even in DI. The DI can only enhance what you're trying to get. Therefore if you shoot it

right, DI works a lot better, gives better control over the image, and the colourist has a good information in the raw image to work on.

Considering that two cameras RED and Alexa have the same resolution, say 4k, and you're using the same lens for both, why do you think the look of the images formed would be different for both the cameras?

That solely depends on the making of the camera. I basically see cameras like film stock when I shoot, like one is Fuji and one is Kodak. The reason why Kodak and Fuji are different from each other is because of their chemistry - how their grain structures differ. Therefore, I personally treat cameras the same way, like RED is a different stock and ARRI or Alexa are yet other such stocks. Each of these cameras is different from the other, and advantageous in its own way— it is due to the difference in their sensors, in color denting, in color spaces etc. You have to understand and choose when to use which, and this actually gives you a better option to look at your images. Something shot in RED and something shot in ARRI usually looks very different. You need to know your requirements precisely, and then decide accordingly. Helps to create a look that is instilled.

Do you think large format is really the need of the hour or is it just the urge of the manufacturing companies to come up with something new?

Large format basically means film theater for us, which people have already stopped going to nowadays. It's the laptops, mobile phones and TV that serve the purpose for them now. But large format can still create the magic because that is something beyond that is seen normally. For me, it's quite necessary to have a large screen experience of a film. You really need to watch a film on the silver screen to

understand the magnitude of the images. The larger than life persona of a film. People might not be bothered about 35mm anymore, but 70mm is still a huge thing. It's going to attract people and they're going to watch cinema in a broader spectacle. It always has. And now I think it's more important than ever. Large format is what the magic of cinema is all about and the audience needs to be reminded of that. Of visuals that are much larger than the cages of their mobile screens. The immersive experience of cinema.

On one hand you are doing independent films like Ami O Manohar, Watchmaker, Amar Colony etc. And on the same hand you are shooting commercial projects like Naxalbari,



Kishmish, EkDuaa, Kacher Manush. How do you balance the aesthetics or the approach?

The biggest demarcation is ofcourse the economy of these film genres also the next is the intended audience of these films. In indie films, I have an absolute free hand. Though the equipment or the set up is extremely restricted, because they are more of an artistic expression than a commercial liability, it allows me to experiment, explore and simply have fun with the camera. Of Course shooting any indie film comes with its own set of difficulties, but somehow I've always loved the challenges that come with it. It excites me and challenges my craft to find ways of giving the best in the

limited resources. The other spectrum is the the so called commercial projects or as I like to call them; Popular projects. When I work on these projects, it is about the production logistics, understanding the end platform of the film and of course having the idea that it will be watched by a vast number of audiences. The excitement of projects like this is the scale and the stylisation and the fun of creating a fictitious world. The aesthetics change but that's what a cinematographer is to do. I understand that the language of the films changes and hence it viewing perspective. I honestly enjoy both the genres because it comes with their own set of challenges and excitements. I've always strived to stay true to the story than have a signature. Hence I'm equally excited to

shoot the noir shadowy world of Watchmaker or the colorful vibrant world of Kishmish.

Do you believe in creating cinematic worlds? You have spoken about this recurrently. How do you build a world? What is the approach?

Yes, I completely believe and try to create a cinematic world for my protagonists. That depends on their

mindspace, the pace and rhythm of the narrative and the mood of the film as well. The geography that is set, the weather that is predominant, the lighting that the characters function is will be different according to the different worlds. It is about immersing the audience into the world and making them believe that this exists. And I want the images to incur that sense of world to them. The visuals must trigger that smell, feel of temperature, that touch of texture for them to get into the film. To have the psychological three dimensionality to a two dimensional image.

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Chetan Kapri on Roger Deakins

**Blade Runner 2049's
Great Scene Lighting**



Roger Deakins had to lose 13 times before winning the oscar for best cinematography in 2018 for "Blade runner 2049". Directed by Denis Villeneuve, the film is a sequel to Ridley scott's 1982 neo-noir. But as it happens the film owes more to Russian master Andrey Tarkovsky both in style and Tone than it does to Scott's Blade Runner. In fact Roger Deakins in his interview for American cinematographer has mentioned 'SOLARIS(1972) as a direct influence on this film. Together Villeneuve and Deakins not only created a visually striking film but an experience, where environment and space work as a character, Best example of this being scenes inside Wallace headquarters.

The principle photography of the film took 92 days and was majorly shot on ARRI ALEXA mini and ALEXA XT with Arri/Zeiss master primes. One of the common motifs in the film is moving sunlight inside Wallace's headquarters(see image below). In a scene where Luv and K walk down the stairway a 24k bare bulb and three 10 k bare bulbs were used to light the passageway. These bare bulbs, housed in safety protection, were rigged to a channel track above the set, and the electricians pulled them to create a hard light that traversed the set as the characters descended. For the wide shot that follows this, in which K and Luv walk down to the 'memory library' door, two 24k Skypanels were rigged on a pulley system, which grips slowly lowered during the scene to create a pattern that slowly grew up the wall.



Most of the look was achieved in-camera without visual effects and lots of gels were used on the lamp heads to create different color atmospheres.

Another common motif inside Wallace's monolithic headquarters is caustic light pattern(see image below) .The Idea of water caustic effect in Luv's office walls came from an



architectural reference and is achieved by bouncing of multiple 10k fresnels from the glass ceiling, which has water above it, water machines were used to slightly move the water. The use of water suggests security within the context of that environment, and the idea that Wallace has total control. These scenes were entirely shot inside a soundstage in Budapest.



For the scene, which introduces Wallace, three 25 feet circles of light were created. Each circle had 35 10k fresnel lamps and were put on a dimmer to create a pattern of moving light. There were square cuts for the light some 15 feet below the lamps to create defined patterns across the walls.



(lighting setup for the scene where wallace is introduced)

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Notes on visualization

Saumyananda Sahi

"Yahudi Ki ladki" Directed by

Hema Singh

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Master of Theatre Lighting

Souti Chakraborty

Interview with DOP

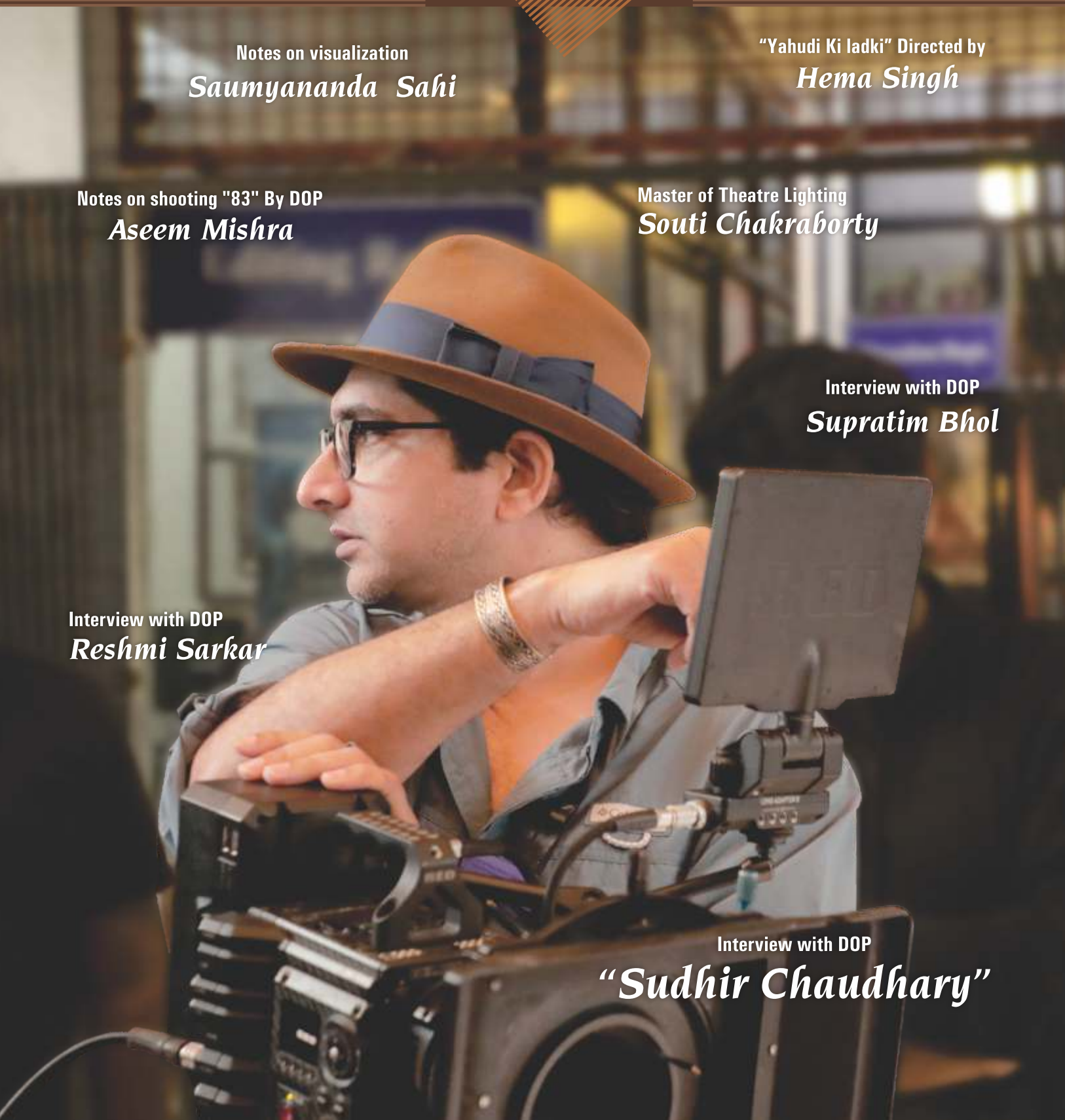
Supratim Bhol

Interview with DOP

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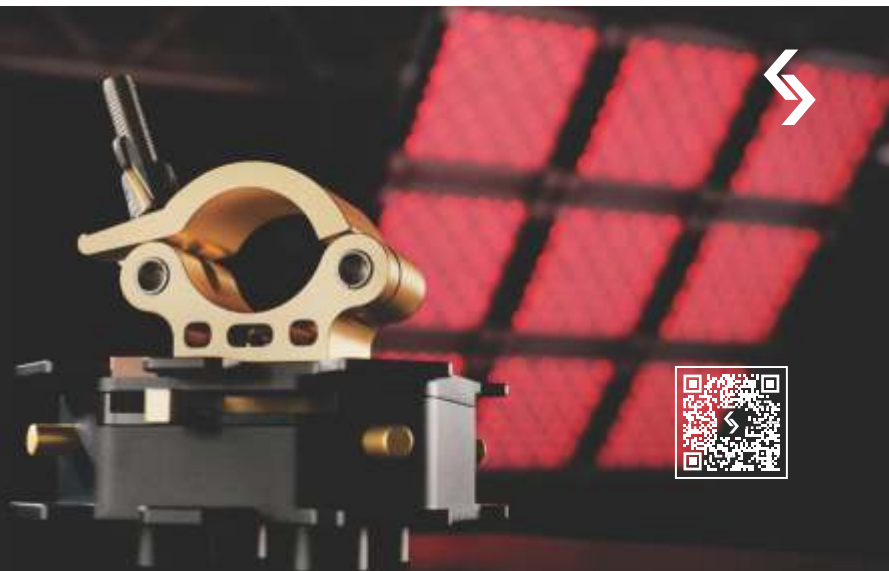
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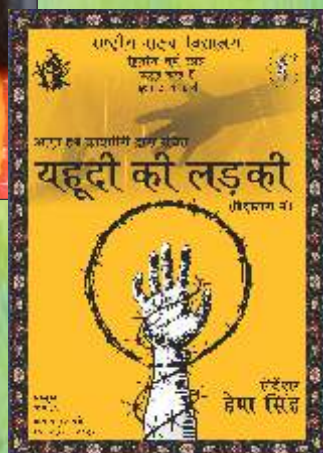
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Yahudi Ki Ladki



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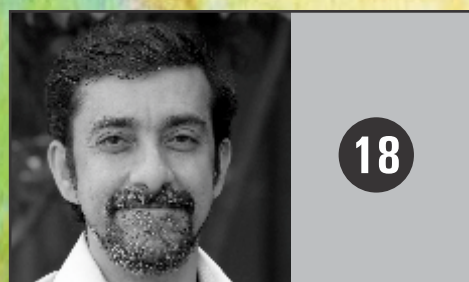


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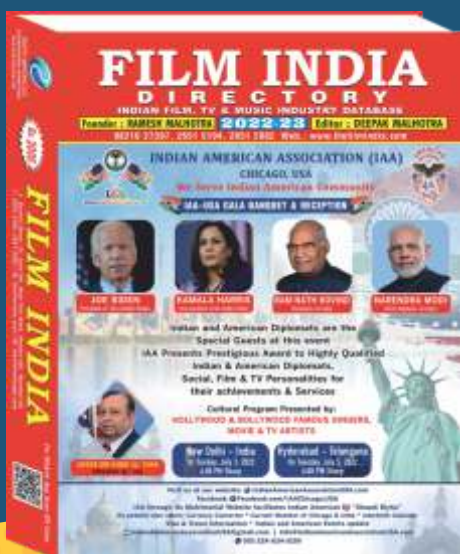
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Yahudi Ki Ladki Directed by Hema Singh

Playwright Agha Hashar's Kashmiri play, originally written more than a century ago, is just as relevant today as it was back then. It was an absolute delight to see these characters come alive a century later. When the same character is being played by more than one actor, while this is a regular feature in the NSD classroom exercise, it is a challenging and exciting journey for any actor to take on the same role and put their sense of aesthetics and understanding of these characters into their performance.

An actor, especially when performing, always plays off the energy of his or her audience and that is the magic of theater. Being an in-house production, the connection with the audience is evident with loud cheering and applause for the grand success of a great show. Revisiting this Parsi style theatre classic play is no easy feat. When I say feat, it can be a real challenge in a great journey of learning and discovery.

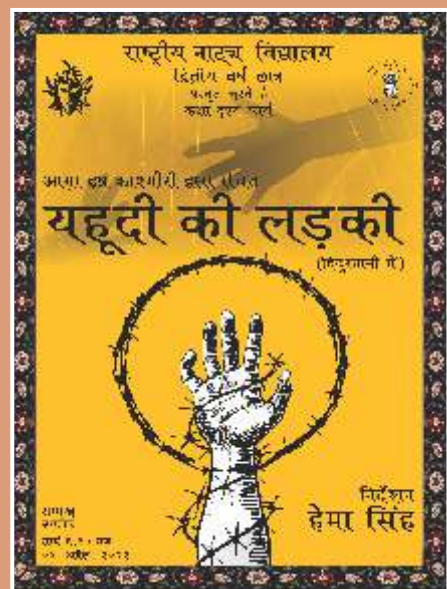
Lighting design is always my special concern, but in small spaces, it can be a real challenge. Yet barring a few places where I felt the fade-outs were a bit longer, it was a job well executed by the students. The set design was minimalist, though it does make one wonder if it was done by design or was so due to a lack of funds.

The performances by all actors were par excellence triggering a varied range of emotions.

One factor that this genre of performance needs is a specific understanding of music and an expert musical arrangement in accompaniment to its narrative. While complimenting the performance, it also underlines its dialogues and gestures consistently. The success of this play "Yahudi Ki Ladki" lies in the fact that it was quite engaging due to appropriate music. Music has been used very well as a tool for changing, transitioning, and amplifying emotions throughout the play.

Anjali Negi as the female lead, Princess Tresia, along with her group of friends, sets the happy tone in the opening scene, and in the latter portions, when faced with rejection by the character of Prince Marcus, her dejection is so real that when she sighs, so does the audience by applauding her performance. "Pyaar karne ka goya jamna nahi" which gets intensified with the sitar rendition, and the scene fades out with the audience clapping. There is the use of dramatic music and the mood shifts to a happy one when Raheel searches for her lover prince disguised as Mansheeha.

Ezra's daughter, Raheel, is introduced to the audience through Anjali Pawar, the perfect cast for a young and happy-go-lucky girl. Her performance adds to the appropriate fragrance of romance in the air, and there's effortless chemistry between Sahoo and Anjali in the opening scene.



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Later, Pooja Malkani carries on as Raheel. She has more powerful lines to enact as the graph of the character takes twists. She contributes her best to build up her character. The momentum generated for Raheel so far gets passed on to Aisha Chauhan who performs with full vigor and intensity which was needed to justify another shade of Raheel's character. It was an engaging performance by Aisha when she denounces him in open court and he is sentenced to death by his father, the emperor.

Dipu Rabha, as the king, delivers a convincing performance. I like the scene when he gets down from his throne and comes to the ground, and the stage is filled with red light to compliment the mood and dialogues.

Mrinali Pandey, as one of the Raheel, does an impressive job. It's a difficult section of the character where she is torn between love and hate for the prince and needs to take an important decision. She enacts the scene with remarkable finesse and brings out the pain of love. She compels you to pause and reflect on the character.

By the time Aparna Kapoor enters as Raheel, we already know that her lover is Prince Marcus and his religion is discovered. Ezra has already asked him to change his religion to Judaism, but Marcus has denied Ezra's condition. It is an engaging scene, where Manoj Yadav, as Marcus, has a heated argument with Aparna making the audience spellbound.

As a teacher, Hema Ji knows how to work on a specific talent of a student for

the benefit of the overall production. Besides maintaining the strong-willed persona of Princess Tresia, Garima Diwakar, who has an added advantage of a melodious voice, conveys the feelings and thoughts immersed in the lyrics by singing a few lines.

This adds another dimension to her performance that enthralls the audience. It was an interesting idea to use the popular tune from the film "Nagin"- 'Tere Ishq Ka Mujh Pe Hua Yeh Asar Hain', which perfectly fits the bill.

Puneet Nanada as 'Kanishash' delivers an intense and powerful performance, except for the occasional screaming that dilutes its impact. I especially liked the debate between Saho and Puneet: it's head-on and maintains the intensity generated by Kanishash.

Vishal manages to do a decent interpretation of Marcus and delivers the poetic lines with grace. He also draws applause from the audience.

Though Abhijeet Kumar Sinha is getting typecast as an old man, but as Ezra, he's simply fabulous and different from what he enacted in "Antiyo ka Tehkhanna". The interactive equation between him and Pooja Malkani as Raheel works very well. Amogh Shaakya and Deepak Rao are equally good as Ezra. When four to five actors perform a single character, a comparison is bound to pop up.

For me, Manoj Yadav as Ezra is the best among all. As required, he delivers his lines in a voice choked with emotions, like an old man at the end is

an absolute soul-stirring experience. His performance without making the audience feel like the odd one out from this typical style was much more inclined toward realistic acting. He managed the high pitch and exaggerated dialogue delivery toned down but surprisingly it gets integrated with the overall flavor of the Parsi style play.

I have observed Jitendra Singh in two different performances, where he has played important characters. He is blessed with a unique reverberating voice quality which comes as an advantage to him in whatever character he played so far. As the priest Brutus, he has impressively emoted an arrogant and cruel man and later the helpless father of a daughter lost in her childhood.

The costumes were a bit underwhelming when compared to professor Hema Singh's grand production of Veer Abhimanyu a couple of years ago featuring NSC students.

The color code in the characters' costumes helps the audience to keep a track of the character. We are not left baffled as they are enacted by different students from time to time during the play because it was a students' exercise, everybody needed equal opportunity to get the taste of Parsi style. However, red and green are overly used, which is disturbing. Matt finished grey for Sahoo and Vishal, brown for Ezra and soldiers - the rest of the color schemes were chosen aesthetically.

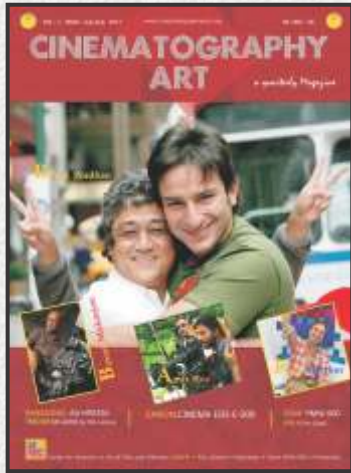
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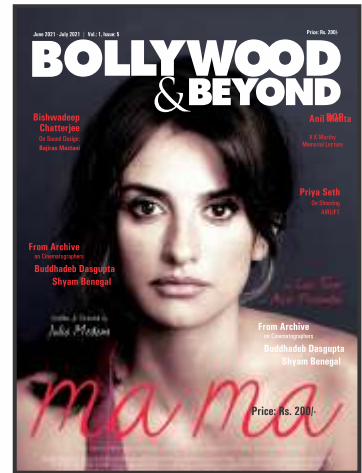
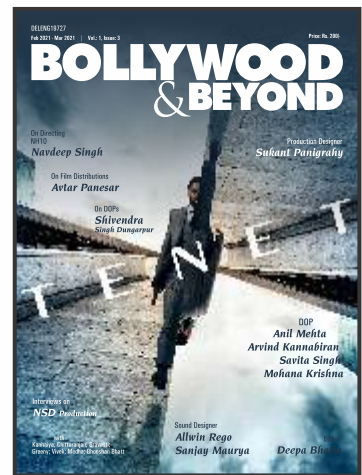
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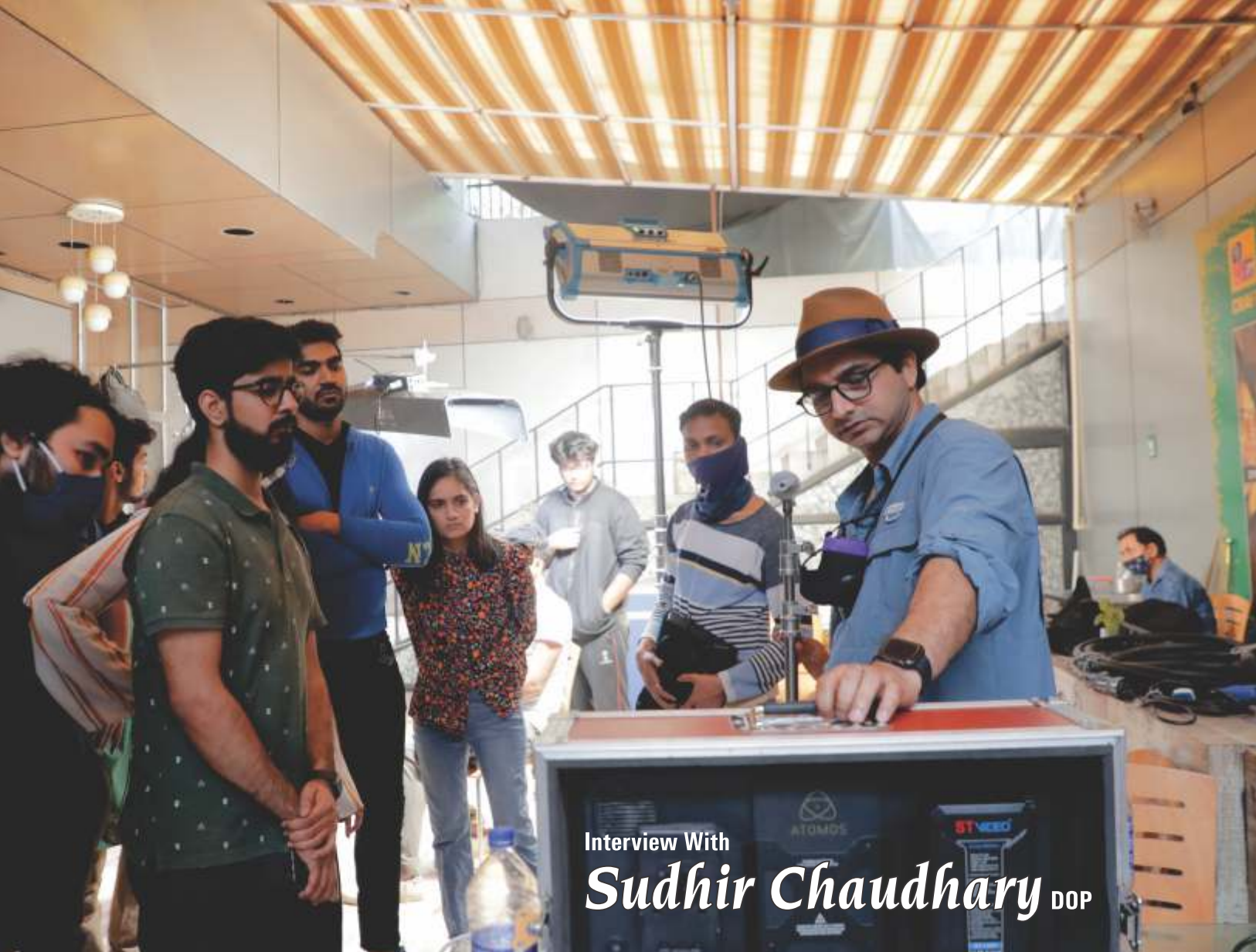
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Interview With *Sudhir Chaudhary* DOP

What is your approach towards the cinematography of a film when a director approaches you?

The approach is always to justify the script, justify the world the script is trying to portray at the same time make the images acceptable to the audience that it's going to cater to. Be it the world of the boys in Luv Ranjan's, 'Pyaar ka Punchnama', or the realistic world of Ajay Bahl's, 'Section 375' or 'Blurr'.

On 'Pyaar ka Punchnama' which is an out and out comedy with vibrant colors, overexposed glossy skins, the idea was to have neat images, not try and say much in visuals. Whereas on Section 375, images had to affect the audience in a much stronger way. The approach was more realistic. Taking it further on 'Blurr' where the protagonist is having struggle seeing, the visuals were designed to make it equally stressful for the audience to perceive. Somewhere the approach

has to change with each script, and with every film the effort goes into knowing the world, getting into the skin of characters.

Do you prefer to get references from the directors?

I don't ask them for references straightaway. I prefer reading the script and make my own references, that I share with them to get their feedback. Mostly we find a common grounds in those reference and we build it up from there. A lot of time they have something to share as well. If my presentations don't match with theirs they show me references. It's always good to work with references, be it in any form, a video, photograph, painting or even a visual through the office window. It's good to know what he has in mind. Not just the look and lighting but even the lensing, composition, camera movement. 'Section 375' and 'Blurr' are mostly on dollies and

sticks, but I felt a strong urge that 'Sangeen' should be completely handheld. We discussed and tried it for a day, then two and then just carried on. Twenty Nine days every shot was filmed handheld.

What was your interaction with the prosthetics artist in "Ujda Chaman"?

The prosthetics team on Ujda Chaman was an excellent one. They had concerns regarding top lighting with the prosthetics, so we did some tests and figured out ways to make it work in top light.

In how many days did you shoot "Ujda Chaman"?

It was a one-go shoot in Delhi in the month of June, and it was really tough with all the sweat. Prosthetics was a major concern in such a scenario, but it got successfully pulled off. We wrapped the film in around 39 days.

What is your interaction with the production designers in general?

I think my approach with Production designers changes with the kind of film it is. When it's a rom-com I try and keep it less demanding. They bring the stuff on the table and it's more of choosing, picking what you like and then mixing things up. On films like 'Section 375', 'Blurr' or the under production 'Drishyam-2', I like getting into details, talk about textures, aging. It's a teamwork after all, we all share our ideas and figure out ways and means to justify the script eventually. I think I get really demanding on films that have a certain look and feel around them.

What do you discuss with the costume designer?

I mostly discuss the color scheme with them and provide them with a palette - if I would want to have certain hues avoided or incorporated into my frame. Sometimes I advice them against certain texture or color that reproduces strangely on digital format.

What role does DI play today in achieving the overall look of the film?

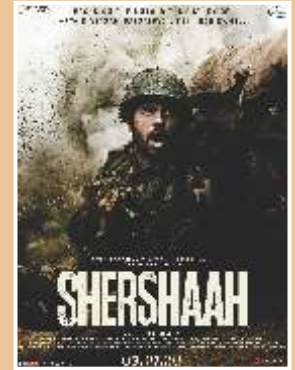
It has always been my aim to achieve my look in camera. When I get into costume colors, or background colors or the kind of lighting(soft source, direct source, etc.), what remains for post is just finishing it off and doing the extra bit if need be. For 'Blurr', we needed a look that was relying on tweaking of the image digitally. So I created a look from images we shot during look tests, and then created a LUT (Look Up Table), We then fed the LUT into the camera to continuously monitor that we were on the right track during shoot. It made our life in post very easy. Since the same LUT was used as a reference to create the final color grade in the DI. My colorist Makrand Surte at Red Chillies was of great support. It's always better to have a look in your mind during shoot, it rules out a lot of differences during post.

With the same colorist on board, how much can the choice of a particular DI machine brand affect the look of the film?

I've never actually got the opportunity to test it the way you ask. But I do strongly believe that the workflow is extremely important. Something that looks in a certain way on one machine might not look the same way on another machine if the workflow isn't the same. This is one of the reasons why VFX that's being done at a different studio never returns back to fit perfectly in a DI suite. Some tweaking is always needed.

Key light, fill light and backlight being

Important Films of Sudhir Chaudhary as DOP



July - September 2022



the standard terms and a kind of routine work for a professional, how do you regularly reinvent yourself on set?

These terms exist, they are the basics in your learning process. It changed with time for me. I don't call for a key light now, I make a sun source instead; I make an ambience in the room, which you can term as a fill light. I have a glow on the hair from the light behind the character, which's obviously the back light. Probably you might tell a gaffer pre lighting somewhere to keep the key at a certain level, but mostly I have grown out of it.

Since we have 4k resolution monitors on location nowadays, do you go by what the monitor says or you still go by the meter reading?

I still use the meter in order to keep the contrast consistent. More time you spend on set, your eyes get used to how you see things there, which is why you may fail to notice certain changes in contrast instantly. You need tools to keep things consistent. I do use false color a lot

when I'm trying to work a little faster.

What is false color?

False color is an option built into all digital cameras and a lot of monitors. It reproduces different IRE values in different colors. For example, a skin tone shows as pink on the face, a mid tone is represented in a greenish hue. Something that's lost highlight detail and is burning off shows as red. Similarly underexposed portions become blue or magenta. It gives you a fair idea of where you are—whether you want to control it or you want to leave it for post.

How much are you involved at the DCP making level?

When it's just digital conversions, I don't bother much. Only if the DCP is in a resolution that's way below we planned for, I check the DCP thoroughly. Most of the time, especially with labs like Red Chillies and Prime Focus, there's not much to worry, once your grade is right and you've checked your FOPs(the

rendered version of your grade). I would probably just check a few reels, and if it is fine then I don't feel the need to worry. With technology our DCP conversions have really come close to our final grades. QUBE is my most trusted DCP technology.

Has it ever happened that you watched something perfect at DCP level but you watched something different in cinema halls?

Always, because we work in a perfect or a nearly perfect condition in a DI suite. We are working with the correct foot lamberts projected on the screen. But when you see the same footage in different theatres, it looks a little offset - either in exposure or in hues. It's mostly because of the age of the lamps and aged screens. But we obviously cannot go to each theater and correct it. Therefore, my game stays only till the lab and DCP. Post that I let things be, because I have no control on it.

How much is 4k/6k capable of enhancing a projected image on the screen, or is it just a myth?

For a song in "Pyaar Ka Punchnama2", we were filming with a lot of strobe lights. I was using a digital camera which had an optical shutter back then to avoid the rolling shutter issues most digital cameras had in those days. But after a day's shoot there was some issue, and I was looking around for options I could continue with, when I got my hands on the Sony F-65, which had an 8k converted into 4k image to boast of, and an optical shutter on it, so I used it. Later while I was doing the grade on the song, I was really amazed with how the footage of the F-65 looked. It was very sharp. I had realized that 4K was actually the way forward, and I shot "Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweetie" on the Sony F-65. It produced wonderful images. But I think we can stop at 4K because it's more than enough, unless you go for something for the IMAX format.

Do you think 'Bokeh' to be an aesthetic version of the image or has it something to do with the technical measurement of a lens?

It's of course something technical, but has a certain aesthetic value to it. We think of the aesthetics first and technique is there to achieve it. The 'Bokeh' you get on an anamorphic lens has a different charm as compared to that from a spherical lens. I am mostly choosing based on the aesthetic value of it.

Do you feel that large format was actually the need of the hour?

I think the sensors can be divided into two categories . Ones with higher resolution and then ones with great color rendition. Large Format to me is more like a common ground between them. Higher resolution sensors get more space to increase pixel sizes and get better color rendition, while sensors with better color rendition find them selves with more space to add some resolution. Full frame sensors are a result of that I suppose. I personally like the way they feel. Though they are really harsh on focus pullers. I personally feel, that charm of the large format will diminish if every film is shot that ways. They are something special, and they should be used for special films. Probably a Sanjay Leela Bhansali film in an IMAX format. Just saying.

Why do you think is this 3D craze among the film goes increasing or why are the producers even coming out with the 3D versions than the 2D versions of the newly released films?

Cinema has entered your drawing rooms with bigger screens and 4K now, and you also have movies in 4k on platforms like the Apple TV with Dolby surround sound. More and more platforms will follow. It's probably something for the film makers to pull the audience back to the big screens. That's one reason for the bigger screens or theatres to offer IMAX or 3D. But not every film needs to be in 3D or IMAX . Good content would be good even if watched on a 15 inch monitor.

Feedback: sudhircine2005@gmail.com





Saumyananda Sahi

DOP

Born in Bangalore, Saumyananda Sahi originally studied philosophy at St Stephens College in Delhi before deciding he wanted to be a cinematographer, attending the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune.

Over the past decade, Saumyananda has worked on a variety of projects, both factual and fiction, with such filmmakers as Kamal Swaroop, Shaunak Sen, Prateek Vats, Arun Karthick, Anamika Haksar, Thomas F Lennon and Prashant Nair. His work has played at film festivals around the world, including Cannes, Berlin, Sundance, Rotterdam, Locarno, Busan, Hot Docs (Canada) and IDFA (Holland). He was nominated for an Asia Pacific Award (Balekempa, 2018) and, more recently, a 2021 Filmfare Award (Eeb Allay Ooo!, 2019) for Best Cinematography. He won awards at both MIFF (Have You Seen the Arana?, 2014) and IDSFFK (Rangbhoomi, 2014). His most recent work includes feature film 'Nasir' (2020) and documentaries 'Invisible Demons' (2021) and 'All That Breathes' (2022).

As well as his work as a cinematographer, Saumyananda has directed two documentaries and has producer, editor and production designer credits to his name. In 2019, Saumyananda was selected for the PJLF Three Rivers writing residency to develop his directorial debut fiction film, which he will be co-directing with Tanushree Das in 2023. This year Saumyananda has also been selected as one of the ten participants of BAFTA's Breaththrough India programme for 2022.

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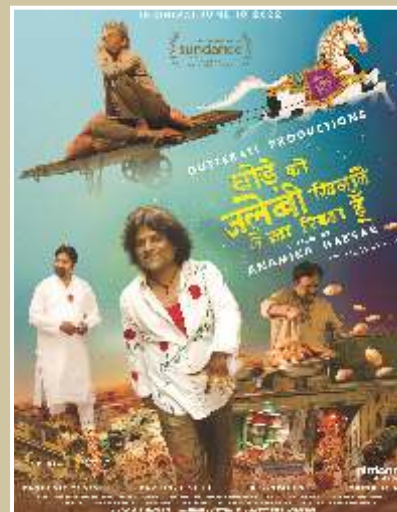
Notes from the visualization
process of

'Taking the Horse to Eat Jalebis'

by cinematographer

Saumyananda Sahi

”



GESTURES IN THE AIR

I vividly remember what I felt as I turned the first page of Anamika Haksar's script for her debut film, 'Taking the Horse to Eat Jalebis'.

The opening sentence was liquid, moving from a dirty drop of water dripping out of a rusted drainpipe to flow down and through an entire network of gutters and scurrying rat trails to finally behold the old city of Shahjahanabadas it hesitated on the threshold between night and day, dream and wakefulness.

As I read on, it quickly became clear that this was not a regular script. It was written differently. Certain specifics, which are usually the starting points – is a given scene day or night? Interior or exterior? In which location? – were often left for interpretation. The text hopscotched over boxes that seemed to be moving with lives of their own, while characters joined in or left mid-jump.

What was enacted? What was documentary? What was animation? And if we had to film this... how? There were scenes where the city is inundated by a giant wave; there were scenes where vegetables transform into children and then burst into terrible fire. Reading the script, I felt a disorientation comparable perhaps to finding myself in a bustling foreign city where signposts were unintelligible and whose spoken language I could not understand. I did not know where I was supposed to be going, let alone asking for directions to get there.

It was only after we started shooting that I began to gradually understand that Anamika saw things quite differently – and the key to this difference was her background in theater. For while Anamika was a newcomer to cinema, coming with



the exuberance of having found a New World, she was a veteran theatre person with a truly unique and path-breaking body of stage-work behind her.

My confusions with the script were largely due to my projections while reading – expecting the text to be a floor-plan of sorts, from which to build up and around and forward, but then discovering with some uneasiness that the pages were actually a pack of cards. The script was meant to be played, not followed. Anamika did not see text as something that needed to be realized, but something that needed to be performed!

Indeed, this distinction was essential to Anamika's method – and I slowly began to see why. Cinema and theatre approach the question of how to represent reality and the imagined in quite strikingly different ways, because what is real and what is imagined is itself strikingly different on the stage as compared to on the screen. But what, exactly, does this difference entail?

The French philosopher Henri Gouhier once observed, "What is specific

to theatre is the impossibility of separating off action and actor." Cinema, Andre Bazin observes, is quite the inverse – accommodating "every form of reality save one – the physical presence."

This fundamental difference – in being an image of (in cinema) as opposed to being an image itself (in theatre) – has naturally led practitioners of each medium to take separate paths in exploring how their particular breed of images can best evoke an experience.

The stage for the most part does not bother trying to present a world – being content in just evoking it. The cinema must also evoke, no doubt – it does not bring a real steam engine to the screen, only an image of it. But the 'life-like' images captured by its mechanical and electronic devices from the very outset bring an element of realism part and parcel – seeming to offer an 'objective' view of an actual world, rather than a 'subjective' rendition of it. And so the temptation in cinema is often to make the guiding hand invisible – to hide the artifice and enhance the illusion, it being assumed (erroneously) that a sense of 'direct experience' paves the shortest bridge between moving pictures on screen and viewers being emotionally moved.

What Anamika did in 'Taking the Horse to Eat Jalebis' was to open up the borders – she allowed the currency of cinema and the currency of theater to be exchangeable, and she allowed the values of each to enrich the other. Anamika took the realism of the camera and turned it around on its head – to





create a kind of magic realism that penetrated into a subconscious world. She was not interested in the surface of things, she was interested in the feelings swirling and colliding within.

While 'theatrical' tends to be another way of saying 'bad acting' in cinema (obsessed as it is with verisimilitude), Anamika used it as a means of sculptural relief – lifting characters into the foreground, while the camera recorded the real street and surroundings as the backdrop. And suddenly, the foreground would subside

– as if it were only a passing wave, an upheaval against gravity, and what would remain was our view of the life-like, the documentary. Then another wave would come – not enacted this time, but animated, a flying carpet over the city. And that too would subside, sinking back into the gutters.

What I found most exciting about Anamika's aesthetic choices was that they were deeply committed to reality – to the daily struggles and daily joys of the daily wage earners – but approached through a tradition of storytelling that took heart

as well as strength from folk imagination. Anamika embraced the whimsical, the caricature, the farce. Anamika also embraced the unsettling and vulgar and horrific. She embraced the city of Shahjahanabad the way the people who lived there did: entirely. She shared Luis Bunuel's sentiment that "Of course, fantasy and reality are equally personal, and equally felt, so their confusion is a matter of only relative importance..."

The final result, everyone seems to agree, is an experience quite difficult to describe. For those going into the cinema hall expecting something "with human interest and a semblance of truth" as Coleridge would have it, the film is a veritable assault. Anamika does not ask her audience to "suspend their disbelief" – in fact, her jarring together of multiple forms ensure the exact reverse.

Somewhat akin to the Brechtian effect of eye to eye, Anamika's cut-outs and pasting together of multiple mediums and multiple aesthetic traditions makes the audience uncomfortably aware that they are



watching, that they are tourists no different to the tourists who enter into her film – asking to see folk stories, but “not this, not this”.

Looking back, I think it was the many dream sequences contained within the film that pushed us into exploring how we could break out of the cinematic trappings of realism. It is interesting in this context that the dreams are the parts of the film taken directly from the testimonies of actual people. The dreams were real dreams dreamt by beggars, pickpockets, loaders, small-scale factory workers and many others who make the streets and gutters of Shahjahanabad their home. And they were communicated to us in short broken sentences, truncated by the daily nightmare to which they awoke:

“I see a dark dungeon. I see a temple. I see corpses. I see a dark dungeon. We are running... we are flying. We are running. I see dirt everywhere. We are going up... flying in the air. I see a dark dungeon. The Ganga has dried up. I see corpses. I see a graveyard. I see a temple. We are going to the shelter. We are flying. We are going up...”

When Anamika finished reading, we were all silent. This was the first time members of the core team were being introduced to one another, meeting in her house. Soumitra Ranade, who was to helm the VFX and animation of the film, was the person to whom many of the questions were being directed – because the pressing subject of the discussion was how to visualize the dreams. Gurudas Pai, the line producer, was also there – sitting with knitted brows, not saying a word, but listening with trepidation as to what all this might cost.



Anamika then passed around what she called 'visual landscapes' prepared by Archana Shastri – who was to be an integral part of the team, credited as Production Designer, but perhaps better described as Imaginative Instigator. (Archana, like Anamika, is not a film person – she comes 'from painting'.)

The visual landscapes that Archana had prepared for the film were inspired by the dreams Anamika had collected, and for the most part they were mixed-media collages, using cutouts from photographs, calendar art, maps and miniature paintings with the additional intervention of her own drawing laced on top. And we were all of us lost again, trying to communicate over differences in language, differences in form, about how we were to translate what Anamika had written and Archana had created on paper into moving images on the screen.

But the dreams challenged the crew beyond questions of representation. It was not a lack of budget or technology that we were faced with – though, for

certain, those constraints were also there. The dreams challenged us fundamentally about what it is to create a sound-visual experience of something felt, something illusive to our senses, something so fragile and vulnerable that it needs the closing of our eyes to see.

What was this dungeon? What did the temple look like? Was it day or night? Were the corpses of people known or unknown? Who was running? Were you flying by moving your hands, or were you carried upwards by the air? What is this shelter? How did you know where to find it?

Faced by a barrage of rational questions, the dream folds up like a touch-me-not. Even horror is vulnerable, even horror hides its face from the flashlight – borrowing deep into the warmth of our intestines. But stay a while, be silent, and the leaves unclasp and re-open with soundless welcome.

We cannot depict our dreams as real things. Dreams cannot be shared as real things. We can only gesture – gesture with words, gesture with images, gesture with sounds – and hope, perhaps, that you might dream the same dreams.

What is most inexpressible, but most urgent, we communicate with gestures in the air. Gestures are perhaps all we really need, in any case.

Technical Details:

'Ghode Ko Jalebi Khilane Le Jaa Riya Hoon' was shot on the Canon EOS-1DC, with Zeiss Compact Prime CP2 lenses.

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watching, that they are tourists no different to the tourists who enter into her film – asking to see folk stories, but “not this, not this”.

Looking back, I think it was the many dream sequences contained within the film that pushed us into exploring how we could break out of the cinematic trappings of realism. It is interesting in this context that the dreams are the parts of the film taken directly from the testimonies of actual people. The dreams were real dreams dreamt by beggars, pickpockets, loaders, small-scale factory workers and many others who make the streets and gutters of Shahjahanabad their home. And they were communicated to us in short broken sentences, truncated by the daily nightmare to which they awoke:

“I see a dark dungeon. I see a temple. I see corpses. I see a dark dungeon. We are running... we are flying. We are running. I see dirt everywhere. We are going up... flying in the air. I see a dark dungeon. The Ganga has dried up. I see corpses. I see a graveyard. I see a temple. We are going to the shelter. We are flying. We are going up...”

When Anamika finished reading, we were all silent. This was the first time members of the core team were being introduced to one another, meeting in her house. Soumitra Ranade, who was to helm the VFX and animation of the film, was the person to whom many of the questions were being directed – because the pressing subject of the discussion was how to visualize the dreams. Gurudas Pai, the line producer, was also there – sitting with knitted brows, not saying a word, but listening with trepidation as to what all this might cost.



Anamika then passed around what she called 'visual landscapes' prepared by Archana Shastri – who was to be an integral part of the team, credited as Production Designer, but perhaps better described as Imaginative Instigator. (Archana, like Anamika, is not a film person – she comes 'from painting'.)

The visual landscapes that Archana had prepared for the film were inspired by the dreams Anamika had collected, and for the most part they were mixed-media collages, using cutouts from photographs, calendar art, maps and miniature paintings with the additional intervention of her own drawing laced on top. And we were all of us lost again, trying to communicate over differences in language, differences in form, about how we were to translate what Anamika had written and Archana had created on paper into moving images on the screen.

But the dreams challenged the crew beyond questions of representation. It was not a lack of budget or technology that we were faced with – though, for

certain, those constraints were also there. The dreams challenged us fundamentally about what it is to create a sound-visual experience of something felt, something illusive to our senses, something so fragile and vulnerable that it needs the closing of our eyes to see.

What was this dungeon? What did the temple look like? Was it day or night? Were the corpses of people known or unknown? Who was running? Were you flying by moving your hands, or were you carried upwards by the air? What is this shelter? How did you know where to find it?

Faced by a barrage of rational questions, the dream folds up like a touch-me-not. Even horror is vulnerable, even horror hides its face from the flashlight – borrowing deep into the warmth of our intestines. But stay a while, be silent, and the leaves unclasp and re-open with soundless welcome.

We cannot depict our dreams as real things. Dreams cannot be shared as real things. We can only gesture – gesture with words, gesture with images, gesture with sounds – and hope, perhaps, that you might dream the same dreams.

What is most inexpressible, but most urgent, we communicate with gestures in the air. Gestures are perhaps all we really need, in any case.

Technical Details:

'Ghode Ko Jalebi Khilane Le Jaa Riya Hoon' was shot on the Canon EOS-1DC, with Zeiss Compact Prime CP2 lenses.

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Souti Chakraborty ”

Do you decide the lighting scheme for a play as a whole, or do you go scene by scene?

There are two things that I always focus on. First, the physical atmosphere that the playwright has given, provided if it's a play written by a playwright. There'll be a definite locale, under a definite time, under a definite season, which sets our mental atmosphere accordingly. This is the work I do before meeting the director. When a playwright writes a play, the physical and mental

atmosphere is there in his / her mind; and the dialogues come according to that. The physical atmosphere which we tend to miss, is also provided in the brackets. Depending upon the scope of the brackets, and the physical time of the performance, it might differ. Suppose, Chekov wrote "The Cherry Orchard" in 1903 and someone performs it in 2022, the atmosphere of the play still remains the same. But if one only goes through the playwright, it would be a mistake. Understanding the

atmosphere of the play and the psychology of the characters is very important. For me, light design is a visual art; it's a narrative, and beyond that, it is psychology. Hence I also explore it from that point of view. If it's a new play, I go through the play at least 20-25 times. When I read a play for the first time, I don't read it from the point of view of a light designer. I try to read it neutrally, so that from the next reading I can focus on what I'm supposed to do. I usually spend about one and a half months for doing light design for a play. It's my individual decision to take up less work - I won't do Ctrl+C and Ctrl+V. I need time to spend in rehearsals - that's where I, as a light designer, get to read the mind of the director and the actors. A simple movement, like if I turn from right to left, might decide the psychological state of mind of a character. Moreover, every actor is made of a different rhythm. If an actor moves his shoulder from right to left it might be my cue to enter a light source, which is why I spend at least one and a half months for a play. Usually I don't discuss the play for about 7 days with the director. I just be there and understand everything. I always try to be there from the reading itself. But it's very important to accept the director as the captain of the ship. There might be a difference in opinion while working with a director, but that shouldn't affect your decisions. We as light designers can always contribute to the production with our creative inputs. I always tell my students to not impose anything on the director. Only after gaining a decent experience one can slowly bring in his / her ideas, and the director also understands his/ her capability by that time. It's a collaborative process. It's not just the director; as a light designer we need to sit with the set designer, costume designer, makeup designer, sound designer and if there's video, video designer. Unless you understand theatre in totality, your light cannot fulfill the requirement of the production.

How do you go about lighting up a scene with multiple characters?

Light design is never about the quantity of equipment; it is the quality of light that's required. Light design is not just rigging 300 equipment. You can do light design even just using 20 equipment as well. I start to break up a scene after 15-20 days. After the



preliminary blocking is done, there are three major things when I start to think. First, the angle of light which decides the state of mind of a character; second, the color; third, the quality of light, whether it is hard or semi-soft or soft light. Soft lights create a different state of mind compared to hard light. Therefore, it's important to decide where to use which equipment and the angle of it. One equipment can be used in the first scene, and again in the fourth scene. If there's this kind of possibility, I always have a talk with the director before blocking. I give suggestions for the composition. Light design is a systematic process and therefore, making the Lighting plot is very important because it reflects a systematic thought process of a designer. Two equipment can be used in scene 1; one of them can be used in scene 2 separately; and again both of them can be used in scene 3. This distribution is called 'patching', and it needs to be understood in order to keep the production cost in limit. Every locale is bound either by the presence or absence of light. If there are 5 scenes in a play and all the scenes take place in the same locale but the time is different, it means that the quality of light would be different. Therefore understanding, at first, the physical atmosphere, then the mental atmosphere of the characters,

and then the interpretation of the director counts. Then the main thing is the composition - the bodyline of the actors, which helps to decide the angle of the light source. Visibility is the primary thing. Therefore, besides creating the physical and mental atmosphere, we have to find out the right visibility depending on the distance between the actor and the audience, i.e., geography of the performance space. This also helps to decide the wattage of the light equipment. Suppose, a 500 watts equipment can still work in black box, but not in a proscenium. It's because the perception of visibility has changed with the introduction of mobile and television. 20 years ago people could see even in a lantern's light, but today they can't. Also, another major thing is the entry point of music, because music creates a definite rhythm. Music or the sound creates an image in the audience's mind, which decides the mood of a scene; and light has to follow it. If the music is slow and the pace is regular, then light cannot enter speedily. It has to synchronize with the music, to create a composite impression. Suppose, in "Abhigyan Shakuntalam" I just don't

follow music as a unit; it's rather a changing sub-unit in the unit. It creates a different mood and a different state of mind for the audience along with the character, which light has to follow; if it's a song, light needs to follow its lyrics; if music changes abruptly, it has to be noticed in the light too.

How do you inculcate the change in light?

If the rhythm is a continuous tune followed by a sudden short rise, I make my own counts. When I operate it, the rhythm is right in my heart. Say, I'll count till 7 and at 8, it'll change. I have to remember this in my body memory. Light should be a part of the whole plan. If you can see light as a different element in a play, that counts as the worst light design.

Does the standard formula of key, fill, kicker and back lights apply for theatre lighting too?

The objective of light design is to create a 3D or a sculptural. On stage there are the objects and there are the bodies of actors. If it's a realistic play, I have to follow the key source, the fill, and also along with that, the state of mind of the character. Following these three things, I can create the three



dimensional quality in a scene, in an empty space.

Do you recollect any play you designed, where a sequence or two of it is stylized?

This happens often when I have worked with Prof. Robin Das. He uses a treatment in his plays where it is sometimes realistic, sometimes surrealistic and sometimes impressionistic. For example, he used impressionism in "Ashadh Ka Ek Din". Although it's a realistic play by Mohan Rakesh, the treatment used is not realistic. However, there are scenes which pertain to realism, e.g., the first entry of Mallika when Ambika prepares food. But as it progresses, especially the last scene, it's more about impressionistic painting. Therefore, it happens. When you talk about the '-ism', there is a difference in line, color, volume and understanding of the characters.

What do you mean by volume in this context?

Suppose, when we see Dali's 'wall clock' painting, it's a three-dimensional object. There's a change in line and volume there. Hence as I try to do it in a play with multiple treatments, I need to consider these things.

How do you execute surrealistic lighting for a particular scene in a play?

We need to understand light as a form of energy. The paintings of Renaissance and the paintings of Dali exhibit different energies, different feelings. Hence when we talk about energy, we convert it through the

intensity of light. The quality of light changes with the volume of light. The volume produced by hard light and soft light are different. Under the soft light lines are blurred and it gives an impression of a higher volume of a line than under the hard light which produces prominent shape of that line. Besides, there should be an understanding of color. When we treat a play with realism, surrealism, or impressionism, the tonal quality of the color, whether I use shade or tint, is very important. A blue can have 32 shades. I may use a different blue for the ambience, and a different blue for a special spot on a character; or I may use the same blue for both.

Can the distinction between the various shades of blue be managed in smaller areas like "Sammukh", as it's done in large areas like "Abhimanch"?



The first important thing is the angle of light. It's not just the color; it's the angle of light from where it is coming. I would probably use blue mixed with a little bit of white, for "Abhimanch". Since the audience capacity is 330, I also need to achieve the visibility criteria. But if it is "Sammukh", probably I won't use white, where the audience capacity is just 96.

Is white added only to increase the intensity level?

Yes. To increase the level of visibility. For blue there are two different kinds of equipment used. From the back it's LED – the quality of light is soft. Along with that, there are par 64, which has tungsten halogen bulb. Hence there are two different kinds of bulbs – tungsten halogen and LED, which produce completely different qualities of light. For the Par 64, I use Rosco colored filter. But the quality of blue which comes from Par 64 and the blue that comes from the LED are different. By mistake, if you ever use blue color from LED on the characters from the front, the characters would look like ghosts. It completely changes the texture of the skin. LED is not meant for Indian skin texture, and that is the reason we use it from the back.

Why is LED not used to light up characters in theatre when it is widely used since the last 5 years in cinema?

It's because one is the eye of the camera and the other is the human eye. That's a major difference. Under the LED light you lose sharpness; but it's important to get the right texture of skin, makeup, costume and set.

What was the idea behind using small bulbs in the backdrop of the set of "Ashadh Ka Ek Din", instead of using standard light schemes?

Doing light design in a 'proscenium' is easier than doing light design in a 'black box', simply because in a proscenium you have multiple options. In a 'black box', the sitting is not fixed. The audience can sit anywhere, and you have a very low height of the grid, which means you lose the beam area of the equipment. In proscenium, you get enough beam area because light comes from a distance. There's a limitation of angle in black box. In "Ashadh ka ek din" the four thin wooden bamboo pillars were fitted into the four corners of a hut, I tried to reveal the lines of the structures one by one from the beginning of the play, to create its climax. At the end of the play when and I tried to reveal the skeleton of the house. That was the reason I used small miniature lights in this production.

Did you ever break away from the cliché of using 'red' and showcase violence through a different lighting style?

Usually I try to avoid 'red' for violence, because that's a very common notion. Of course, 'red' represents violence. But if you suddenly murder someone out of short temper, the consequences after two years turns out entirely different from what you had thought. As a character, you become partly blind – you fail to foresee the

consequences of your actions. Hence since it's blindness, there's always a possibility to explore violence scenes through light and darkness. For example, in "Abhigyan Shakuntalam", Shakuntala comes out of the 'Raj Sabha', urges for help from the audience, and knocks at the door. Here if you look carefully, there are two footlights and they're placed in different angle. She comes in front of both the lights and talks to the audience. When she knocks at the door, it's not just her hand but multiple shadows of hands create a different impact. The scene is dark, as she's going through a dark phase of her life. This is also violence – violence of the society, which is not ready to accept her. Thus, you can rightly create violence without using 'red'.

How do you choose a diffusion material which serves multiple purposes in a production?



You need to decide on the equipment first. If you want a diffuser, you have to decide why to use it for hard lights. You have to be sure of its purpose. You might want to cover a certain beam area using one light, but it might give less area when you're actually using it because you used the maximum distance. Now you can mute the diffuser to get a bigger beam area. I usually use butter paper, which helps to refract light. But if I need diffused light qualities from different light equipment in theatre at different timings, there is no other way but to use multiple light equipment. It's because I can't change anything while the show is running.

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Notes on shooting "83" By DOP *Aseem Mishra*

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Kabir Khan (Director) and I have been working together on many films but 83 is a very special film for both of us. Neither of us had done any sports film before nor did we do a film at such a massive scale as 83. For me to shoot a full-scale sports film of this scale was really a challenging experience.

Furthermore, for our cricket-worshipping nation, India's first ever Cricket World Cup win in the year 1983 was, and still is, massive for the entire country. The memories of those matches are still fresh in the minds of Indians. Hence, the margin of error in the making of this film had to be zero. So, each frame had to look and feel what the viewer had either seen or imagines. Also, we are so exposed to cricket already. Hence, the enormity of the details in pre-production from Kabir and his team was massive. Each shot, whether it's a square cut or a catch in mid-on or a sixer was well researched rehearsed and then executed. Hence, we had a herculean task to achieve.

Recreating the iconic images and the moments of the famous 1983 world cup through my lens was an enriching and unbelievable experience for me because the memories of these matches are etched in my mind. During the world cup of '83, I would run back from school to hear the commentary on our radios. I still remember how big this event was. India winning the world cup that too against the West Indies was great euphoria. So, I was thrilled when Kabir offered me this film. I couldn't stop reading the film script till I finished. It was so gripping and interesting with cricket, actions, emotions humour and more packed in one.

We had numerous meetings on the style of shooting and the look of the film. There were many discussions on questions such as: How many cameras should we use? Where would the cameras be placed? Which lenses should we use? How should we shoot the dialogues scenes between two batsmen on the pitch etc. Finally, we

decided that it should be shot exactly the way 1983 world cup was shot during those days. So, I started watching the old recorded matches and started figuring out camera positions and the angles.

We, basically, used five cameras. One on batsman, second on the bowler, third on scissor lift for pitch-to-pitch view and for follow pans of the players chasing the cricket ball from the batting side fourth again on a scissor lift from the bowling side on around 30 feet height. And the last one on the ground for panning with the bowler and following the fielders. This camera was a little inside the boundary line. The batsman and the bowler camera had cannon zoom 50 to 1000 mm 1500 mm with 1.5 X extender lens. Other cameras had 340mm Optimo lens. We used Alexa SXT.W.

We mostly shot all the matches in one cricket ground near London. We got the pitch made and it was maintained every day after pack-up. We shot the cricket matches for nearly 40 days with green chroma all around. In fact, I remember one day, a big stormy wind came and brought down all the chroma walls. It caused a panic in me and the whole unit. The art and the lighting team had to rig them back, but we lost a lot of precious time.

All the cameras were placed near the boundary line. It was a big challenge for the focus pullers, and they did a fantastic



job! We were shooting between 1500 to 800 mm focal length on 5.6 to 8 apertures on the cannon lens. Following the bowlers with their complete run-up was difficult. But the focus pullers managed it quite well. Kabir suggested that the dialogues between batsmen and the events that happens on the pitch area should be shot using the steady cam. And this worked very well in the film.

The most difficult part was maintaining lighting continuity because

the weather kept changing. The English weather is famously notorious. In a day, the weather would range from being cloudy to sunny to rainy to windy. So, we would keep light continuity sheet for all the matches. This also helped to shoot the crowd sequences, which were shot much later in the schedule, according to the sun position for each and every match and every shot. It was a very tedious job. Luckily, we got very nice and beautiful natural light, due to open sky, for the final winning shot where all the Indian team players are running towards the pavilion.

Kabir and his team had done a very detailed shot breakdown of each match specifying which bowler is blowing to which batsman; what is the fielding positions of the fielders, who is going to run to the boundary and who is taking the catch! Mr. Balwinder Singh Sandhu was our team coach. He was guiding all of us in all the matches. Rob Miller was the sports choreographer. For 8 months, all the actors had been given cricket practices according to the style of their cricketers they were portraying. Actors were given a detailed study of body language, style of talking etc. Also, the actors frequently met the real players. The result of this exercise was such that while shooting these actors were playing so well that it was hard to believe that these boys were not cricketers. The result was fantastic. Ranveer Singh has done a





brilliant job in the film. This was my 4th film with Ranveer. He has always been a very dedicated actor. He was very sincere and concentrated throughout the film.

The only match that we shot in real location was at the Royal Turn bridge Wells where Kapil Dev took his famous 175 runs against Zimbabwe. It was interesting to shoot this match because this match was not televised anywhere in the world. So, Kabir and Mr. Sandhu sat and created all the cricket sequences that happened during this match. For me, it was surreal to meet Kapil Dev in-person on the same ground.

Kabir and I always believe in real locations, and we try to accomplish that as far as possible. All the pavilion shots were shot in real locations be it at the Lords, Oval or Royal Turn bridge Wells. All the scenes of the Lord's match were shot on real location. Even the oval scene where the players are sitting in the bus and the little boy shows the Indian flag was shot at the



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oval. The final award ceremony where Kapil Dev lifts the cup was shot at the Lords. The authorities at The Lords were so helpful that they took out the real cup from their museum for the final award ceremony shoot!

Many scenes other than cricket were shot in Glasgow and Edinburgh. For example, the scene where the team meets the queen, the press conference scene and Srikant's embassy party scene where he delivers a long monologue. Some of the hotel room sequences were shot in Edinburgh and on the sets in Mumbai. We shot Kapil Dev's home sequence where the family is watching the matches and the curfew scenes in Ghaziabad. The scene at the Delhi railway station where people are watching match was shot at Delhi Railway Station. All the reaction shot of people listening to the radio and television commentary of the matches were shot in India. The Siachen bombing sequence was shot in Leh in minus 31 degrees temperature!

I kept my lighting design very simple and real in the film. I wanted to shoot in natural light as much as possible. I used practicals in my scenes wherever required. I mostly used sky panels and open tubes wherever it was required. For the cricketing portion, the only place that I used fill light was whenever a dialogue scene was happening inside the pitch area. For phantom high-speed shots, a few HMI lights were pumped in for higher aperture.



For me, 83 has been a great experience. Though shooting 83 was massive, tedious, complicated and challenging, it was also equally satisfying and surreal. This film's experience is one of the best experiences of my life till now.

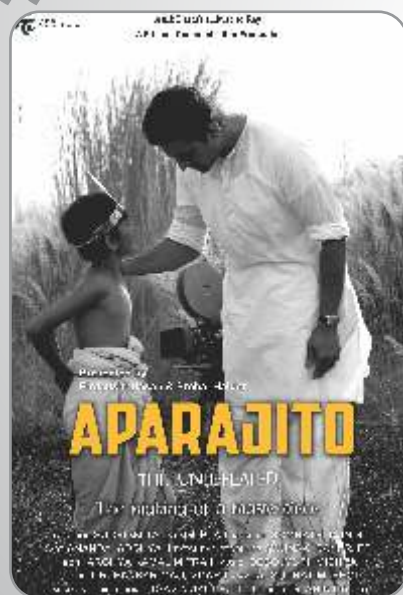
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Interview With **Supratim Bhol** DOP

Supratim Bhol is an FTII alumnus who has shot various feature films, commercials, short films and documentaries. Among the feature films, his works have mostly catered around Western & Indian literature, adaptations, and biopics; out of which three are in Black and White. “Panchlait”, “Dada Lakhmi”, “Sahaj Pather Gappo” (National Award Winner), “Abyakto”, “Avijatrik” and “Aparajito” to name a few. His last two in Black and White has garnered applause across the country and world in theatres and festivals. “Avijatrik” which is the sequel to the Late Satyajit Ray’s Apu Trilogy – the concluding part of the novel Aparajita by Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay. The film won him Best Cinematography Award, Filmfare East and the prestigious age-old Best Cinematography Award given by West Bengal Film Journalists’ Award committee. The film was in competition at many national and international festivals including Miami, along with Majid Majidi’s Sun Children. His recent venture “Aparajito” a film based partially on the late master Satyajit Ray’s life and his days of making “Pather Panchali” which has been recently considered similar to Mank which is the making of another classic “Citizen Kane” by MiD DAY. It is the backdrop of how the man with changed the history of Indian Cinema in front of the world through his first feature. The cinema has been running full house in PAN India and still in theatres. Today he will focus on his experiences of the BW duo and how he created the visual difference.



How was pressure handled from your end when such cinematic history is being touched by shooting the sequel of Apu Trilogy & the second film on Ray's making of Pather Panchali?

Pressure seemed immense at the planning stage. We never knew what we were getting into. How will the audience react if things don't fall in place? Specially both the films had two iconic characters. Apu as earlier played by Late Saumitra Chatterjee has won hearts of millions of cinema lovers through the decades. Portrayal of Apu again for the sequel Avijatrik by young Arjun Chakraborty in today's times through my lenses was definitely a bit unnerving initially. In the second film Aparajito, Ray's character was the most difficult to be casted, groomed and finally shot in today's times in the backdrop of 1950. Ray as a person is what all cinema lovers are possessive about. There are audiences who had met Ray and knew Ray for years. How would it appear to them and off course to the general audience? Pressure was definitely mounting but the most important thing for me was to play one ball at a time. With limited resources, ignoring all the challenges of the shoot, keeping oneself rock steady and calm inside helps to relieve stress and concentrate on lighting and camera.

What was approach of lighting the characters after reading the script, when everyone knows how iconic they are?

It becomes very tempting to shoot such icons larger than life. Because some where they are larger in our conscious state of mind. Glamorous lighting style enhance images a lot. It has got its own way of guiding the audience to a different world. But when the script of Avijatrik was narrated to me, I found Apu a character created by novelist Bibhuti bhushan is a next-door dreamy guy. A wanderer, a traveller and one who love life to the core. The primary scanning of the characters of a script in the mind of a Cinematographer is very important to lit up. In the film "Aparajito", Satyajit Ray a visual designer and the son of the famous Writer Sukumar Ray was from a middle-class family.

In that era of 1940 / 1950, there was no LED, No CFL, No Tube lights except filament bulbs and organic sources like lantern, petromax and oil lamps. My entire focus shifted to organic lighting style where source became the most important aspect. I looked for reference photographs and paintings of pre independence and post-independence era. All were in Black and White which all the more enriched my own thought

process. Without highlighting a particular character with a back light/rim light/kicker, I focused on natural simulations. At times it can be challenging a lot but luckily, I found things to be conducive. In this respect I would want to talk about another important department later which is the Production Designing Team, which helps to develop images immensely.

Both the films depict journey. Avijatrik is a physical journey of Apu to various places and Aparajito is a psychological journey and struggle of making a debut feature film with a totally inexperienced crew. How was the shooting experience?

Apu a writer and wanderer is a very calm character with dreamy eyes, with a spirit of freedom. Now when this character is travelling across textured and harsh realities of life, and physically across various locations of India, I chose to shoot Apu with a very soft look. I tried to make the images feather weight. In BW filming, delivering a feather weight image is difficult. When my primary objective is to create a soft look, the choice of lens, camera and light bodies and its positions need to be very precise. Which camera will give you optimum contrast, which lens will generate





contrast, softness, required depth, and what type of light bodies will keep the era intact and give a classic look is a matter of test and taste? I have shot Avijatrik in Red Monstro with series of Cooke lens and added a series of Tiffin Black Satin as per when required in various percentage. Also, I have tried to shoot the film in tungsten lights like Baby, Solar, Panja, T12, etc. rather than HMI lights, with various diffusion materials.

On the other hand, Ray and his world was very realistic. It's the story of his struggle of shooting his first film but the journey was inside and at the same time, he belonged to a world of visualization and the cinema as an art form. I decided to bring in a balance. I wanted to capture the realities across the man and also his artistic mind. I have shot the film again in Red Monstro with a series of Sigma lens, added Tiffin Black Satin to kill the digital sharpness to a certain degree and for close ups I clubbed Schneider Classic Soft. Again, being of the same era, I have tried shooting the film mostly in tungsten light bodies to achieve a certain quality of light.

What did you expect from the Directors in terms of giving briefs for each scene?

When I am approached with a certain script, first I see myself whether I am being convinced about my contribution towards that story telling. When convinced about my involvement, I tend to give away all that I have to make each scene better. The Director / Script Writer lives with a script with maximum number of days to develop it. They are the creators and Cinema is a director's medium. My job is to take the same to a

different height and so does all other HOD's job is too. I always expect a clear, detailed and textured conversation about depicting a scene from the director. The feel and pace of the locale or zone, character's mood, how he is looking at the previous scene and the scene following that particular scene which is being shot. My moto always remains how to increase the production value of a particular scene after it is being briefed.

Just to cite an example, when the last scene begins in Avijatrik where Apu and Shankar are leaving for a trek towards Java from the North East terrain of India, the location itself was so beautiful that placing a camera so called almost anywhere will create good images. But from my recce days I had been constantly thinking about how to use the flowing river to enhance my frame. The establishment shot of the scene,

depicting the river bed and jungle was a huge expanse. On the day of the shoot, I realised the establishment shot can begin from the river water with the early morning sun reflection falling on it. The slow flowing water along with the sun also added as a transition for the last scene to begin. When the camera is tilted up with a jib movement and advanced towards a grazing horse and the travellers, keeping the sun constant from River water to the sky acted as a new dawn in Apu's life of freedom. The flowing water became a metaphor of journey of Apu's life, thus giving the title of the film Wanderlust of Apua beautiful justification.

After the digitization, shooting process has become really fast. Producers always look for DOPs who are lighting and shooting fast. Even Director's brief the DOP to complete in limited time frame keeping the budget in mind. How do you cope up with this type of approach?

The lowest number of days I have shot was ten days. The film was "Abyakto-The Unsaid". And the highest number of days was "Dada Lakhmi", fifty-four days roughly. I had shared my experience of shooting Abyakto in this magazine before. The film was In IFFI, Goa Indian Panorama section and one of the only two films selected from India for IFFI World Competition for Debut Directors. To begin this discussion, I would harp on the fact of being honest to myself about my capabilities. I never tend to get into any situation where I fail my commitments. And one should not practice that too. If I really feel that a film will not be possible



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to finish in the time frame given by the producer after looking into all the pros and cons, its better to be upfront about conveying the same. The other side of the coin is when I say yes to a film, I have to be perfect with my homework. Days are numbered and so are the scenes. I divide my entire shooting schedule discussing days after days meticulously with the chief assistant director to see all unforeseen situations are also taken care of with alternatives in place. The lighting techniques and shot divisions with 5% changes is what I allow myself.

How did you plan about recreating the selected portions of Pather Panchali in the film “Aparajito” and also how Varanasi was planned to be explored in “Avijatrik”?

Extensive research and extensive recce. To sum it up, it boils down to homework. Reference photographs and making stills was our Bible for both films. First talking about “Avijatrik”, we did an extensive location hunting and that led to location recce. And then we went for technical recce. For some reason or the other, we had to do the first recce in the beginning of 2019 which was winter. Then for the availability of all HOD as per their dates, we did the technical recce in July/August and finally shot in October and November. I have been a witness to all seasons in the north eastern India before, back in 2014 for shooting documentaries, but this was feature film. So as usual, surprise after surprise in terms of sun movement, greenery, water

levels, etc. Post monsoon the locations seemed a different world all together. As a DOP I tend to be very flexible and adaptive to situations, at the same time trying to keep the quality of image intact. Moreover, everything has undergone so much of development through the years, that finding a proper location of the flavour of 1940 and 1950 was really difficult. We had to mix match locations to bring in flavours of the era. For e.g., if two characters are walking on the narrow lanes of Varanasi, then the front angle has been shot in X zone and the shot from their back is in Zone Y. This needed to be very subtle. All the grace to the Universe, that audience didn't find any fault and have appreciated the film vehemently.

In both the films, I must mention about production design department, which is an extension of the camera department I feel. The possibility to explore my vision and my lighting was dependent on that team always. Both the films being BW, special focus was on the art and costume department. It's because of their efforts I got to go the extra mile to make the image better. How a particular colour of character's skin tone, walls of the houses, furniture, costumes and other props will appear in colour and later to be converted to BW is a very serious exercise and needs continuous struggle of balancing the grey scale. We could not shoot in Red Monochrome brain which I dearly wanted for both the films due to budget and logistical issues.

How did you make difference in image from Avijatrik to Aparajito?

Avijatrik tended to be lot poetic than Aparajito which was prosaic. It's a complete permutation and combination of camera, lens, camera filters, lighting, light filters, diffusion filters, etc. I believe it's a very relative subject to discuss about how a DOP perceives the image in terms softness and harshness.

How do you go about choosing a camera?

I choose camera and lens completely based on the script. I am not blind about any particular brand. I make sure I test certain camera with a combination of two or three lens to get the right mood. When convinced I take the footage to the colourist and observe the output about the colour reproductions, highlights and shadows and the subsequent changes as per requirement.

Lastly how do you do your homework?

I believe Cinematography is not just about fancy cameras and gears. Just like music, cinema is very divine. It's the reproduction of all the books that I have read, all the poems I have recited, all the news that I have gathered, all the laughs that I have hearted and all the cries that has torn me at times. That's all what is there in my kitty to go ahead and shoot!

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Interview with **Reshmi Sarkar** DOP

Reshmi Sarkar , After graduating in Mass Communication from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, she assisted Abhik Mukhopadhyay in "Antarmahal"(2003) and "Bunty aur Babli" (2004), before joining FTII, Pune in 2005 for 3 years course in cinematography .

Later she assisted Binod Pradhan in "Mausam" (2011),Prakash Kuttu on "John Day" (2013), H.M. Ramchandran "Zed Plus" (2014).

Her Diploma film "Motorbike" was featured in Indian Panorama 2010 and was screened at both (IFFI,Goa) and (PIFF) in 2010.

"Ring Road" (2015) was her first independent Kannada feature film as a DOP.

Her second feature was a period action drama "Fatteshikast" (2019), for which she received the Majja Digital Award for Outstanding Cinematography 2020 and a nomination for Best Cinematography in Filmfare Awards Marathi 2020.

Her latest release is Marathi feature film "Sher Shivraj" (2022).

*Film critic **Lalit Rao** (FIPRESCI) explores her vision and style of working.*

Important Film of Reshmi Sarkar as DOP

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How did you prepare for this film as DOP?

This is my second film with director Digpal Lanjekar after “Fatteshikast” which was also based on the life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. So most of the prep work had already been done during the first film. I had done some look tests earlier for the first film which came in handy while shooting “Sher Shivraj”, since both the films are historical drama and based during the same time. Being a regional film it had its limitations of budget and we had to work according to a planned schedule. So all the scenes were discussed at length with the director and we had worked out a shot breakdown before the start of the shoot.

What are your expectations from the director during preparation?

The director should be able to convey his vision to me through the script. For this film, Digpal was very thorough with his research in terms of the story. He was sorted with his screenplay and the treatment of the film. So my job of rendering his vision onto the screen became much easier.

What was your interaction with the costume designer regarding the color schemes of the film? Did the director also become a part of the discussion?

Yes, we did discuss the colour scheme with the costume designer. But since it is a historical, some colours were pre-decided. For example, the Maratha soldiers wore white clothes with red caps. The ‘Adilshahi’ soldiers wore grey. The colour palette for the Marathas was towards orange and reds whereas the ‘Adilshahi’s’ was mostly green, browns and blacks. The costume colours were also decided keeping the set backdrop in mind, so that the characters did not merge with the background.

What was your interaction with the art director regarding the set interiors?

The first discussion with the Art Director was differentiating the two sides — ‘Marathas’ and ‘Adilshahis’, in terms of colour palette. We followed the orange, red scheme for Marathas and browns, blacks and greens for ‘Adilshahi’ side. We shot both in real locations and constructed outdoor sets. In real locations we could not make structural changes and had to light up accordingly. The tents of Afzal Khan and his

commanders were constructed. So we opted for large windows through which I could pump in the light. Also overhead beams were installed inside the tent where I could rig my lights.

Did you also put light inside the tent or was the lighting done from outside itself? How did you avoid the cast of the ‘red’ color on the characters’ faces?

Yes. For the night sequences inside the tent, I had put up a 2k gem ball through a skimmer and honeycomb for the fill light. For the day sequences, 4K par lights were pumped through diffusion from outside the windows. The red tent, where the climax sequence takes place, had a translucent top cover, through which the natural light filtered in, acting as the fill. I had rigged Kino 4 banks inside the top of the tent. When the natural light dropped, the kinos were switched on to maintain the contrast ratio. The key light came in through the windows. The lights were diffused and the characters were placed away from the walls of the tent, so I guess that helped in avoiding the red tint on their faces. Also some of it was colour corrected.

Was the Pratapgadh Fort shown in the film the actual fort where Shivaji shifted at that time, or was it a similar location in the forest?

The Pratapgadh fort shown in the film has been shot in two locations. The outdoor scenes are shot in Pratapgadh fort and Purnagadh fort. The interior scenes were shot in Bhorwada. The tent for the climax scene was constructed in

Film City ground.

Most of the characters’ faces are dark in the song at night. Was it deliberate or was it due to production limits?

It was meant to be dark as the song happens in night. I did not want the characters to be lit unrealistically. The source is moonlight— hence the darkness. We completed the entire song in one night. It was a difficult song as it was combined with action and higher fps. Sometimes because of the action in wide shots, it was difficult to place a fill light near the actor. Hence the creative liberty to let the actor’s face go a little darker in some shots.

Since interiors then were lit up with ‘mashaals’ and ‘diyas’ only, what challenges did you face while lighting up the interior scenes?

The interior scenes were not just lit up with ‘mashaals’ and ‘diyas’, it was mixed with tungsten lights. For the close up shots I used to keep the ‘mashaals’ just outside the frame to give the flickering effect on the face. The lighting scheme was source based to give a realistic feel. The lights were placed on low stands to match the height of the ‘mashaals’ and ‘diya’ stands.

Did you also use the panels that produce a flickering effect?

In ‘Fatteshikast’ I had used Flicker units. The flicker units give a very rhythmic flicker unlike an actual fire. So I like using actual fire flicker. A ‘mashaal’ just outside the frame gave a natural flicker and I could achieve the desired





effect.

What about the long shots in which the characters change positions?

According to me, one does not see too much flicker in the long shots. When several 'mashaals' are placed inside the frame, the flickering effect is rendered naturally. Sometimes I ended up mixing both the flicker unit and actual fire to get the desired effect.

Do you recollect any such situation when you really had to sit down and take time to arrange a shot?

Not really. We had scouted the locations earlier and I knew the exact scenes that were to be shot. So the prep work was already done. There were two sequences which were challenging. One was the night sequence slow motion action song and the other one was the 'Devi Ma' dream sequence. The song was shot at 72 fps at night. To create a single source of light for exposing at night at 72 fps needed prior planning. We created a box with MK 40 lights inside it. It was then covered with satin skimmers and suspended on a 150 ft high crane.

I wanted to make both the films "Fatteshikast" and "Sher Shivraj" look different.

When you say 'different', you say it in terms of what?

In terms of the look and the visuals.

Did your earlier film belong to the same period?

Yes. They are both set during the 17th century. Yet the two films had different locations and backdrop. Thus the difference in the 'looks'. In Sher Shivraj, I have tried to keep it natural and have consciously not added any tint.

What was your brief to the VFX guy and what was his brief to you as a DOP?

The VFX supervisor was present during the shoot. So it was easier. Any doubts or confusions were cleared on the spot. We had simple VFX shots like blood splatter, sword entering the body etc. We shot empty plates where it was required.

One major sequence was the 'Devi Maa' dream sequence. We shot the entire sequence in chroma and the background was later created in VFX.

Was there any specific problem in the post that you realised you could have done in a better way?

No, not really. Some VFX shots could have been rendered better I guess. We worked on a very tight budget and schedule. If I had the time maybe some shots could have been designed /choreographed better in terms of cinematography.

Would you have preferred to work with a particular console or a specific DI guy for this film?

I don't have any specific preferences regarding the DI console. It is the colourist's choice. We worked on DaVinci Resolve for this film. Initially my colourist and I sat down to decide the tone of the film and once we achieved the 'look' we just graded it. I try to be consistent during the shoot itself so that we don't spend too much time in the post.

What was the camera model and lenses you used for this film?

The Camera I used was ARRI Alexa SXT with Master Prime Lenses.

Do you recollect any particular shot for which you needed a particular lens during the shoot?

I had the regular combination of lenses. For the extreme close ups, I used Macro 100mm. For some fight sequences, we used Optimo zoom for the zoom effect.

Is there any specific incident or experience that you would like to add?

Important Film of Reshmi Sarkar as DOP

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Nothing specific for this film but in 'Fatteshikast', we shot in Rajgarh fort. It is situated at 4500 ft above sea level and is not connected by any road. The entire cast and crew climbed the mountain along with all the equipments and props.

We shot all the sequences in two days and camped at the fort at night with very basic amenities at our disposal. Yet we had an amazing shoot and I will cherish this experience forever.

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