

JAYWANT PATHARE

Can you tell us how you came to be cinematographer? Did you have a background in still photography?

I was doing still photography in the beginning, and to my knowledge still photography is the basis of every kind of photography. So after getting some good results in stills I thought why not try cine photography? Still photography was my hobby right from the school days. I had a box camera that had cost 8 Rupees, at that time. It used to take nice snapshots. I used to take pictures at picnics, and I would take photographs whenever I saw a good scene. Clouds, rivers, all these things. Then I purchased some other cameras. Even now I do still photography. Recently I had an exhibition in Banwaari Hall, on the 9th of this month. I enjoyed mixing photographs. Taking two positives then making one negative out of them and so on...

Anyway, after my matriculation, somebody told me that there are some courses in cine photography at St. Xaviers College, Bombay. And I immediately went there, got a form and enrolled my name and I got a chance to join that institute. It was a two-year course. One year was still photography, 1st year, and 2nd year was cine photography. At that time the Pune institute was not there, so this was the only institute which was doing some technical education.

Of course my family did not want me to go into the cinema as a profession. That was the atmosphere in those days. Educated people did not work in the cinema field. I must go in that line, I must go, I will go. Then ultimately I asked my mother to have faith in me. I told her that I would not go into any 'wrong' track. She agreed and that is how I went into this profession eventually.

Which year was this?

It was in 1944 I think.

Did they have any practical training?

Practicals were very few, really speaking. It was all lectures and theory. But even then, I got a chance and I was happy. So, ultimately after finishing the course I got a certificate. Then I went to some studios but they didn't allow me to come and work as an assistant. They all said "No, you will have to stay here as an apprentice for at least one or two years. Then we will see whether you are able to work, and only then we will take you as assistant."

Then I joined Jain-Desai Studio, in Parel. They accepted me as an apprentice. In my apprenticeship I saw four films being made. I can remember the names of three of them - '*Lalkar*', '*Maroma*' and '*Chandragupta*'. As an apprentice, all I was doing was watching, not touching the camera, not touching the lights also, and just watching. Just observation.

Did you get paid?

No, I was not paid. For two years I was not paid. Then there was a job in Eastern Studios in Worli. One of my friends told me there was a vacant post there. I went there and applied, because by that time I had learnt so many things. I had watched lighting, which is very essential in photography. Although I still did not know anything about the camera, I was studying lighting, because lighting is the real basis of photography. So that knowledge of lighting helped me. When I joined Eastern Studios, the cameraman there was Jal Mistry.

He just asked me, "What you have learnt there?"

I said. "I have learnt lighting, I don't know anything about camera".

He said, "So how you are going to focus?"

I said, "I will try my level best to do it".

Then he asked me to do some lighting, background lighting. They don't give you face lighting first. Face lighting is very difficult so he asked me to do some background lighting and I did it evenly. He appreciated what I had done.

He said, " All right, you know something about lighting. This is proof that you do. You must carry on lighting because lighting is the essence of photography".

Then he asked me to learn focusing from one of his assistants.

Which camera did they have?

At that time, they had a Mitchell. You could not look through this camera. It had a parallax on the viewfinder side. Before that I had seen the Debree camera, in which you could see through the viewfinder directly. But the Debree camera was too big and heavy to be picked up by one or two men. Four people used to have to carry it. It was a box type of camera, junk. Then the Mitchell camera came. Mitchell was a little bit handier. At least two persons could pick it up! But it had this parallax problem. That was rather difficult for our people to understand, but those cameramen who were already working with it were all used to it.

So then the Mitchell camera came and I started working, focusing as well. One or two shots I spoiled as well. But I told Jal Mistry frankly that I had spoiled the shots. You cannot say anything after it is all seen on the screen. Then you get thrown out. But I told him. "Please give me another take and I will see

that I will do correct focusing". And I did it. So it was a tough job for me.

Which film was that?

That was some south Indian film. They were shooting South Indian films also in that studio at that time. I worked there for two years and I worked on the sets of South Indian, Marathi pictures and Hindi pictures, because that studio was always on hire. They used to give it on hire to whosoever would come. I used to attend from the side of the camera department of Eastern. I was not attached to any film company as such. I belonged to Eastern Studios and worked on a shift basis. Night shifts as well as Day shifts.

And the cameramen were also changing?

Of course, I worked with many different cameramen. Once someone called Nirmal Dey from Calcutta came there. He liked my work and he insisted that I should work with him on some films. So I was on a very good footing at that time. Then Raj Kapoor came to shoot his first film, 'Aag'. I was on that shift, it was the day shift, some other fellow was doing the night shift.

I remember the first shot. Mr. Reddy was the photographer, KVS Reddy, he was the photographer and he had some fellow who was focusing but he had no lighting assistant so he asked me, "Can you do lighting?"

I said, "I can do lighting".

Then I started doing lighting and he liked what I did. Then he asked Raj Kapoor to take me on for the entire shoot of 'Aag'. So, finally I got a chance to work regularly on a single film. I started working sincerely, without making any mistakes or anything like that. Reddy appreciated my work. Raj Kapoor also appreciated and he said "All right, you are working with me from now on". We

completed '*Aag*'. Mr. Reddy went off after completing the film. Then Raj Kapoor started another film called '*Barsaat*'. Jal Mistry was offered the camerawork. So I started working with Jal again on '*Barsaat*'.

Assisting Jal Mistry?

Of course, assisting Jal Mistry. After the completion of '*Barsaat*', Raj Kapoor started thinking of making his own studio in Chembur. He asked us if we would join him if he made his own studio. Jal said he could not join him as he was already working in Eastern Studio and besides he had commitments to finish, other assignments as well.

But I was ready to join Raj Kapoor and I did so. Ultimately we went to Chembur when the studio was erected. And there we started working on '*Awaara*'. Of course Raj Kapoor had Jal Mistry on his mind to do the camera for '*Awaara*' because he liked his photography very much. He appreciated Jal's contrasty and artistic lighting style. But Jal couldn't work with him; he wasn't free. Raj Kapur asked me, "Do you know of any cameramen who can work like Jal ?"

I said, "His brother Fali is there, but he will not join us because he is a very big cameraman."

Then I told him "I have seen a film shot by one Radhu Karmakar in the Majestic cinema, go and see that film, I like his photography, his camerawork is good". So, he got a copy of that film from Majestic, saw it in the studio and liked it very much. And he then asked Radhu if he would like to work with him. So Radhu joined R.K films and that is how R.K's '*Awaara*' was started.

Now, Radhu Karmakar's style was very realistic, very natural. He used to maintain the light source faithfully. He used to say, "Day scene should feel like

day scene". Jal Mistry's lighting style on the other hand was a little artificial and decorative. Raj Kapoor liked, Radhu's 'natural' style, but sometimes he wanted something decorative, in Jal's style. So he (Raj Kapoor) would push me to speak to Radhu to try and modify his lighting. So, I told Radhu, that Raj Kapoor is not able to get Jal and his work out of his mind, and he wants something like that as well. Radhu did not believe in that type of lighting, he was not for it at all. He was a little annoyed at first, but then he said "Ok, let us try it". So in this way some of the night scenes of "Awaara" were shot in this 'decorative' style. 'Awaara' became a big hit, it ran for 50 weeks.

In the middle of the shooting of 'Awaara', Radhu Karmakar fell ill. I think he got Typhoid. The doctor did not permit him to come for work for at least 20 days. The problem was that we had to shoot some scenes with Prithviraj Kapoor, and he was not going to be available, as he had to go away on tour with Prithvi Theatres. So, Raj Kapoor asked me if I would be able to shoot them. I said that I could do it, but that first I would have to take permission from Radhu Karmakar. So I went to Radhu Karmakar's house and told him that Raj Kapoor was insisting that I shoot some scenes in the film and that I had come to take his permission. He agreed and so I began shooting myself.

Which scene was this?

It was the scene where Leela Chitnis gets kidnapped. Prithviraj Kapoor and Leela Chitnis go for a picnic and then she gets kidnapped by gangsters. It was a huge set. Not on location, in the studio, and he wanted to do it as a night scene. The R.K. studio was a huge studio; it was complete in itself. We had trees, a full hill station set up for the picnic, and a small cottage, and these gangsters come and kidnap her. It took full two or three days to shoot that scene. Then we sent the rushes away to the lab. After three days we got some rush

prints and saw the results.

He said, "All right Jaywant, you have become a cameraman".

I was so happy, that was the moment of greatest happiness in my life. Then he said, "You are shooting my next film". That was 'Aag'. But before we started work on that film, he had a long talk with me in his cottage.

He told me "Jaywant, I am giving you this film to shoot, but don't forget R.K. standards. Whatever you want you tell me now. If you want new lenses, I will get them for you, if you want more lights, I will get you more lights. Just don't tell me afterwards that you could not do your best because this or that thing was not there. Whatever it is, don't forget the R.K. standards."

I said, "I will take the challenge, I am ready and you will see my work", after all, I too had got a little confidence in my self after seeing my rush prints from 'Awarā'.

Was Raj Kapoor knowledgeable about photography?

He was an all-rounder. You know the way in cricket you have all-rounders who know everything in the game? He knew a little bit of recording, a little bit of photography. He did have an understanding. He couldn't do it himself, but understanding is also very important. In every art. In dance, he used to say, "No this is wrong because I want it like... this". He used to sit with Shanker-Jaikishen and tell them, "No, no, make some change in the music, make some other tune, cut this line or that phrase". He was interested in all the branches of filmmaking. He was not thinking of anything in his life other than films and filmmaking. And he knew something or the other about all the arts and branches of filmmaking. That is why I was very much impressed by him.

Did 'Aah' prove to be a challenge?

It was a challenge because it was a tragic film. I had to show all the stages of TB (tuberculosis) in Raj Kapoor's face. Raj Kapoor was so beautiful at that time, that to make him a TB patient was difficult for me and the make up man. I had to do it with the lighting. I decided that I would increase the height of the main light on the face with each successive stage of the illness. In the first stage the light was kept at a normal level, in the second stage I put a highlight and made the main light a little more toppish just to get a suggestions of 'socket' eyes. Then in the then third stage I gave the face light even more height. And in the last stage I put some lights on the 'tarafa' (the catwalk) to get shadows on the face, and a little highlight so that the cheek bones would shine, but otherwise the whole face was kept dark.

He was very happy with the results and said that I had created just the effect that he had needed. This encouragement was sufficient for me to take on the challenge of Raj Kapoor's death scene at the end of the film. The scene is like this - Raj Kapoor is lying dead on the footpath, Nargis is getting married to Pran and her *baraat* is passing by, and the *baraat* being a typical one, it is full of people carrying gaslights. The plan was to inter-cut between shots of the dead Raj Kapoor and the *baraat*. At this point in the shooting I said "I would like to suggest something, I would like to take a shot, if you like it you can use it, if you don't like it, you can throw it away." The image I suggested was to have the shadows of the passing *baraat* (as if seen against the light of the gaslights) on the body of the dead Raj Kapoor, as a prelude to the actual shots of the passing *baraat*. Raj Kapoor like the idea and we shot it. When he saw the results he said that I had done very good work. The picture was completed, but it was a flop, so R.K. films went through a bad patch after that. The songs are still popular, like

"*Raja ki Aayegi Baraat*", but the film flopped.

It was in this period after the flop of *Aag* that Hrishikesh Mukerjee came to sign Raj Kapoor for '*Anaari*'. Hrishikesh Mukerjee and the producer, Mr. Laxman Lulla, both came to sign Raj Kapoor for the film. Raj Kapoor told them that he wanted to work in their film, but also requested that they take me on as the cameraman. Radhu Karmakar was already working for his company, and it was going through a difficult time, so he was worried about me and about my work. That is why he asked them to take me on. '*Anaari*' had Raj Kapoor and Nutan, and Raj Kapoor was just like any other artiste on that set, not involved with the production aspect at all.

Hrishikesh Mukherjee was a little panicky because he had never worked with me and there was not much 'understanding' between us at that stage. I used to do whatever he told me to do. I never said no to anything - to trolley shots or to crane shots or to anything else. After that he got a little more confidence in me. After seeing the rush prints he told me that the work was very good, and he got to know what I could give him in my work. By the time we finished '*Anaari*', I can say, that an 'understanding' had grown between me and Hrishikesh Mukherjee.

Did you order any new equipment when you were shooting '*Aah*', since Raj Kapoor had told you that you could order anything you want?

No, because everything was there already. All the cameramen were using the same lenses at that time. But he just gave me a chance to say if I needed anything. He didn't want me to say that I was not able to do my best because some equipment was not there.

So what kind of equipment was there?

Mitchell camera was there, lights were there, arc lights were there. They had their own arc lights even though they were quite expensive. Normally people used to hire them from outside, but R.K had their own lights, and they had plenty of lights. So I had nothing to worry about.

What kind of lenses were you using?

Normal fixed lenses, there were no zoom lenses at that time. We were mostly doing trolley shots instead of zoom shots. Nowadays, you can zoom from here to there. But at that time every time we needed a shot like that the trolley was used. The lenses we had as I said were normal lenses, - 50, 35, wide angle and 75, just these four lenses. With these four lenses we had to finish the film. The lenses were mainly 'Cooke' lenses and when the zoom came it was from some other company in France - yes, it was Angineux.

When did you first see the zoom come in?

Zoom lenses came afterwards; I think it was only after '*Aanari*' that I saw a zoom lens.

We use the Zoom lens a lot nowadays, because the Trolley has almost vanished. It is used only sideways, not for frontal movements anymore. For all frontal movements nowadays we tend to use the zoom lens. I began using the zoom lens almost throughout the shooting of my films. It cuts down the need to shift the camera, suppose you want to come a little closer to one character, then I just zoom in. Hrishi-*da* has a particular style of connecting the characters. He will want the camera to pan from one character to another and then pan back again. In the return pan he would want to include the entry of another character. So there would be 4 movements in all.

The zoom lens was very helpful in achieving this. For steady close ups of course you don't need the zoom. But I feel that you must stick to one lens in any film, different lenses have different characters, one may be slightly soft, the other very sharp and then there is the question of correct negative density, you should use one lens to ensure a uniform negative density. I know I have to use the zoom, so I use it throughout a film

And did you use the crane?

Yes I used the crane. Then, we also had a dolly which could crane and track at the same time. We had a very good dolly in R.K films. I used that also. The equipment in R.K was very beautiful - the crane, lights and everything was in very good condition.

You should know why you are using the crane. The Crane shot should have a purpose; there should be a real demand for it in the story and in the scene.

Let me give you an example, once in a film with *Hrishi-da*, there was a scene of a man who has lost everything, his daughter has also run away from home or something like that. *Hrishi-da* asked me to take it as a crane shot, I got on to the crane and then came down and asked him why he wanted it be a crane shot. He said "I want you to come down in such a way that it feels as if to suggest that the ground has slipped away from under the actor's feet". So this is an instance where the situation can demand a crane shot. But I find that it is often used without a reason nowadays. But a crane is good to use in a song sequence, where there is a lot of movement, in a mob scene or when you have to cover large amounts of people.

When did you first use a crane or see a crane being used in films?

The first time I saw a crane was in Eastern Studio. It was a small crane, about 12 feet high. Then I saw crane that was up to 14 feet. Ultimately I saw one crane in Raj Kamal Studios which was much higher, about 50 feet or so.

And what was the stock that you used?

Black and White Stock, for *Anaari* and also for all the pictures we did in RK Studios.

Kodak or Orwo?

Kodak.

What was the film speed of the stock?

The Kodak stock's film speed was 100 ASA. Raj Kapoor used to prefer Kodak. He used to purchase the stock from Kodak in bulk so that you could get one uniform emulsion number for all the footage of one film. Raj Kapoor was very particular about the emulsion numbers and these kinds of things.

Did you use a lot of filters?

Yes of course, in B&W we used to use plenty of filters. In colour we don't need filters. But in the Black and White days we used to use the orange filter, and the yellow filter and sometimes to give the effect of a cloudy sky we used to use orange or red filter, 50G or 23A. These numbers I still remember because we used to use them all the time. And we used them a lot outdoors to darken the sky.

You used to do a lot of outdoor shooting?

Yes, of course. I think one third of the work we would do was outdoors,

maybe even a little more than one third.

And if it was indoors would you use any filters?

No, but we did use diffusers for close ups. To soften the skin tone.

For both heroes as well as for heroines?

Mainly for the heroine. But sometimes also for the hero because we wanted to avoid any 'jerk'. We should not feel that the heroine is so soft and the hero is a little harsh. So we used to manipulate the diffusers. For example if I gave number 4 diffuser to the heroine then I would give number 2 to the hero...

Did you ever use nets and stockings?

No, not generally, diffusers were available. But if we had to take an extreme close up, then we used to use net, black net. But this was done very rarely because we had 4 grades of diffusers, 1-2-3-4; these were the gradations. So you could make your choice according to the distance that you had to work with and so on.

And did you use soft lights?

We used to actually put diffusers on the light, but this 'bounce lighting' was not there that time. This was brought in by the film institute boys from Pune. Actually bounced light was never used in our period, only direct lights. We used to put paper, butter paper and sometimes net, wire net or something like that, on the lights to soften them. But there was not any use of reflected light.

What kind of meters did you use?

I used to have a Norwood B-1 meter. That was the one that was available that time. Then after that we had a small ball meter, another Norwood.

The old one had a big ball and then a new one came with a small ball. Norwood was very famous amongst cinematographers in those days. But in the period before this we never used meters because all the work was done just with the eyes. Our eyes were used to the intensity of a hundred foot candles, through habit, so we get a sense of the intensity of light, how much less than or more than a hundred foot candles, we had a meter in our eyes as well

Did you have the experience of working without meters?

Yes of course, as an assistant I mainly worked without meters. The first time I saw someone with a meter was when I met Nirmal Dey, we used to use his meter. Then I saw some other cameramen also using meters. And Jal used to use a meter. He wouldn't stick by the readings, sometimes they mattered, and sometimes they didn't matter. His calculations were always different. Sometimes he used to change the lighting, between close ups and long shots. He didn't always work to strictly maintain a uniform negative in one scene. But he used to always consult the meter. Then he would ask me "theek aayega?" (Will it be all right) and then I used to tell him "it is all right, theek hai, aayegaa baraaber aayegaa".

Jal was very particular about lighting and he used to measure every light. He would measure even the backlight. And he was very intelligent in putting up the fill light. That was his trade secret. He used to know exactly what should be the percentage of the fill light in comparison to the main light. This is very important for bringing out the details in the shadows. It was very secret, trade secret. I learnt that also afterwards. Gradually, I learnt that. But I had very little opportunity to use that in my lighting.

Did cameramen hide things from you when you were an assistant?

Of course, all the time. When I was an apprentice there was one cameraman called Mr. Dronacharya. We had a Debree camera and just to hide the f-stop from us he would cover his head with a big cloth when he was shooting. Actually he was always working on 2.8, with an open diaphragm, 2.8 or 3.2. But even for that he used to work with a torch inside the cloth covering and then close the diaphragm after every shot so that none of the assistants would ever know the reading.

But, once I asked him "Dronaji, kya rakha hai. bataiye na?" (What is there to hide, please tell us)

He said, "Nahin tumhen samajhne mein bahut time lagega, tum chhoro, tum abhi lighting-metering hi dekho, bus". (No, it will take you a very long time to understand, you stop thinking about this and worry about the lighting and the metering).

They didn't want to teach anybody anything. But I've realised that by giving (sharing) your knowledge you learn more yourself. You give knowledge; you can get more knowledge also.

In this respect Radhu Karmakar was very nice. If I did something wrong he would tell me, but he did not say that I was always wrong. He would appreciate it if I did something well. This was the difference between people like him and those old cameramen. They used to hide all this things so that nobody would know what they know. But ultimately people who want to learn, learn.

One day, many years later, the same Dronacharya met me in a bus. He

had become quite old. He tapped me from behind and said "Kyaa bhai Jaywant tumhaare paas to bahut pictureen hain kuchh hamaara naam bhi recommend karo" (Jaywant, I have heard that you are doing lots for films, recommend my name as well somewhere). He gave me his address and I tried also for him, but nobody was interested in giving him any work. Raj said, he has become old now. So this is the difference between the new generation and the old generation. Of course I am now old but in that time I was a part of the 'young generation'.

What were the different established styles of photography when you were a young cameraman in the 1950s?

There were different schools of lighting. Radhu Karmakar was strictly following source lighting. Jal Mistry, in his photography, maintained the source, because he believed in source, but he would not necessarily reveal where the source was coming from. Suppose in one shot he is saying the source is coming from the left, then in other shot he will show the source from right also because he wants to see the artiste look beautiful, glamorous. I think there is no cameraman who has glamorised heroines more than Jal Mistry and Fali Mistry. They were masters of glamour. They would have miracles today if they were working, because with colour you can have even more glamour.

Then there was Reddy. Reddy used to go to the theatres, see some English film and he used to copy the same thing that he had seen. He used to come to the studio and just copy that particular shot he had been impressed by. He used to insist to the director, "Please let me keep the camera here and see what an effect I will give you. Sometimes even in a Night scene he would give light through the window. I would ask him, "How can there be light coming through the window at night" and then he would say, "Some lamp is there, some street light" - and all because he had seen this in some film in Metro cinema. His

lighting was not constant. Sometimes he used to give so much that the hair would glow brightly like as if it was on fire. Then Reddy would say, "Ok now, chalo dalo diffuser" (Ok add the diffusers). Reddy's lighting was a mixture of all lightings.

Had you seen the kind of films that were beginning to be made in Bengal - say by Satyajit Ray and Subrata Mitra?

I had seen these Satyajit Ray and all. I found that the lighting was very good for those films; that type of subject demanded that type of lighting. When you want to show poverty, where you have to show mood, that's mood lighting and for that you know - this subdued lighting, or reflected lighted or bounce lighting is good. Subrata - his lighting is mostly bounced lighting and whatever light is available he works with that. But the thing is that these films only go to festivals. They are not commercially successful. Also, that type of lighting I think is dangerous for the negative.

Whom do you consider to be your contemporaries?

Murthy was there, Srinivasan was there. Their work was very good. Murthy's work was very much like Jal and Fali Mistry. He had worked with Fali Mistry for a long time. Srinivasan and I were in the same batch and we were working together.

Did you have a lot of discussions or conversations with them about cinematography?

Actually we had no chance to meet together because everybody was busy in their work and our association was also not strong that time. So we never used to meet together but everybody had regard for each other's work.

What do you think is the main difference between your generation and the generation after you?

Bounce Lighting!

I think K.K Mahajan started bounce lighting in Bombay. Somebody told me that bounce lighting is very economical and is giving very soft results and all this sort of things. So, I just went to the laboratory and asked, "How is the negative?" The processing in charge in the laboratory told me - "The lighting is very good and soft but the negative is very thin." Now, a thin negative cannot give you more than 8 good copies, 6 or 8 copies at the most.

Now suppose we have to print at least 60 copies. In commercial cinema we have to sometimes print as many as 200 hundred copies. See, our negative should be a little thick so that it will not get scratched. Once it gets scratched... you see - "barish baras rahaa hai" (the scratches give the impression of rain on the print).

So the printing-in-charge said, "You can try this kind of lighting in one or two scenes but you cannot do a complete film like this if you are working in the commercial film industry. If you want to make film for film festivals or you want to enter it in a competition somewhere then you can do it, but for general purpose if you keep your negative that thin you are going to suffer. You will cry after seeing the first few prints. After twenty prints you will not be able to see the picture." That means scratches will be all over the frame.

But I still appreciate his (Mahajan's) lighting in terms of what I had seen in that film.

I think we have differences in other ways also in terms of how we think about lighting, and here I mean between my generation of cameramen and the generation that came after me.

We, of the old school were taught lighting in terms of highlight, backlight and 'kick' light, in that order. Nirmal Dey, an old cameraman I learnt from, used to say - "You must be able to show the distance between ears and nose with your lighting, then you can be called a good photographer. What is the distance between you and your background, 4, 5, ...maybe 6 feet, you must be able to create that depth in your photography." This is what he taught me. This is the main idea behind this kind of lighting. It is quite different kind of lighting from what the new generation practices.

Why did I use a lot of backlight? Because I wanted to separate the artiste from background. The artiste must not merge or blend with the background.

Why did I want to give a sidelight to the face and keep one side dark? Because the nose-shadow will create depth and then the distance between the nose and the ear will be seen. If you put candlelight, then the nose and the ear will be on one plane, on one level. That is why we paid so much attention to the moulding of the face and to depth and perspective in the picture. That was the idea in those days and I still like that.

Of course I like this kind of photography with soft, even light also, but it is good for films that are not very big, or for those films where it is not necessary to create a large number of copies

Did you go to the lab regularly when more prints were being struck?

Of course I used to go to the lab. I used to see at least the first 25 copies, only then would I come out of the lab. First 25 copies I used to watch. If there was any scratch, if ever a wrong filter was used or anything like that happened then I would reprint it, get a patch print made and put it in that particular copy. Only then would I send the copies to Madras, Calcutta and other places. I would not allow prints to be sent out without having personally checked them. It was a standing order.

You used to screen them all for checking?

Yes, I would screen them, my assistant and myself; in shifts. We used to see the copies because it was a sort of a prestige issue. I used to think that I have a little name in the line and I must see to it that it must continue. In all this I must say R.K Films was very particular. We had also appointed one man in the lab who used to look after our negative, process for us and all these things. He used to send a report.

Which lab?

Famous Cine Lab, in Tardev. That lab was doing very good work in B&W. Then Bombay Lab was also giving very good results in B&W. But Prasad is the best colour lab working in India now. Prasad in Madras. The first time that I got something printed there, they were able to deliver a good print in the first print itself. I actually jumped from my chair because I had never seen an 'Ok' first copy. Usually, there is some drawback somewhere; it takes three or four copies to get one good clean print. But here, the first print itself was such a neat and clean copy that I just went and thanked Mr. Prasad's son. I told him, "You have done very good work, and I appreciate and love your work."

Did you grade with Lilies?

We used to work with Lilies earlier. Nowadays, of course you have analysers. On the analyzer - we just have to see it on the screen, put the right filters and that's all. It has become much easier now. And you get better results.

What was your first colour film?

It was '*Do Dil*' in 1965, Hrishikesh Mukerjee directed the film, it was a costume drama set in Rajasthan, starring Mumtaz, Biswajeet and Rajshri.

Was it difficult for you to switch over to colour?

Of course in the beginning I was a little shaken but after seeing the results I felt that colour was much better than B&W. In B&W you have to work hard to reproduce all the shades and tones of grey between black and white - off white, light grey, grey, dark grey - with the help of lighting. You have to change the lighting, use filters. Black and white film has only black and white - all the middle tones have to be produced by the cameraman. In that sense B&W was much more difficult than colour. Colour is so easy now. You have to just put one light and you get everything perfectly balanced. All we have to see is how much fill light is required.

But in the early colour films of the 1960's and 70's we see a lot of flat lighting on the face. Why is that?

Of course that is what you see. People were scared of Colour. Because most of the cameramen did not know what kind of contrast ratio it could handle. They did not know how much fill light you should keep. That was not fixed by the cameramen. The manufacturers had specified some ratios but the cameramen did not follow that ratio, they were confused and to be on the safe side they used to do flat lighting. Some lab technicians had spread the word that colour film is

very contrasty. That if you make your key light on the face a 100 footcandles, then your fill light should be as high as 75 foot candles. Now this ratio was totally wrong. Just because somebody said this, it was being followed blindly; no one did any tests.

But I got it from the very beginning. When I was doing my first colour film, '*Do Dil*' I went and consulted the Kodak people. And I studied some of the samples which had come from London. I studied them to see how much contrast they were maintaining, and I realised that you can work easily with a ratio of 2:1 or 1:2 in colour. Then I took some tests, I took one of the minor artistes and did a lot of test shoots, just to see how far I can go in terms of contrast, what is the lowest and the highest possible contrast. I found the ratio that I liked after seeing the laboratory results, and that is how I determined my lighting. But if you don't take any tests then naturally you will light flatly, and you will have unnecessary hot spots, even on the actors' faces. Sometimes the whole frame would be lit up, sometimes the face would become absolutely white. There would be no texture. All this happened because they did not take any tests, and then they did not want to take any risks. Those that did take tests did clear work.

Even then, the B&W films of the fifties are very expressive and with the coming of colour that expressivity goes away, what do you have to say about this?

The reason for this is that colour is much more glamorous. B&W is much better in terms of creating drama and suspense. Colour distracts, if you have a sad scene, and in that scene someone is wearing a red turban, then that red colour will attract your attention in the frame. Colour can even 'glorify' a death scene. You have to create a lot more contrast, which is not easy. You may have to decrease the fill light or do away with it altogether, make one side totally dark.

Once I had to shoot a death scene with Rajesh Khanna in colour and I decreased the fill light so that his face had shadows and the eye sockets became prominent, my assistant said "What are you doing, his face has gone totally in the shadow"? I said that is exactly what we have to do. So, you see it is not easy to be as expressive in that sense with colour, as it was with Black and White.

Did you change your style of lighting? Or did it stay fixed

Well, the style of lighting as such was not changed. But my lighting has always been flexible, depending on the situation.

My lighting pattern used to depend on the nature of the scene. A dramatic scene, say a murder scene, required a little bit of dramatic lighting. A night scene would have a different kind of lighting from day scenes. If it was a night scene, I would maybe light from a low angle, or use some source, say a table lamp is there - then I would catch the source from the table lamp.

Let me give you an example from '*Anaari*' - Lalita Pawar is dead, Raj Kapoor is coming to see her. Previously I had always lit from top in that set up (in Lalita Pawar's house) but in that death scene I wanted to do something different. So I asked, Hrishida "Can I change the light?" He told me to go ahead. So, I put a table lamp just near her head and I used that as the source. So now I was free to light from below instead of from above - this gave a lot of shadows, and these shadows went up and down with any movement, and the eyes of the characters were shining, their tears were glistening - all these things I could do with the lighting.

So in this way I was always changing the lighting. I follow Radhu

Karmakar for day scenes, Jal Mistry for night scenes and the meter reading for any old 'thoko' (just print) scenes! So you can say, that whatever I got or learnt from these old masters, I am trying to put in my images.

I learnt from Radhu that you could be expressive with lighting - show a character's emotion. Once, when we were shooting '*Awaara*' there was a scene in which Prithviraj Kapoor is wild with anger, so Radhu asked me to put one light just behind him.

I asked, "Why?" He said, "You give the light from here, and you will notice that when you see him gnashing his teeth in anger, you will see the jaw bone moving because of the way his face gets moulded in that light". I saw the effect, that anger was enhanced 15-20 times because you could see the jaw bone moving, and that particular light was touching that bone so you get to enhance the expression. This was the type of lighting we had in those days.

Would you shoot a heroine differently from the way you would shoot a hero?

With the heroine, I could take a lot of liberty in the lighting and nobody would say anything. I had a special lighting and lens combination for Nargis, quite distinct from what I had for Raj Kapoor. I would generally shoot Nargis from a low angle specially and use the 50mm lens. 50 mm lens because her face was straight, it was a papaya-type face, so I had to go low and use that particular lens. For Meena Kumaari I used to use a wide angle lens, 35 mm, because her face was so bulky that I had to reduce it. These lenses help you to make these corrections in the faces. Different faces - different lenses. Of course this was a trade secret.

And you used to do front lighting for the heroines...?

I used front lighting for some heroines, but front lighting makes the face flat. The face gets merged with the background. For heroines, I used to do this, make the face a little bit flatter, because in that way any some small defects in the face, in the skin that might have been there got hidden. But if the face and the skin were good then I would do normal lighting.

So whose face was best from your point of view?

I like only Madhubala's face. Her face was so nice that you could light it from anywhere and she would look beautiful. I did only one picture with her.

In what other ways could you transform the face of a character with lighting?

When we shoot a villain we do 'wrong' lighting on purpose. I do 'wrong' lighting because I want to get more wrinkles on the villain's face - the opposite principle from the way you shoot a heroine. So you put two sidelights to get more wrinkles. One light from here, one light there, one shadow comes here, one shadow goes there. This kind of lighting also has the effect of ageing you. Sometimes these old people look beautiful, understand? So we have to make them look old by lighting.

Can you talk about the process of going from the script to the camerawork?

Do you do a shot break down, what was the discussion about shot taking and look that you had with the director prior to shooting?

No, our system is quite different. With Hrishikesh Mukerjee, we read the script only once and then we got on the set. Then he tells me, "This is the scene, this is the drama that I want to create in this scene". I check of course with the assistant director, what is the scene being planned for that day, and whether or

not it is a night scene.

At the time that the script is given to me, I make some notings - which is a night scene, which is a day scene etc. Also, I work out an idea of which are the scenes in which I can 'score' as a cinematographer. I mark those portions in the script and give them my special attention. You have to choose your scenes in the script, so you might choose scene number 19, scene number 20 or scene no. 69. When these scenes come for shooting, I just don't tolerate anything and I just go according to my lighting, my idea and my decision.

So when I hear the script or read the script, at that time I point out 'my' scenes, and that is how I can carry on. Whenever I get the chance to shoot those scenes I try to give my best work. In the other scenes, we do only normal photography. Hrishi-*da* does not much discuss the script on the set with me, because he does not have much of an idea of cinematography, he works with the actors mainly.

So what is the difference between the 'Scoring Scenes' and 'Normal Photography Scenes'?

Normal Scene is just a normal day or night scene and you light accordingly. Nothing dramatic, no song, not much movement. Day scene you need to light evenly. And in a normal night scene you light according to the source. I always maintain the source in a normal night scene; I learnt this from Radhu. You must maintain a source, if a window is there, light will come from the window, outdoor light will come inside. This is only thing that I used to do. If a table lamp is there or a centre lamp is there, I used to take that as a source and do the lighting.

But in a dramatic 'scoring' scene I would change the lighting, not necessarily stick to source, but work maybe with a wall bracket or something like that to get less height in that light and create more drama. So in this way I plan the lighting for each scene.

Even if a day scene demands some drama, we have to work on the lighting, change it, and cut out the fill lights so that more contrast will show. Contrast will help in enhancing drama.

Is there a difference in the way in which you would treat a song sequence in comparison to the way in which you treated normal dialogue sequences?

Song sequences have a lot of movement, sometimes the camera is moving and sometimes the artistes are moving. So camera is always on its toes, moving all the time, that is the difference. Stationary positions are only for big close ups. And there are a lot of crane and trolley movements. Generally speaking, the director never shoots songs; the dance director comes and shoots songs. That is the style here. But Hrishi-*da's* songs are taken by Hrishi-*da* only. He never allows the dance director to come and take the song sequences. The dance director only teaches the dance steps in his films.

But normally, the dance directors have got into the habit of moving the camera all the time. Sometimes, so much so, that the audience is looking all over the theatre, with jerks on the neck. And they also tend to overdo zooming in and zooming out. The zoom lens is helpful in song sequences, but it's overuse is also sometimes irritates you.

Can you take more liberty with lighting in the song sequences?

Yes, you can take liberties because there is no continuity as such and

we have to see each shot glorified, each shot looking nice, and pictorially beautiful. Each shot has to be beautifully composed. That is very important in songs. And the heroine and all other artistes also should look beautiful and bright. We cannot make it contrasty because we have to keep a happy mood always. If it is a sad song then we can change the lighting. Suppose the heroine is crying and singing, she has failed in her love and she is crying, then you can take the liberty to change the lighting and make it dramatic. But generally, you see, the songs are happy and happy songs mean beautiful lighting, bright lighting.

Did you discuss camera movements beforehand when you are shooting with Hrishida?

No. If on the set I think I want a trolley shot I ask for it, that's all. Or if I want I might zoom on to a face, that's all.

Compositions were also never discussed?

No, Hrishida never looked through the camera.

All the decisions about composition are your decisions alone?

That's the whole thing you see. Some people have the habit of poking their nose in the camera; some directors have got this habit. Of course they must know something but sometimes they show off also. But I think Hrishikesh Mukerjee has never looked through the camera. He sits in the corner of the set playing chess, and from time to time he will shout and ask, 'Are you ready Jaywant?' If I am ready I will say so, otherwise he will again start playing chess. He knows what I'm doing because he has seen my first film for him on the screen. '*Aanari*' was seen by him and whatever he had thought, whatever he had visualized was there on the screen. So he was fully satisfied. After that he never

looked through the camera. In '*Anaari*' also he never looked through the camera, but he did walk a round a lot here and there. But after '*Anaari*' he would just go and sit in the corner with his chessboard.

And the actor's movements?

Of course he would decide the characters movements - who will move from where to where and who will sit where, and when these things will happen. But in all this he would ask for my inputs also, because it would all depend on my lighting set up. If I ask him to make any changes that too he will agree to.

Like for instance, once we were shooting for '*Anupama*', we had to shoot a song with Shashikala, the vamp character. It was a light song. Dharmendra was due to arrive soon, and the next set up was going to be his song - a sad, moody song. Hrishida wanted me to switch quickly from the first song (Shashikala) set up to the next (Dharmendra) song set up. This meant a whole change in the lighting set up. I was in a fix. So I suggested to Hrishida, please tell Shashikala to add a dialogue saying "Now I will dim the lights", she did so, and she did an action of touching a button - as if she was changing the light, and in this way I was able to incorporate a change in the light set up of that song and that is how I was able to create a moody, dim lighting set-up in a light song sequence, so that we could move smoothly into the next song set up.

So this is how Hrishikesh Mukerjee also helped me. I would have been doomed if I had to shoot Dharmendra sitting in happy lighting, singing a sad song, that would have been awful.

What are your thoughts with regard to composition and framing?

I learnt composition in the very beginning when I was doing still

photography. Then I was seeing English films all the time in Metro cinema when I was a student. So many films, like *'How Green Was My Valley'* and *'Gas Light'*. All these films I used to see, and I used to notice the compositions and those taught me something. I learnt a lot from this kind of film viewing. When I was an apprentice, the cameramen never discussed what they were composing. But I learnt how to balance a composition when I was a student in St. Xavier's, we had a book on composition. From that I learnt about the rule of thirds, how to balance the frame and things like that. But I never learnt any of these things from a cameraman. But like I said I used to see English films and I learnt so many things from those films - what is a long shot, what is a mid-shot, how much you should keep in a mid-shot, how close you can go in a close up and in an extreme close up shot. All these things I learnt from those films only.

Do you remember any particular cameramen whose work you used to particularly admire?

No I don't remember all the names exactly, but this one Chinese sounding cameraman was there. James Wong Howe. I like his work. I tried to learn by looking at this work. Then Jack Cardiff I liked a lot, then some others, so there were a few cameramen whose work I really liked.

Did you work very closely with the Art Director?

No, really speaking we had no contact with the Art Director on the set. In Hrishi-*da's* films, the art director just makes a set and then he goes home, that's all. After that we come to the set, and start. But if we want to change something then we try to catch hold of his assistant and get him change or repair or do any addition or subtraction. But he cannot change the whole set. Hrishi-*da* was not very particular about setting you see, whatever set was available he used to shoot in that. He is a very economical director, if you give him a corner and ask

him to shoot, he will shoot in that corner. But he will see that his scene is complete. Whatever he has visualized is there; he is after that only.

What are your views about shooting on location?

Whenever we go to locations, we go outdoors. Here, location, means outdoors and exteriors only. Often we do this for a song or something like that - gardens and hill stations - things like that. I remember that in '*Mem Didi*' we had some shooting in outdoors in the cities because we had wanted to give the special effect of a slum. Of course we had erected a set in the slum and done all our shooting, day as well as night scenes in that location. We used to cover the set from above with white cloth and shoot inside that. This way some light would filter through and apart from that we used to give some additional light, to give the effect of a slum, with dark patches in some parts and light patches in other parts. But we shot only one film like that that - '*Mem Didi*'.

What about shooting in houses and bungalows that are specially rented out for films?

Yes, nowadays it is quite common to hire bungalows for shooting, but we have to work with whatever is available there, and we cannot change anything...I suffer a lot from the point of view of lighting in these situations. I often cannot give the light from the proper angle, if there is a wall where I want to put a light, I cannot break the wall. Sometimes there is no place to keep a back light. So it can be a real tragedy for a cameraman when you are shooting in these circumstances. So we have to think of ways around these difficulties. Perhaps you have to work with the positioning of the actors against the background to create more depth, sometimes maybe you can give a sidelight if there is no place for a backlight and so on.

Do you measure the difference in light between main lights, highlights and background lights, or are you flexible about these issues?

I change only the highlight; the highlight on the face of the hero or the heroine is the only thing that I keep checking. All the background lighting is done keeping this in mind. Now supposing your face light is at a hundred foot candles, in that case I will see to it that the background is a little less than that. But I will not go and measure the background exactly. Some cameramen do that. But with me it's a judgment of the eye, you have to judge how much light you are going to keep in the background.

Do you have any preferences in terms of the speed of the stock?

I haven't used high-speed stock much, only in some exterior night scenes in outdoor locations, because it gives you a larger margin and you can use less lights, because sometimes you don't get many lights. At that time high-speed stock is useful. We worked mainly with 100 and 200 ASA. Then 500 ASA came in B&W. Now we have high speed colour stock also - 500 ASA and even more than that. I don't exactly remember, but I think I used 200 ASA in an exterior night scene in the outdoor location in '*Mem Didi*'. It was a marriage scene, with lots of people and trucks and so on. I used 200 ASA but it was not much different from 100 ASA. We did not have as many lights as we could get in the studios, so the 200 ASA helped to make it as good as 100 ASA. But with *Hrishi-da*, we worked mainly in the studio, so we did not have to use high-speed film. I have never used 500 ASA, not in B&W or in colour.

Did you like to work on a particular aperture?

Yes, I used to mainly work with an open diaphragm. 2.8 f stop, 100 foot candles, 2.8 or maximum 3.5, is how far we used to go. In '*Anaari*' I had gone as far as f11, in the studio, because *Hrishi-da* wanted Lalita Pawar and Raj Kapoor

both in focus, in the same shot. Raj Kapoor has a big close up and she is standing quite far from him on the staircase.

I said, "How can you use f11 in the indoor?"

He said, "I want this effect, I want both of them in focus because both are talking in the same shot"

So I brought all the lights into the set, all the 5KWs and 10 KW and put three 5 KW lights on Raj Kapoor.

He said, "Yeh kya ker rahaa hai, jalaa rahaa hai humko" (What are you doing, you are burning me)

I said, "Ask the director, he wants 'deep focus' "

Then Lalita Pawar also got angry, she shouted, "How much light are you putting on me, I cannot see, I cannot speak the dialogues, I am perspiring all the time" but I said, "Please, let us do these shots". So in that way I had taken this scene at apertures of f8 and f11.

What lens did you use for these shots?

I used the 35 mm lens for that. The wide-angle lens was also not available at that time. There was a 25 mm lens but it had some defect in the corners. The corners would get dark. So I used the 35 mm lens and put these lights and took it. We had to use plenty of lights to do it. An aperture of f11 means around 500 foot-candles on the face and that too from quite near. Three 5 KW lights on a single actor, and then in order to make the background match I put all the solars and all the remaining lights on.

That was quite an experience. But sometimes, you see, if your director requires something to realize his visualizations, you have to do it. He wants two characters in the same frame, separated by some distance, and he wants then both answering, questioning, answering - you see, something like that. And both

faces are in front of my camera. It even one of them had his or her back to me it would have been different. But both are facing my camera. I cannot keep one of them in the dark or out of focus

Can you talk about your system of lighting? Each cameraperson begins lighting in a studio is totally dark. You have to start lighting and then you have to carry on. Could you describe your system, how you start, and how you carry on?

First I go on the set and see the set. I see the windows, I count how many windows and doors there are. Then I get the scenes from Hrishi-da's assistant and check, is it a night scene or a day scene, things like that.

But every set is a blank set, so now I have to visualize the set. I have to visualize, suppose - this is a day scene, there is this window there, suppose it's a morning scene in the script, the characters are having tea or breakfast or something like that - then I will visualize that the sunlight is coming from the window on the wall, another light from some other source is coming on to the faces of the artistes, I have to think what can that source be, then there has to be fill-in light as well. So this is how I visualize before I start lighting. I think about what I am going to use and how I am going to use it.

If it is a night scene I see if there any light (practical) on the set, if there is no practical we just ask the art director's assistant to provide table lamps, reading lights or bracket lights or anything like that. Then I can play with the light. So this is my requirement. I just see the set and I get my requirement worked out and that's how I start lighting. But without some source I don't do lighting. I must see some source of light on the set. If you are shooting a stage show or something like that then there is no restriction on lighting, we can do any kind of

lighting, then there is no right or wrong lighting.

Are actors and actresses fussy about the kind of lighting that they get?

Previously the artistes used to be very particular about their faces and all that. I have already told you how I had my own way of shooting the faces of Nargis and Meena Kumari. But even then, some of the heroes were quite particular. Biswajit for instance, always liked to look more beautiful than heroic. He used to tell me, "chokhta achhaa banaanaa hai" (The eyes have to be beautiful) and I would tell him "baneygaa, achha banayegaa" (I will make them beautiful). Dev Anand also appreciated good lighting. Dev Anand was very particular about his face lighting. He always wanted to look the same as he was in his earlier films. But generally they were quite co-operative.

The artistes used to ask us, "Where should I stand". And then we used to make a mark, a chalk mark on the floor. We used to tell them that they must come and stand on that mark and look at a certain point and only then their face will look good. So they used to come and stand exactly on the mark. If by chance they don't come on to the mark they will say "No, we will take one more take because I am not on the mark." Sometimes, I made a funny cut out face, and put it on a cutter stand at the correct angle and distance and I would tell them to look at this face. In this way I would get the correct face lighting for the actors and actresses. They used to co-operate with us, because they knew that what was beneficial for me was also beneficial for them. After all, if a heroine looks good I also get some name and she is also happy because she is looking beautiful. So this co-operation was there and that's how we worked.

In my days I was very lucky in terms of the artistes I worked with. Whether it was Rajesh Khanna, or Amitabh Bachchan or Guru Dutt or any other

hero, I never heard anyone of them say anything about the lighting because they knew that I would do perfect lighting and it will be good for them.

I have heard that nowadays some boys, some of the new heroes demand that the lighting be done in some specific way because they think that is how they look beautiful. One of my friends told me that when he was working with Aamir Khan, he had done some slightly 'toppish' kind of lighting, then Aamir Khan told him, "Please take that light next to the camera and bring down it's height. He wanted no shadow on his face, just some flat lighting, because someone had told him that he looks good in that. The cameraman had to agree. Of course this sort of thing is not good for the cameraman.

How did you approach the visualization of a film like '*Anand*'?

'*Anand*' is a dramatic picture, but with a difference. Rajesh Khanna is suffering from cancer. So in the beginning I thought I should make it dramatic throughout but when I read the dialogues, I realised that Rajesh Khanna's character is lovable and happy. Sad film, happy character. You know what the dialogues are like "Kal marna hai to aaj kyun rona?" (Why cry today if you have to die tomorrow) and "Kal marne do, aaj hunso khelo" (Laugh and be happy today, death is tomorrow, another day)

So I treated him all the time in "happy" terms. Till his death scene. In the death scene I changed the lighting, otherwise throughout the film I never did any dramatic lighting. I took the lead from the attitude of Rajesh Khanna's character. And so, for this sad film, happy lighting was needed.

What would 'happy lighting' mean?

Happy lighting means, ... what we call "goody-goody" lighting... The

face should look good. A charming hero should look like a charming hero. A 'chocolate box hero' you may say.

And what about 'Namak Haraam'?

'*Namak Haraam*' had some dramatic scenes. I tried my level best but actually I couldn't get the drama because they swallowed the drama themselves. When Amitabh is there, he is very good at the fighting scenes, so our lighting was secondary. But anyway I tried my level best to work on the dramatic moments. For instance, there is that scene when Amitabh comes into the *basti* and shouts "hai koi mai-ka-laal..." - it was outdoors, so I had no scope to do anything with the lighting, but I changed the angle to make it a low angle shot, to give him more prominence in the frame.

Did you do any glamour lighting?

No, I have not done much glamour lighting. But in one film I have used glamour, especially with Sharmila Tagore. There was one film called '*Satyakaam*', in which she is supposed to be a prostitute singing in front of a Nawab or something like, so there I tried to glamorise her a lot in that scene. That is the only film where I remember that I have consciously glamorised her.

Otherwise I had photographed her in '*Anupama*' also, but with soft lighting. I would shoot the songs before sunrise. For one song we started at about 5:30 in the morning and by 6 o'clock we took the shot. It was shot in reflected light from a skylight. She is seen picking flowers, while Dharmendra is standing. It was supposed to be taken in the evening but I said that evening light is there for a very little time. In the morning one can shoot for a little more time than in the evening. So we shot that song for two or three days, early in the morning. Then we used to start the regular shift at 9 o'clock. That morning light

worked very well for that particular effect.

Could you talk about how much money was paid to cameramen and to assistants and so on, and how that has changed over the years?

In the early days payments were very low. When I first joined as an assistant in R.K. films, I got 250 Rupees per film as an assistant. Then ultimately I got up to 1000 Rupees as an assistant and 2000 Rupees when I became a cameraman. After that I was working there on a regular monthly salary. Later, when I joined *Hrishi-da* I signed a contract, a payment per film contract. I started with 20000 Rupees, then 30, 40, 50. I reached up to 70-80,000, that's all.

And how long did it take to shoot one film?

With *Hrishi-da's* we used to shoot very fast. That meant relay shifts. You will not believe it, but '*Anand*' was made in just 45 shifts. Then '*Anuradha*' we did in 25 shifts because Leela Naidu was at our beck and call. She was with us all the time. Balraj Sahni was also not working anywhere else at that time, so he was also there all the time, so we started and then finished the whole film in two or three sets, in 25 shifts.

What were the budgets like?

B&W film budgets were comparatively much less than what normal film budgets are nowadays. *Hrishi-da's* budgets were very small; he is a very economical director. He does not retake any shots, if he feels that the artiste has done a good take then he will not take any more takes. He did not even listen to Amitabh when he sometimes asked for a re-take. *Hrishi-da* would say "What I have seen is correct, and you should agree with me if you feel that I am the director and I know my job." So, in that way he was very economical and he is not fussy about all sets and things like that. If there is a mistake in the set he

would just point it out to the Art Director, that is all

What would have been the budget for 'Aah', about 10 lakhs or so?

'Aah' was made in 25 lakhs or something like that. This was because R.K's scale was bigger. His canvas was big.

So 'Anand' would have been made in a much lower scale?

Of course. But artistes were more demanding of money. Otherwise, our other extra expenses were very less.

How much did the artistes take?

I think Rajesh Khanna used to take at that time 20 lakhs Rupees or something like that, 15-20 lakhs Rupees per film. For 'Anand' he took 15 lakhs Rupees. After 'Anand' his price shot up.

We have been reading a lot about 'breach of contract' cases in the journal of WICA (Western India Cinematographers Association). Was it very common for productions to get stalled, payments to be delayed, or not made, would new agreements be drawn up in the case of stalled productions?

What happens you know is that there is a tendency on the part of the producers of looking at the technicians in a very different way from the way that they look at artistes. They think technicians are working just for the fun of it. But we are not working for fun. We are working for bread and butter. But this attitude is there.

Artistes are paid very well because if they don't come on the shooting they (the producers) are lost. Music directors don't even compose the music until

and unless the producers pay them. Singers get paid in advance, so do dancers and fighters (stunt people). But technicians -photographers, sound recordists and editors they are don't bother the producers, so producers think that we don't need money. So that's why these cases are there. Some people take us for granted. They will say things like, "2000 diyaa naa, baad mein dete hain, picture lagne do" (Haven't I given you 2000, the rest I will give you later, let the film run). Sometimes they ask us to wait for the complete amount till the film is complete, or till after it is released.

Nowadays, our association has started telling us to sign an agreement about the payment with the producers and told us that a copy of the agreement should be deposited in the association office. So that office will take care of any dispute. So there are fewer cases of people not being paid or not being paid on time nowadays.

But in those days, in my days, people used to cheat. I have lost about 25,000 Rupees up till now. 15,000 Rupees when I worked with Rawail. Then I did another film in which the producer also cheated me. Gave me a post dated cheque that bounced. That was in '*Satyakaam*'. I lost 15,000 Rupees there.

So that was the way it was going on. But, some technicians also don't take care. They neglect their own interests sometimes. They don't sign the contract and then come to the association and say that they have lost money and have not been paid. They should make sure that they sign the agreement and send it to association so that the association can take action.

What action does the association take?

Association can stop the film's shooting by sending a notice to the

Industry's federations or associations that such and such a technician has not been paid. Sometimes the Federation takes action or use their influence with the producers to make the matter move. Or the technicians just stop the work till the payments are made. So at least some barrier is there now. You can stop the picture. But the system should be that the films cannot be released until all payments are done. This should be made into a law.

Who would make the payments?

The producer. He would pay everyone, all the artistes, technicians and the director as well. Sometimes assistant director is not paid, but the director is paid. It happens like that.

So producers used to have preferences for different cameramen? Different cameramen whom they used to like?

Groups would form, depending on who worked with whom. Like Dev Anand had Ratra, Guru Dutt had Murthy, Raj Kapoor had Radhu Karmakar and Hrishi-*da* had me.

So these groups arose out some aesthetic similarities or from personal liking...?

You can say that it would come from some form of 'understanding'. There must be understanding between cameraman and director. Director must know what is the capacity of a cameraman, what can he give me and I (cameraman) must know what he (director) wants. If you are a director I must know what kind of work you want. What style of work you want. Hrishi-*da* never used to discuss much with me because he knows what I can give and I know what he wants. If he says I want a long shot, I know what kind of long shot, from which angle. I know it and he knows the same thing. So that understanding is

very important.

That understanding was the reason why these groups were formed. A cameraman becomes attached to a group of people, a director, or a company, and over the years the understanding forms...

Were your assistants paid by you or...?

No, by the producer. Some cameramen pay their assistants but I never did that...

Was that the earlier system?

Yes that was the earlier system. Some cameramen still do that. But I have also heard that cameramen take money from the producer for the assistants and then do not pay them. But I would insist with the producers that the assistants be paid before I was paid. Fortunately, Hrishi-*da* had mainly good producers, except for one or two. They used to pay whatever they said they would pay. In instalments, of course.

Can you tell us little bit about your assistants. Did any go on to becoming cameramen?

Two of my assistants became full-fledged cameramen but they died. One was Sitaram, a south Indian assistant who worked with me. He worked with me for 20 years but recently he died of a heart attack. And another fellow was Mohan Lulla who also became a cameraman, he also died 6 years back. So it is unfortunate to say that my two assistants are not working. But one of my assistants, Prakash Anadkar who has been working with me last 15 years, now works as a cameraman in Marathi pictures in Bombay. But he is able to work as a cameraman in Hindi films as well.

Did you do any work on video?

No I didn't do much work on video. I directed one serial on video. But I rarely photographed, my assistant photographed that serial, I directed. I found that video is not so difficult. The best thing is that you can see what you have shot on the monitor and you can make corrections as you shoot. Suppose if your exposure is wrong, you can adjust things, put some filters and so on. Video has got this facility of seeing what you are doing, in films you have to do guess work till you get the results from the laboratory. You are in the dark till then.

Do you see recent films?

I see them on television only. I don't go to the theatres. Nowadays, everybody is staying at home and seeing the TV. Theatres are empty you know, very empty. All the theatres are getting closed day by day.

What is the most satisfying film that you think you have photographed, from the cinematographic point of view?

I think I am most satisfied with '*Aah*'. I have tried to take more out of my work in that film, as it was my first film, it was just like my first child. I had taken a lot of pains in that. I tried to make every scene look nice. I also liked '*Anaari*'. I have always found it satisfying to work with Hrishida. He is not Satyajit Ray, and he is not Subhash Ghai. He is somewhere in between. Sometimes he too tried to please his audience, but he had a different audience. That audience is lost now, gone.