

Western India Cinematographers Association

(*The First 25 Years*, Indian Cinematography, published by Western India Cinematographers Association, 1993)

On the 2nd of August, 1953 a small group of cinematographers gathered at the Embassy Theatre, in Bombay, to attend a meeting convened by Shri V. Avadhut. It was the very first meeting of cinematographers, and it was out of this meeting that the idea of craft wise Associations took shape. Shri Fardoon Irani was in the Chair and most of the top cameramen of the time were present. It was generally felt that a society be formed on the lines of the A.S.C. and called the Indian Society of Cinematographers. Shri Krishna Gopal emphasised the need for a compact body in the following words: "It is necessary to form a compact body of cinematographers so that its voice can be heard. It would also provide cinematographers with a common platform, where they could discuss their problems, exchange views and generally be of help to each other." Shri Rajanikant C. Pandya suggested that a regional body be formed instead of an all India body and be named Western India Cinematographers Society. The new society included cameramen working in Bombay Poona and Kolhapur, and was ultimately named Western India Society of Cinematographers. The first meeting of the Western India Society of Cinematographers was held at the Shree Sound Studios on 5th September, 1953. Office bearers were elected and a draft constitution was adopted. The office bearers elected were Shri Nitin Bose as President, Shri V. Avadhut as Vice-President. Shri Krishna Gopal Secretary and Shri Radhu Karmakar as Treasurer respectively. The members of the first executive body were Shri Rajanikant C. Pandya, Shri Dwarka Khosla, Shri Surendra K. Pai, Shri Prahlad Dutt, Shri Ratanlal Nagar, Shri Rajendra Malone, Shri M.R. Jaywant, Shri R.D. Mathur, Shri Ajoy Kar. Shri Vasant Buva and Shri Rustom Master.

Kumari Nargis (Smt. Nargis Dutt) and Shri Raj Kapoor were the first to accept life membership. At the 12th meeting of the Western India Society of Cinematographers' held on 23rd January 1954. Shri Dwarka Khosla resigned and on his recommendation Shri Haren Bhatt was co-opted as a member of the Executive Committee.

Working as a Society. the Western India Society of Cinematographers' was unable to solve effectively the various problems of its members. It was felt that these could be handled better if the Society registered itself as a Trade Union. At the 39th meeting of the Executive Committee it was decided to re-organise the Society as a Trade Union. At the General Body Meeting of the Society held on 9th April, it was unanimously decided that the Society be registered as a trade union. On 30th April, 1955 the registrar of Trade Unions Bombay State, registered the Society under Indian Trade Union Act. 1929 as the Western India Cinematographers' Association. The registered office was at Shree Sound Studios, Dadar, Bombay-400 014.

The first General Body Meeting of the newly formed Western India Cinematographers' Association was held on 28th May, 1955 at Shree Sound Studios. Office bearers and members of the Executive Committee were elected by ballot papers for the first time.

The office bearers elected were Shri Nitin Bose as President, Shri Gordhanbhai Patel as Vice-President. Shri Krishna Gopal as general Secretary and Shri Radhu Karmakar as Treasurer respectively. The members of the Managing Committee were Shri V. Avadhut, Shri Rajanikant C. Pandya Shri Rustom P. Master, Shri Dronacharya, Shri R.D. Mathur, Shri S.S. Verma, Shri K.S. Gupte, Shri M.N. Malhotra, Shri Babubhai Mistry, Shri Jaywant Pathare, Shri Taru Dutt, Shri Rajendra Malone and Shri M.M. Vaidya respectively. The draft constitution was adopted with some amendments.

The various trades within the film industry followed W .I.C.A.'s example and started forming craftwise Trade Unions. The Association welcomed the formation of other Trade Unions and at their 8th meeting, W.I.C.A. Managing Committee mooted the idea of a

federation of all film craft unions in Bombay. On 28th February, 1957 a federation of Western India Cine Employees was formed. Shri Nitin Bose was the first president of the Society and also the first president of the Association. Regrettably he was unable to serve out his term and on his resignation Shri Gordhanbhai Patel became the President of the Association. Grateful mention must be made of two long serving bearers, one of whom is no more with us. Shri Krishna Gopal was the first Honorary General Secretary of the Society and subsequently of the Association. He held this office from the first election in 1955 right up to 1970. The following year he was elected President of the Association and was re-elected to his office in 1972 and once again in 1976. Shri Krishna Gopal is also a founder member and past President of the Federation of Western India Cine Employees.

The late Shri Rajanikant C. Pandya was actively connected with the Association for more than 16 years. During this time he served the Association in various capacities. He was also president of the Association for 10 years. With his passing the Association lost one of its most active members and wisest counsellors.

Special mention must be made of late President, Shri Radhu Karmakar who was elected Treasurer of the Society at the meeting held on 5th September, 1953. Shri V. Avadhut who was elected Vice-president at the meeting held in 1953. Recognition must also be made of the services rendered by Shri Gordhanbhai Patel and Shri Haren Bhatt, who served in the capacity of Honorary General Secretary for almost seven years. Appreciation must be recorded of the stalwart services rendered by various other members, to mention but a few Late Shri M.N. Malhotra. Shri Bal Joglekar, Shri Dronacharya, Shri Vasant Buva, Shri Girish Karve, Shri R.D. Mathur, and Shri Madan Sinha.

Apart from these many other individuals have rendered yeoman service and contributed to the success of the Association. Space does not permit the mention of all these

individual names. But, they can be rest assured that the Association has not forgotten the contribution made by them.

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Radhu Karmakar - India's ace cinematographer

- by Bunny Reuben

(from Indian Cinematography, published by Western India Cinematographers Association, 1993)

As far as general public memory goes, everyone thinks Radhu Karmakar's career as a cinematographer began when he joined Raj Kapoor to photograph "Awara" in 1949-50. In reality, Radhu had an earlier phase to his career-long before Raj Kapoor and "Awara". Radhu entered the film-industry in 1936 as a Laboratory Assistant in Calcutta, and after a short while inside the Lab, he came out and became an assistant in the Camera Department. He continued to work as an assistant in the camera department at Sirco and Laxmi Productions until 1946, when he got his first break as a cameraman.

"Kismet Ka Dhani", Radhu Karmakar's first film as cameraman, was a stunt film! Things now began to move faster for Radhu. He came in contact with Nitin Bose and Dilip Dutt, the latter of whom recommended him to Bombay Talkies, where he photographed "Milan" (an early Dilip Kumar starrer) and its Bengali version "Nauka Dubi". The photography of this Bengali film caught the attention of New Theatres and Radhu went back to Calcutta to photograph the Bengali film "Dhrishti Dhah" for them. Radhu came back to Bombay again in 1948 to film a Bengali Picture titled "Marshal Shomar" for Bombay Talkies. The year was 1949.

And Destiny had laid the stage for Radhu Karmakar to meet the man who was thereafter to be the most important creative and driving force behind this humble, quite and soft-spoken cameraman's career. Radhu Karmakar met Raj Kapoor -- and the rest is history.

Radhu photographed "Awara" and overnight people stopped calling him "cameraman" and began to call him "cinematographer"! The photography of "Awara" elicited generous praise from the critics and Radhu settled down to being Raj Kapoor's permanent cameraman.

Color was coming to Indian cinema, and Raj Kapoor arranged an intensive, six-month study- cum-training course for Radhu at Technicolor Ltd, in London, under the aegis of ace, world- famous cinematographer Jack Cardiff! While in London Radhu had requested Cardiff to take a look at "Awara". Cardiff agreed to watch a few reels and brought his wife along to the screening, which commenced at 10 p.m. --both husband and wife planned to stop the screening after half an hour and go home to bed. But, as the reels of "Awara " began to rewind, the Cardiffs became so engrossed in the film that they sat up till 1.30 a.m. and saw "Awara " from start to finish!

Radhu did not immediately get to film in color because Raj Kapoor made two more black-and- white films then -and it was for "Shree 420" that Radhu won the "Filmfare" Award for best photography (black-and-white) of that year.

Radhu photographed two of Raj Kapoor's most ambitious films, "Sangam" and "Mera Naam Joker", in color. Both films won Radhu many Awards, both major and minor. Subsequently Radhu photographed in colour also "Bobby", "Satyam Shivam Sundaram", "Prem Rog" and "Ram Teri Ganga Maili" winning many more Awards for his cinematography in the process. After Raj Kapoor's death in 1988 Radhu did the photography for "Heena" too, which Randhir Kapoor directed. Apart from his work behind the cameras at R.K. Studios, Radhu photographed some "outside" films too, notably "Milan", "Mashaal", "Be-Imaan", "Sanyasi", and Rajendra Kumar's "Aman" as well as "Love Story".

I came in contact with this remarkable gentleman first as a journalist during the "Awara" days and later became a close friend and colleague as I spent the better part of my

working life in close association with Raj Kapoor and consequently became friendly with all Raj's senior technicians at R.K. Raj Kapoor used to proudly describe Radhu as "my eyes" and also gave Radhu his first break as a director to wield the megaphone in R.K. Films' "Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai". Later, Radhu also directed another film "outside" R.K. - "Harfan Maula". He was also the producer of this film and, having burned his fingers, resolved never to stray from the field of his mastery (cinematography) ever again! After Raj Kapoor's death Radhu not only photographed "Heena" under Randhir Kapoor's direction, he also photographed "Param Vir Chakra" for writer-producer-director Major Ashok Kaul. "Param Vir Chakra" was the subject which had brought Kaul and Raj Kapoor together. Raj had wanted to make this film himself but an untimely death left so many of his dreams unrealised. Most tragically, it was in the midst of shooting "Param vir Chakra" that Radhu Karmakar died suddenly and tragically --in a fatal car accident on October 5, 1993, while returning to Bombay from the location shooting of Kaul's film.

Radhu Karmakar's name will rank amongst those of the most accomplished cinematographers in Indian cinema, ever. He was the proud recipient of two National Awards, many "Filmfare" Awards, Film Journalist Associations Awards and many other Awards and Trophies. He was also a long-time member of the British Cinematographers Society and one of the Founder Members of the Western India Cinematographers Association. He served as its President from 1977 till his death in 1993.

With his departure from this world the Indian film industry has lost one of its most brilliant and dedicated technicians. Radhu was a very great cinematographer, but, above all, he was also a very wonderful human being.

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A Lantern and A Lamp

- by Dilip Gupta

(from Indian Cinematography, published by Western India Cinematographers Association, 1993)

Creating actual effects of light source I had the opportunity to work with great masters and stalwart directors like Nitin Bose, Debaki Bose, Pramathes Barua, Hem Chander, Phani Mazumdar and Bimal Roy. While all of them had outstanding merit and expertise, I enjoyed most working with Bimal Roy. Bimal Roy, being a veteran cinematographer had the vision and creativity to narrate stories through the lens of the camera.

As you all know I was the Director of Photography of Bimal Roy's super-hit '*Madhumati*', for which I was honoured with the award for Best Photography by Filmfare and Bombay Journalists' Association. I would like to share a few reminiscence of the kind of interest and pain I took in making this film. From the very beginning, I made it a point to attend the story and script sessions regularly with Bimal Roy, Ritwick Ghatak, Salil Chowdhary and Rajendra Singh Bedi. Despite being fully equipped with the story and script, I still faced difficulties in lighting up the set but soon I solved the problem and went ahead with the shooting.

Photography is a vast subject with a limitless horizon. Despite my 58 years experience as Cinematographer, I still consider myself a student of Photography. Actually. I learn something new, every shooting day, while composing and lighting the set. My style of Photography is a little different from others. I believe in reality and always try to light up a set according to the mood of the scene. I strictly follow the light source while lighting up the scene. Of course, I enjoy artistic licence in lighting and camera angle to make the scene effective.

I shall describe briefly a few scenes from *Madhumati* where I created the actual effect of the light source from a lantern and a lamp.

1. Night scene: When Dilip Kumar and Tarun Bose knock on the door of the Mahal, a watchman opens it, carrying a lantern, in his hand. As he lifts the lantern, the faces of the visitors as well as the watchman are gradually lit up, as if the light source is the lantern.
2. Night Scene: Dilip Kumar with the easel is painting Madhumati's portrait. There is a lamp on the table near the easel. Vyjayantimala enters and sits in the foreground. Dilip Kumar lifts the lamp and walks up to Vyjayantimala. Here the light source from the lamp was created very effectively - even in motion the source was maintained.

Half of *Madhumati's* shooting was on location, in Bhawali (near Nainital), Ranikhet and Igatpuri. There were many instances where the outdoor effect of the location was created perfectly, in-doors on the floor .

1. The Opening shot of the film-Night Scene: It was raining heavily, when Dilip Kumar and Tarun Bose riding a chauffeur driven car were stranded due to an uprooted tree blocking the way. They discovered a Mahal at a distance and approached it for shelter. This scene was taken in the outdoor of the studio, where I created the actual effect of monsoon weather.
2. Day Scene: Pran is on horseback, chasing Madhumati, who is running in order to protect herself through the forest. The animals are running helter skelter, the birds are disturbed & flyaway in fear and panic. This sequence was partly reshot to build up climax on the floor where the outdoor effect was perfectly replicated to match with the location shooting.

A major part of the shooting was shot at Bhawali where the hills had a forest of closely growing chir trees. The entire forest ground was covered with dry golden colored chir

leaves, which added beauty to the location. Most of our scenes and songs, including the theme song '*Aa Ja Re, Pardes*' were picturised there.

Bimal Roy was a very serious and conscientious worker. He was concerned about quality and not quantity. He would not leave the scene until he was satisfied with the technicalities and performance of the artists. If he found the slightest fault after viewing the rushes he would immediately call for re-shooting and this time, instead of going outdoor, he would ask the Art Director to erect the outdoor scenes inside the studio floor, or in the outdoor of the studio. Being fully aware of his quest for perfection, I consulted the Art Director Sudhendhu Roy, and suggested that we carry dry chir leaves in dozens of gunny bags and a few small chir tree to Bombay by truck. Sudhendhu Roy appreciated my idea because he also knew Bimal's nature. After the location shooting was over and we were back in Bombay, as was expect - ed, after viewing the Rushes, Bimal decided to reshoot. quite a number of shots from theme song '*Ah Ja Re*' and several other scenes. He ordered Sudhendhu to erect the set inside the floor handing him over some still photographs of the location. Sudhendhu was fully prepared because he had all the materials in hand. He moulded number of chir trees from the real trees and erected the set according to the stills. The set was so perfect, that it gave us a feeling of the actual Bhawali location. It was now my turn to show my abilities in matching the shots with outdoors. I got the sky in the background painted off-white and used big unit arch lamps for lighting the set and maintained the continuity of the outdoor location. I also maintained the same exposure as outdoors. *Madhumati's* indoor and outdoor matching was so perfect that nobody could make out, one from the other. I got full cooperation from my dearest friend Bimal Roy throughout the making of the film *Madhumati* and I must admit that my success was largely due to him.

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It's All Wild Jumboree of Noise

- Conversations with Dilip Kumar

(from Indian Cinematography, published by WICA, 1993)

Adeep Tandon: Having worked with veteran cameramen and now young technicians, do you see any difference between two different schools of technicians -those who believed in absolute perfection and those who are always in a hurry?

Dilip Kumar : Everybody is in a hurry. Not only the technician. The Star is in a hurry. The Producer is also in a hurry. The traffic is in a hurry. This is the 'hurried' age. No doubt the modern technician too would like to have reasonable facilities and time to do his job well. Sometimes these conditions are thrust upon him. Instead of covering certain things from a qualitative point of view he is also forced to deal with the quantitative aspect of the merchandise. And that is, I think, his handicap. But there are so many innovations now as far as the quality of film, of the negative, of various kinds of lenses, opticals that they can achieve much more than our colleagues of yesteryears. We cannot ignore the tremendous technological strides made both in the sound track and negative, rawstock, lenses and effects that are available. Yes, he has to work fast. To work fast. he has several. compensatory elements at his disposal. But I wonder if he always like to work fast. He would like to take little time to enhance the quality of his work.

Adeep Tandon: Don't you feel that photography can enhance your performance? Do you ever discuss the lighting pattern with your cameraman?

Dilip Kumar: A lot depends on the quality of the negative and also the bath through which it has to be processed. Notwithstanding that, assuming that a picture is shot on a good negative and it is properly developed, lighting is of prime importance. I wouldn't

discuss lighting in an environment where it did not matter much. But in units where it matters I would like to pick up something from the cameraman and perhaps discuss with him. I always deal with the scene as a whole rather than isolated shots. Cameramen have always been close to me, like Kamal Bose. (Dwarka) Divecha and Fardoonji (Faredoon Irani) used to be very close to me. The same was true of Nitinda (Nitin Bose). I would ask them about the highlights, and effects of the shades, the background. Sometimes we don't need to highlight the background. If the wall is there you just highlight the face and diminish the impact of the elements on the wall, or maybe the sidelight or the frontlight. I'm a student in that respect. I don't give instructions but explain and I'd like to know if a certain scheme is being followed. So often I have asked Kamal (Kamal Bose) about the element of shade being applied, about shadows being enhanced. I have to go by his verdict. I'm not expert in identifying qualitative lighting. But I am much concerned and I know good lighting is extremely vital, particularly where shades of emotions of dramatic thrust is to be achieved.

Adeep Tandon : *One who has always strived for perfection, what do you have to say about 'discipline' in today's film-making?*

Dilip Kumar: Even when I entered the film industry there were certain problems in this respect with the producer or the director. I must admit that they have become far more acute now. Some of today's artists are very talented. But they could achieve more if only they dedicated themselves to the undertaking. It is not just the attention during the course of the shot, lot of it goes before the shot is taken or lit up. A great deal depends upon discipline. I find working these days, there is much laughter and wisecracking between the stars and others. The sets are far noisier. I must admit that it put me into a great deal of discomfort. But the fact that some people may have a surface talent - you know what I mean by it - does not necessarily imply that they should come to the floor

or in front of the camera with a casual air and make very light of the work. Maybe they can do it or get away with it but there are others who have to concentrate. And if everybody has to talk and if people are laughing or joking, the technician and the soundman have to shout in order to convey their instruction to the lighting man. So it's all wild jumborie of noise. Kamalda has told me so many times "Yusufbhai, I won't be able to reach over to the man who is there on the plank or the fellow who is there on the light or the reflector". Often on my own set I sometimes loose my cool and I shout to stop this - what are we, in a fish market? What are we doing? And for a little while it is as it ought to be. It is important even for studious actors because on the floor he is the person of prime importance. He is the one who is going to spell out the dialogues. He should realize that to maintain the serenity and precision in work, it is important that we have reasonable amount of quietitude. I don't say that everything should be absolutely still and frozen. I have watched many a shootings for long stretches abroad where men just gesture to each other and talk in soft low whispers, Even that is not desirable. This is a problem that creates operational difficulties, both for the actor and the technician.

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Working in Tandem

B.R. Chopra

(from Indian Cinematography, published by WICA, 1993)

You have doubtless seen a Tandem bicycle. A Tandem bicycle is a double bicycle with two seat and double pedal. Two persons can ride it and together make it a single effort. The relations between a Director and a Cameraman are identical - they make a technical team working in absolute harmony to shape a Motion Picture to look like a single effort.

Once upon a time -long ago - in year 1951-52 when I had made only one picture - *Afsana*, I was sitting at Taj Mahal Lounge taking tea. On the next table were two persons not quite known to me. But when they addressed each other I came to know that one of them was the famous Indian Cameraman Falli Mistry and the other was the world renowned Ernie Heller of "*Gone With The Wind*" fame who had come to India to direct the camera for Sohrab Modi's 'Jhansi Ki Rani'. It appeared Mr. Ernie Heller had seen picture 'Anjaan' of Falli Mistry, and the discussion was about the intrinsic merits of the same picture. I remember to this day the words that Ernie Heller used in describing 'Anjaan'. He said that the picture's photography and camera work were simply superb but in totality the camera work was a little too heavily weighted against the story. He said - if after seeing a picture one were only to extol cameraman then it is clear that the picture on the whole is not good.

Photography is meant to tell a story in visual images - it cannot arrogate to itself the task of dominating the subject. Cameraman and the Director have to work for only one goal - that of making a good picture where direction and photography mingle imperceptibly to create a sense of absolute harmony. I used the word Tandem because it was used by Heller when he said that the director and cameraman had to work in tandem without one trying to overpower the other. The director is incharge of the script - the cameraman has to describe it in terms of images. Which means that visual images have to be true to the spirit of the subject. The cameraman does not have the right to impose his personal mood on the subject and though sometimes the cameraman is tempted to introduce some extraordinary compositions and bring in some highly attractive mood shots, it can be prejudicial to the overall basic structure of the film.

A good cameraman does not come with any preconceived notions. He has to merge his identity with the identity of the subject and work hand in hand with the Director, translating faithfully the scenes as conceived by the Director. I do not mean to say that

the cameraman has no personal identity or that he cannot make a contribution to the subject. He has a definite identity of his own and he has to make useful contribution but within the confines of the subject. I know how Dwarka Divecha, a very talented cameraman used to quarrel with Kardar. "Don't tell me where to place the camera - tell me what result you want. Allow me to be useful to you." Kardar himself had good camera sense but I know how he used to submit to the artistic genius of Dwarka Divecha. And we all know this team of Kardar and Divecha turned out some very brilliant pictures which were a photographic delight and otherwise also artistically and thematically satisfying.

I have seen Avdhoot quarrelling with Shantaram who was also alleged to have a very good camera sense. But I always found him submitting to the judgement of Avdhoot and together they turned out some of the most outstanding pictures. One could see the basic understanding between the Director and the Cameraman in creating the proper atmosphere for a picture, which alone is the criterion of a technically balanced movie. When I talk of atmosphere I mean to suggest that every subject has to have its own atmosphere. A family picture is different from a suspense picture. '*Maha!*' and '*Andaz*' could not be given the same treatment. '*Chandni*' and '*Lamhe*' had to look different. '*Lekin*' could not be treated like a usual social picture. It has the uncanny atmosphere of a mystery picture and it is to the credit of Manmohan Singh that he captured it admirably. It is said and may be with some basic truth that Cameraman does not make a good director. This also has been belied. Bimal Roy and Nitin Bose did make good directors. Well, there may be some cameramen who did not really click as directors. The reason is not far to seek. The cameraman - director has to forget that he has principal qualification in photography. He has to change his total physiognomy and present himself not as a mere photographer but principally as a story teller. The cameraman in him has to

occupy a secondary position. He has to create a sense of harmony of two artistic expressions within his own self.

The most important requirement for a harmony between cameraman and director is to appreciate and understand the basic need of a story, its type, its style of making and above all its atmosphere. Making a film is to create a basic understanding between two artistes who have their own individual style of expression. That is why we find that successful producers have by and large tried to remain faithful to their cameramen and gave them a place of respect in their pictures. Because to create understanding is difficult and once it is created it is better to improve on that understanding and create a fusion of artistic temperaments. Most important thing in filmmaking is to create a sense of unity and harmony among the various departments engaged in the telling of a story on celluloid. Whether it is Director and Cameraman or Director and audiographer, a director and his script writer, director and his music director, a director and his art director, a director and his action coordinator, a director and his dance master - it has to be a homogeneous team with Director as the revolving common factor. The Cameraman and the Director must therefore work in tandem to create a motion picture which brings out the genius of the two artistes making it look like a single minded spectacle of an inspired product.

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We Back The Man Not The Project

Conversations with Govind Nihalani

(from Indian Cinematography, published by WICA, 1993)

Opendar: At this stage of Indian Cinema, what is the status of Indian Cinematography?

G. Nihalani: We are going through a fairly exciting phase as far as our cinematography

is concerned. The Government policy has become more liberal during the last four or five years. Easy inflow of technology, availability of latest lenses, films etc. You can see the latest films in theatres, on video tapes & laser discs. All this input stimulates the imagination of a cinematographer, creates an ambition to tryout new things. Younger cinematographers particularly are responding beautifully to that kind of stimulation. See the work done in Madras by cameramen like Santosh Sivan, Sriram and Rajeev Menon. You can see the influence of contemporary American Cinema not only in terms of direction but also photography - the way lighting is used, strong backlights with soft fillers. The new look is coming and we are passing through a phase where new themes are being tried out. In a way we will arrive at something which could be termed as distinctly Indian style, though it is increasingly difficult to talk of an Indian style because the globe has really become a village and you can't say this is mine and there is no influence on it of anybody else.

Opendar : To what extent the infrastructure which contains processing, raw stock etc. support this kind of resurgence in Indian Cinematography?

G. Nihalani: As far as infrastructure is concerned, much needs to be done. Though we may have all kinds of negatives but what we don't have is the support raw stock like good internegative, interpositive. We don't have a choice. Our labs, perhaps because there is not much demand for it, are not geared to give us the best quality in opticals, dupe effects. No doubt labs like Adlabs in Bombay and Prasad in Madras can do good optical dissolves through A&B Processing in 35mm. But for 16mm they are not available. But if you want to go on the optical printer the results are far from satisfactory. The dissolves, the supers and even the titles are not at all satisfactory and what we have not been able to get rid of here is even simple things like dust. It is a major problem when it comes to negative handling. It really pains you when you have taken so much trouble,

invested so much money when you end up with a print which is so full of dust. To get rid of dust you need a certain kind of technology, which is not available here with everybody. We are told that maybe our labs are not dust-proof or we, as it is, have lot of dust in our atmosphere or that our water is not pure or clean. Whatever may be the reasons or explanations, the fact is that we have not done enough. Even where lenses or dolly's like Allemac are concerned they are few and everybody can't afford them. Ultimately the producers, particularly in Bombay, don't attach much importance to these things.

Opende: *Maybe their priorities are different?*

G. Nihalani: Absolutely. And in this case our cinematographers should keep reminding the producers that quality does matter. See the quality of the print of a Mani Ratnam's film to-day. See the richness of the frames. That itself becomes an element of tremendous enjoyment and satisfaction when you watch his film. The Cinematographers must take the lead and demand things. They will be refused, to start with. They were refused all these years. But if they insist, if they keep on at it, I'm sure some doors will open.

Opende: *How do you reconcile yourself to the fact that projection facilities are atrocious in most of the theatres?*

G. Nihalani: The important thing to consider is that we can't have everything in an ideal kind of state. Urban theatres, by and large, are not too bad. When I say not too bad, I mean they are not ideal but tolerable. Once you go out of urban centres the theatres are beyond anybody's control. Certain amount of compromise in printing is done which is sad. When you have no control over projection that takes place outside urban areas you can't really worry and get ulcers. Important thing is to get at least the main theatres, the

urban centre copies supervised properly. Ultimately it is a matter of attitude. If the theatre owner also takes pride in maintaining quality in sound and projection in his theatre, we don't even have to tell him. As it is the theatres are so few and they are not bothered. Theatres are getting filled in any case. So there has been a certain kind of inertia and lack of sense of pride amongst theatre owners. We can't do anything except to make the theatre owner realize that a good projection adds to your enjoyment, adds to your prestige and it does not cost so much.

R.C. Das: Theatre owners have to renew their license every year. Is it not possible to evolve a procedure whereby license is renewed subject to maintaining minimum standard in projection and acoustics systems?

G.Nihalani: It's a good suggestion. But you know the kind of corruption that exists in our country. No doubt we can study the rules relating to licensing and try to talk to the concerned authorities. We can suggest to them to include the parameters of quality which should be fulfilled before a license is renewed. But people always manage to find loopholes. The important thing is to motivate the theatre owner.

R.C. Das: It used to be 'Effective lighting'. Now it is 'Flood lighting'. As a cinematographer what do you feel about it?

G. Nihalani: The younger generation is once again opting for 'mood lighting'. Amongst the vererans my guru V .K. Murthy continues with the tradition and amongst the contemporary cameramen, people like Ashok Mehta, Vinod Pradhan, Baba Azmi, Thomas Xavier are trying to bring in a new look to their films. They are exposed to so much on television. There is so much visual material available to get inspired by that now the younger cameramen have become very ambitious and I have even noticed that now the Stars too have become very conscious about photography. They often ask you

"Who is the Cameraman?" We went through a phase when the new kind of cameraman were coming in and they had discovered the flood-lit field of the European Cinema and they were trying to re-produce it. But the reverse is also true. We keep on thinking that we are getting influenced by American or European Cinema. In 1980-81 I'd been to New York and there I met Nestor Almandros, a very fine cameraman. You must have seen his 'Sophie's Choice', I was taken aback when he asked me "How's that beautiful Indian actress Asha Parekh? Is she still around?" I asked him why he wanted to know about her. It so happened that while he was studying cinematography in France he saw a film starring Asha Parekh and he felt she was a 'beautiful actress'. He also enquired about Subrato Mitra. Though he had never met him he was inspired by Satyajit Ray's 'Charulata' which he happened to see while at the Institute in France. He was stunned by the quality of lighting and photography of that film. Later on he discovered that Mr. Mitra used to make boxes with photo-floods in it and then put, maybe, butter paper to get that soft feel. He himself did something like that and went for a very soft feel in his lighting. At the institute his colleagues thought he had gone crazy. "This is not the way to light it", they said. They were used to the old style. Once they saw the results they not only appreciated it but followed suit. It was a great compliment paid to Mr. Mitra and I remember telling him about this incident. Hence as far as technicians are concerned they are very open-minded all over the world. If you get to see any good work by somebody else, you feel stimulated and we always respond to each other's work. We don't know how our own work is inspiring somebody else just as he doesn't know how his work is inspiring somebody else. This interaction has become very easy now.

Opendar: You have enjoyed critical acclaim as well as audience patronage. You have not been put into any extreme slot. It's quite an achievement in Indian Cinema.

G. Nihalani: There is no such thing as a compromise formula, or a middle path. It has rarely succeeded. You have to be either this side of the line or that side of the line. The purity of the genre, of the style, has to be maintained. The integrity and the style that you chose to treat your film in have to be maintained. You can't play with it. Each genre has certain tradition, which you follow. You can always break away from it but you've to understand the form. That doesn't mean that you've to make the film only in genre - you can create your own. I would normally not try to compromise or create this little blurring line. I'm not saying that to make a popular kind of film is bad. I'm not passing any moral judgement. If I decide to make a popular kind of film, I will follow the traditions which have emerged after decades of practice of that kind of genre. If you maintain the purity of style then you create and give a personality to the film, which is unique. As a director, I always feel the intensity and sincerity with which you feel concerned about the characters and issues within the film. It gets communicated in your work and audience also gets it. And if the audience also respond to the characters and issues that you have dealt with in the same manner as you have, then the communication between the audience and the film maker is established and the film works. I have had the good fortune of having few films which have worked like that and I have also made films which have not worked. I did a lot of thinking about our popular genre, our popular cinema. We all know our popular cinema has evolved from our folk traditions which include narrative traditions like '*Hari Katha*', '*Raslila*', '*Ramlila*', '*Nacha*', '*Tamasha*' where elements of narration, dialogue, choreography and music is always employed in a beautiful mix. The important emotional moments of the film are always highlighted by the stylised expression either through music or dance or both together. It is a very unique form that we have evolved in the sub-continent. I don't think it exists anywhere in the world and one doesn't have to be ashamed of it. It's how this very vibrant and energetic form is made use of. That's important. That is the point of argument. I have discovered that our

popular form has a tremendous strength and possibilities. I'm planning to do something in the same form and also trying to project my sensibility about the subject matter. It is something that I'm looking forward to, particularly to see how it works.

Opende: Is there any subject that has excited you all these years but which you have not been able to make?

G. Nihalani: I lived with a subject for many many years. I was lucky enough to get a break in 'Tamas' and I must say my producers Lalit Bijlani and Freni Variava who were also the producers of Shyam Benegal's earlier films - thanks to them that my dream came true. And they stood by me like a 'Rock of Gibraltar'. They never let me down. I went wildly over budget in spite of the fact that we were getting our money from our sponsors and we went into litigations and those are the people who never saw a single frame of rushes, never came on the sets. Lalit told me: We back the man. We don't back a project. You have full freedom. When I showed him the film he came out choked with emotion. He said "I'm proud to be associated with this film".

R.C. Das: Nowadays an impression is sought to be created that despite the availability of latest technology the contribution of cameraman is belittled.

G. Nihalani: This is an observation which is not based on facts. Not a correct observation at all. However good the technology may become, ultimately it is the man behind it that will make the difference. Just because the quality of brushes can improve, you don't create a good painting. Simply because your Keyboard becomes more sophisticated you don't create great music.