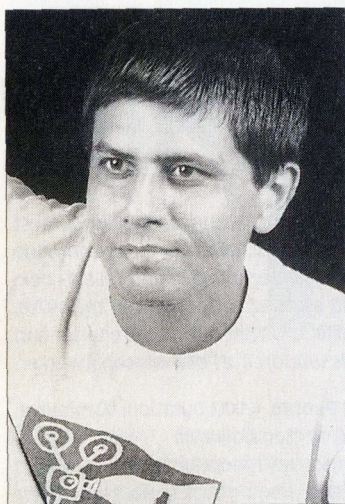


Neeraj Bhasin, maker of *My Friend Sue*, on how passion leads the way

# WHAT MATTERS



“... I travelled each and every highway and more, much more than this, I did it my way. Regrets, I've had a few, but then again too few to mention. I did what I had to do. I saw it through without exemption...

I feel filmmaking is all about what these lines from Frank Sinatra's song say.

I made my first film around one and a half years ago. It was an out-

come of the discovery of my own path, own beliefs and faith. My approach towards this film is unerringly, a reflection of my life and that led me to narrate the story in a unique way.

In the darkness of the crowded theatre, when you see your dream on screen, it gives you a strong feeling, a sense of the fact that your dream works. It gives your thoughts a perceivable form in the real world and that in itself, is an achievement for a filmmaker.

For me, craftsmanship and technicalities always come later, what is important is that whatever you are conceiving, should be straight from your heart.

I had to dip into the ocean of images to bring out my imagination. When I joined the Fine Arts course in Shankar's Academy of Arts, I stopped thinking about time and space. In real terms, that phase started “my way”. A period meant to explore the whole new world of Great Artistic Work, Sketching, Philosophy, Photography *et cetera*. These four years primed me to understand the splendour of different forms of art. Perhaps, a single frame offered by the illustrative arts was not enough for me. I moved my self into a 25 frames per second scenario. I learnt the basics of film making at Mass Communication School and waited for two years. During this time, I made concept notes, read about new technologies and searched for the right kind of opportunity, that would support my dreams. This was a period of exile when I did not want to take up a job with a television channel or a producer. And that is what reassured me that my rendezvous with

filmmaking, was not for a good job in a good channel; rather it was more about a passion. Not being in a regular job, sometimes gives you a sluggish feeling, but once your first project is on board, these adverse feelings just vanish somewhere. You start experiencing on your own, you know that your idea is now going to take shape with the help of a team of professionals. The responsibility of being the director of your project, gives you a whole year's experience, all in the span of three months, the time span of your project. I think the real fun is in the sense of ownership.

There's always an opportunity behind our thoughts or ideas and our approach initiates a convergence between the two. Digital technology has made us more democratic in expression and has helped us acquire knowledge and opportunities from around the universe. The struggles that a filmmaker had to battle with, 10 years ago, have now reduced. This has given tremendous encouragement to the new breed of filmmakers. It has helped them get recognised in the world of images. Thousands of International film festivals, and hundreds of funds are dropping from the web, what we now need, is just the right click...

According to me, in Delhi there are many examples of this upcoming breed of filmmakers. There's Manish Jha who made *A Very Very Silent Film* and won an award at Cannes. There's Siddharth Anand Kumar whose film, *The Game*, was chosen as the closing film in the Commonwealth International Film Festival. These debut successes are real time achievements in this series of recent filmmakers.

Yesterday, when I was speaking with a family friend, he said my films and ideas were more inclined towards the stark side of life. I agree with his thoughts. For me, films are the replica of real life, sometimes it gives you a flavour of Science Fiction, Romance or Action. They explore relationships in societies, it could be between a teacher and a student or a mother and a son or even male chauvinism; the existing arguments for my next film. It can be a feature or a documentary film, only the right click would know. But, you cannot say that the stark side of life has no fun or allure in it, I feel this approach speaks a lot about life.

As of now, I am going to start shooting a 60 to 90 second spot for The Royal Commonwealth Society in London. I assure you, this is not about the stark side of life; it is about development.

But more much more than this, I did it my way.”