

## COURSE ON FILM RESTORATION, PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

The Film Restoration and Preservation School of India in affiliation with FIAF in Brussels along with the World Film Foundation of USA organized and conducted a short course about film preservation and conservation. It was held from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2015, in Mumbai, India. This course was available to candidates from the South Asian region. Students from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and various regions of India were all present. The founder of the FPRSI, Mr. Shivendra Singh, welcomed the student gathering. The objective of this course was to create awareness about the destruction of film and its effective preservation. He brought to light the scarcity of knowledge amongst the general population with regards to this field. The ultimate purpose of the course was to learn not only to restore a film but also to develop the skills required to preserve and conserve them.

The course was conducted for seven days, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the Film Division in Peddar Road, Mumbai. The facility was an excellent place for this course to be conducted. Nevertheless, enduring the tedious Mumbai traffic whilst travelling to and from the location was a hurdle. The provision of accommodation for students, who travelled from out of town or from other countries, would have been an ideal solution to this.

The first day commenced with an Inaugural Ceremony. Guest speakers were present to highlight the importance of film preservation. A cocktail party followed with a screening of a film.

The five days that followed was purely academic, in addition to a daily film screening. The first day featured an Introduction to Film Identification and Repair. Film Scanning, Film Restoration, Film Comparison, Sound Restoration and Film Mastering were the focus of the lectures in the consecutive days. Foreign lecturers along with a few Indian lecturers conducted the lectures. Practical learning with hands-on experience was also incorporated. The lecturers were extremely knowledgeable on the subject they taught and imparted their knowledge effectively and patiently. As consistent as each lesson was, a longer course would have enabled students to have more time with practical work as well as allowing the lecturers more time to conclude the lessons more comprehensively. The online reading material provided was key to the comprehensive understanding of the subject and to aid the lecturers in their deliberation. However, most students were unable to read the material to completion and therefore would have benefitted had the material been sent earlier than it was sent. Each lesson was concluded with a film screening of a previously restored film. Guest speakers who were involved in the restoration of these films were also present. At the end, a group photograph was taken of all the students and staff members.

Refreshments consisted of a morning cup of tea/coffee. At 10 a.m. another tea break with snacks was served. At midday an excellent buffet was available for lunch. Final refreshment was the evening tea with some snacks.

Each evening the film screening took place at the Liberty Cinema. Transportation was provided to the theatre.

The final day consisted of an awards ceremony where each student was handed a certificate for their participation and successful completion of the course. The guest of honor was the legendary actress Waheeda Rehman. The awards ceremony was followed by an elegant dinner party.

Coming from a small country like Sri Lanka and a family of film, I had been exposed to the film industry at a very young age. My curiosity about film restoration came about with the pressing need to preserve my father, Gamini Fonseka's films- where he acted and directed, which are considered as some of the best films made in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan film industry has a history of 68 years of continuous cinema. With much difficulty and assistance from other countries we have managed to hold on to this dying industry. Unfortunately, Sri Lanka does not have the resources or the knowledge to restore and preserve its film heritage, which has seen much damage thus far. The only form of preservation available to me was to transfer these film into DVD format, which I have managed to do for about 10 films. This course has taught me the process of restoration and preservation methodically and accurately and enabled me to use this knowledge to preserve the little that is left of these important films made here. The scholarship offered by FIAF for me to do this course is much appreciated and has paved the way to achieving an almost impossible task of restoring film in my country. I now have the confident knowledge of the subject to be able to create awareness among the public as well as to speak to relevant parties regarding this need. Armed with this knowledge, my next venture would be to find the necessary resources and funding to preserve my country's film heritage.

Dammith Fonseka  
140/33, Kalapura,  
Templers Rd.  
Mt. Lavinia- 10370  
Sri Lanka  
+94777780777  
dammithfonseka@gmail.com