

GAURI KAMATH: LEARNING THE ROPES



By ANJALI GHORPADE

I DON'T suppose it's anything to be proud of, but I've always been known to be a loquacious and garrulous person and I can out-talk any Demosthenes and so when the Ed asked me to look up Gauri Kamath I agreed because I'd been told to engage her in a pleasant chat and I love chatting. But I did not know what I was letting myself in for.

So bright and early one

Tuesday. Any day was fine by me, as long as I could engage someone in a pleasant chat. And Gauri proceeded to give me elaborate directions on how to get to her place. "It's near the traffic signal," she said. "You look around for the traffic signal, and you look to the left of the traffic signal, and there's a Hanuman temple there, and you look to the right of

CLOSE-UP

morning I rang up Gauri and she asked me to drop in at her place on a certain Tuesday at eleven a.m. "Tuesdays I'm home," Gauri told me. "That's because Tuesdays I fast, you see," she finished.

I didn't, but I agreed on

I'm in that building on the first floor — it says K-a-m-a-t-h on the door."

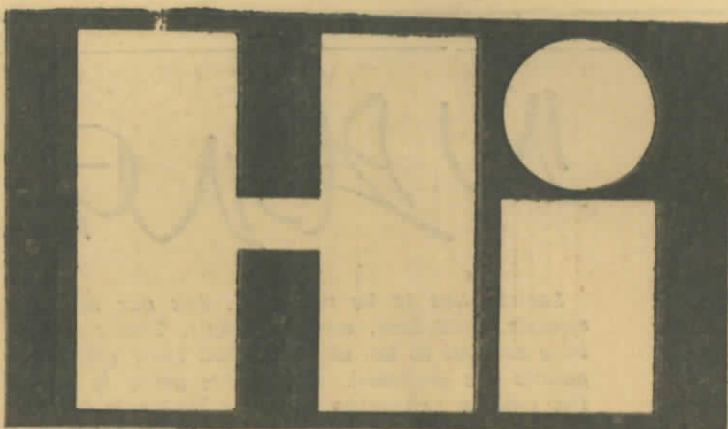
And that night I had nightmares in which I was standing at a Hanuman temple and looking around for a door marked "Kamath", and something told me when I woke up, that Gauri Kamath wouldn't be an easy proposition.

Come Tuesday I fetched up at the door marked "Kamath" and rang the doorbell and Gauri opened the door and asked me in.

She looked as old as she claimed she was (which she did later during the day, of course) with a pair of sky blue jeans and a silk kurta and her hair done up in an untidy bun. Her face was sans make-up and she looked like any undergrad. In the Elphinstone or the Xavier's canteen, between lectures.

Gauri Kamath must have read a lot of film magazines because she made herself comfortable on a settee just like Simple did last month or

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the newspaper that entertains

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Kem chho, Chandra bhai? Fine, I see. Thought I'd discover what makes you tick. Tell me what's doing.

CHANDRA BAROT does not answer at once. He's busy buttoning his cuff. And then:

I'm directing Don. And this is keeping me on my toes right now. It's a fun experience, shooting with

of Indian origin. I first visited this country in '64.

Pity you had to land up just when Nehru died. But tell me, what transformed this Barclays cashier into a Hindi film director?

It happened in '67. I was planning to settle down in London, and decided to visit my sister here in Bombay before jetting to the B. Isles. Kamal Barot, my

joined him, I was the ninth and juniormost assistant. He used to call us his Navratnas. And when I left him to take on Don, I was number One.

Mr. Barot, you're certainly a Horatio Alger-ish character. Please to explain this phenomenon of the Fast Rise.

I worked with Manoj Saab in four movies —

don chandra

By CHAITANYA KALBAG



Amitabh and Zeenat and Pran and Satyen. Here. Look at these colour stills of Don.

Is the film about a clown or something?

Two minutes. Full of silent shaking laughter. And then:

The circus scene? Well, only one particular sequence was shot there. Don is about a smuggler — the type of stuntful story that keeps the audience on its seat-edge. Story-wise, there's nothing remarkable, really. It's all dhu-shum dhishum. But the script is by Salim/Javed. And it's a director's dream, a fantastic script. I think it's the best they've ever turned out.

Naturally, Chandra bhai naturally.

Well, let's go back, shall we, Don Barot?

Sounds vaguely Spanish, doesn't it?

Over to Barot.

You won't believe it, but in the early '60s, I was a cashier in Barclays Bank in Dar-es-Salaam. Born and brought up there, you know. Typical East African

sister who's a playback singer. And she introduced me to Kalyanji-Anandji. We got quite friendly with each other, and before I could say Tanzania, I'd been introduced to Manoj Kumar. And before I could say Roti Kapada Aur Makkaan, Manoj Kumar took me on as an Assistant Director.

Well, well, strange are the ways of Fate, Chandra bhai. But haven't I heard that Manoj Kumar has a platoon of assistant directors?

Woh to hai, and when I

Yadgaar, Purab Aur Pachim, Shor and Roti Kapada aur Makkaan. The thing is, he always treated me as a close friend, never as an assistant. There was therefore no restriction of complexes, and I learnt a lot, and I learnt fast.

You've certainly been lucky, Chandra.

I agree. It surprises me too. Sometimes I sit back and wonder how come a chap who was counting notes at a counter is today ordering spot boys around.

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IT'S A MAD AD, MAD AD WORLD

HOOKHEN PLUNGES THE SCREEN INTO AN ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT EXCITEMENT! SEE KABIR BEDI IN 18TH CENTURY WOLF'S PHRENSY!!



PHOTO: UMESH VIJAY

"Omigod! No! Noo! Nooo! Not you! You can't be the Girdle-Strap Murderess!"

DON CHANDRA

(Contd. from pg. 1)



If you 'vibed' so much with Manoj, why did you leave him?

It's like this. Manoj's No. 1 assistant, Sikandar Khanna, branched out independently midway through *Shor*, and I took over his place. And then Nari-man Irani, Manoj's cameraman in *Shor* and *Roti Kapada aur Makaan*, decided to produce his own film. And he asked me to direct it for him. I was naturally reluctant to drop out of Manoj's team, but Manoj himself told me not to let this chance go by.

But tell me, Chandra bhai, hasn't working with Manoj cramped your style? Isn't Manoj known to stick to patriotic or ultra-social

themes, and take a couple of years over each film of his?

Pause. Call for Chandra Barot. Ten minutes of staring at a painting opposite. And then Barot is Back: Ah, where were we? Of course. My style vis-a-vis Manoj's.

Pause to answer the doorbell. Then Chandra again.

I'm basically trying to direct in my own style. And Manoj's perfectionism and finesse has definitely rubbed off on me. Moreover, the technical crew and even the cast is full of familiar faces. So the atmosphere is very much like those days as an Assistant Director, except for the absence of Manojji.

Well, Chandra, it's been a pleasure and all that, but tell me, after Don, what?

After Don? I'm going to produce my own film with Dillip Kumar and Saira Banu and Pran with the story by Abrar Alvi, and life's cool.

And so I leave Chandra Don Barot to his cool life, and walk out into the warm March afternoon.



Mr. Bhaskar K. Shetty, proprietor of Karnatak Opticals, Bombay, speaking on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Borioli Kannada Association. To his left are Mr. Vittal C Shetty, President of the Association, Father Cyprus, and Mr. M. S. N. Shastri.