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For a woman who was an NCC cadet, not just for the benefits it had with regard to one's attendance record in college, and who took private flying lessons, cinematography seems quite a discordant choice for a career. Her parents, bewildered by her choice of subjects, had, by then, become used to the fact that their daughter would do as she pleased, and that there was no stopping her. And so it came to be that Fowzia Fathima, cinematographer of nine feature films, including Tamil and Malayalam, and numerous advertisements, decided that a career behind the camera was her calling.

So, where did the desire to pursue cinematography come from? "Even while I was an NCC cadet and trying my hand at learning to fly, it had become evident to me that I needed a profession that would give wings to my artistic and aesthetic expressions," she elaborates, "It was that need to ensure the flight of my artistic nature that made me

"That's the way I've always been," she says, "I do what I want to, I know what my goals are." This attitude of hers got her into the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, in 1997, and that too, with a scholarship! Pune was an unusual choice again for a Chennaiite. "Considering that I'd finished my undergraduation at Stella Maris College, I decided to go elsewhere and seek different experiences," she says. Her quest for adventure and an undying demand for richness in exposure was obvious even then.

In her own words, "The two years that I spent at FTII were among the best ever, in terms of how much I learnt. If I'm theoretically strong, it's only because of the institute." Did the kind of talent she saw around her at the institute overwhelm her? She laughs, and decisively dismisses the question. "I was, am and probably never will be somebody who gets overwhelmed," she says. "If anything, the kind of talent I saw around me at the institute only made me hungrier for success." According to her, one of the greatest aspects about studying at FTII was the absence of a consumerist approach to education. "It was all sheer passion," she says.

"The professors never showed any condescension, and looked upon us as one of their own," she explains. "They were forever keen on sharing their knowledge to the best of their ability." And that they definitely seem to have, considering the success she has met with since she graduated from the institute, including her recent appointment at the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata, as the Head of

{ A WOMAN CINEMATOGRAPHER AND NOW THE HEAD OF CINEMATOGRAPHY AT THE SATYAJIT RAY FILM AND TELEVISION INSTITUTE, KOLKATA, FOWZIA FATHIMA OWES IT ALL TO THE FILM AND TELEVISION INSTITUTE OF INDIA (FTII), PUNE }

Through the Lens

FOWZIA FATHIMA
Class of '98
Digital Film Technology
Cinematography,
FTII, Pune

Cinematography

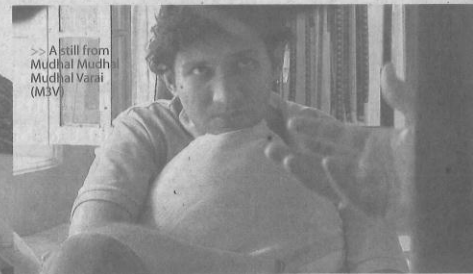
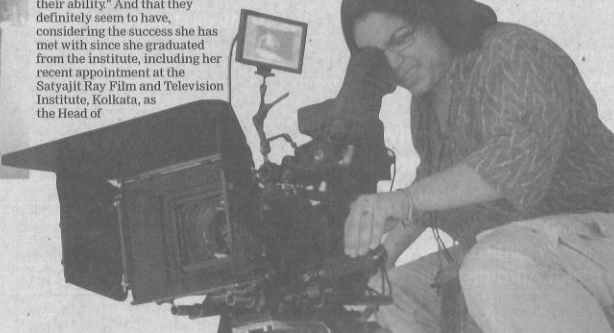
"One of my best experiences during my stint at FTII was when popular French cinematographer Raoul Coutard came over for a workshop," she says, the excitement in her voice, unmistakable. "I cherish that day to this moment. I have only FTII to thank for inviting professionals from India and abroad

on a regular basis to teach us." Perhaps, one of the biggest changes in her personality took place during those two years. "I learnt to see everybody's work as my own and appreciate them as I'd do mine whenever applicable. A great culture of mutual appreciation is very palpable at the institute," she says. This and other traits, in addition to the knowledge she gained at the institute, probably went a long way in her assisting acclaimed cinematographer P C Sreeram later in her life. "No matter where I'm in the world or where my colleagues are, I can still call them and discuss anything in the world," she says, adding credence to her assertion that the relationships formed while she was at the institute haven't diminished in quality. "How can they? We lived with each other and enjoyed each other's success there. We went on trips and lived like a family. Who knows what I would have been doing if I hadn't decided to study at FTII?"



consider cinematography as a career."

How did her parents take to her unusual choice for a career? "Well, I didn't give them much say to be honest," she says, candidly, "I didn't give them much opportunity for manipulation too, as I was financially independent. This ensured that they couldn't reel off the regular, 'I won't give you money!' threat." Nevertheless, surprised they were that their daughter who they figured would probably go on to become a pilot, was on her way to working in films.



>> A still from Mudhal Mudhal Varai (MSV)