

New Breeze Blowing in Bollywood

Bringing a new style of supple sensibility, a Japanese female director of photography is constantly receiving offers in Bollywood, the home of India's giant movie industry

The mention of Bollywood movies conjures an image of brightly-clad and gorgeously made-up beautiful women singing and dancing in dazzling movies shot with light hitting every nook and cranny to prevent shadows. However, Japanese director of photography (DOP) Keiko Nakahara applies shadow with near-natural light and uses handheld cameras to

bring subtle nuance and reality to Bollywood.

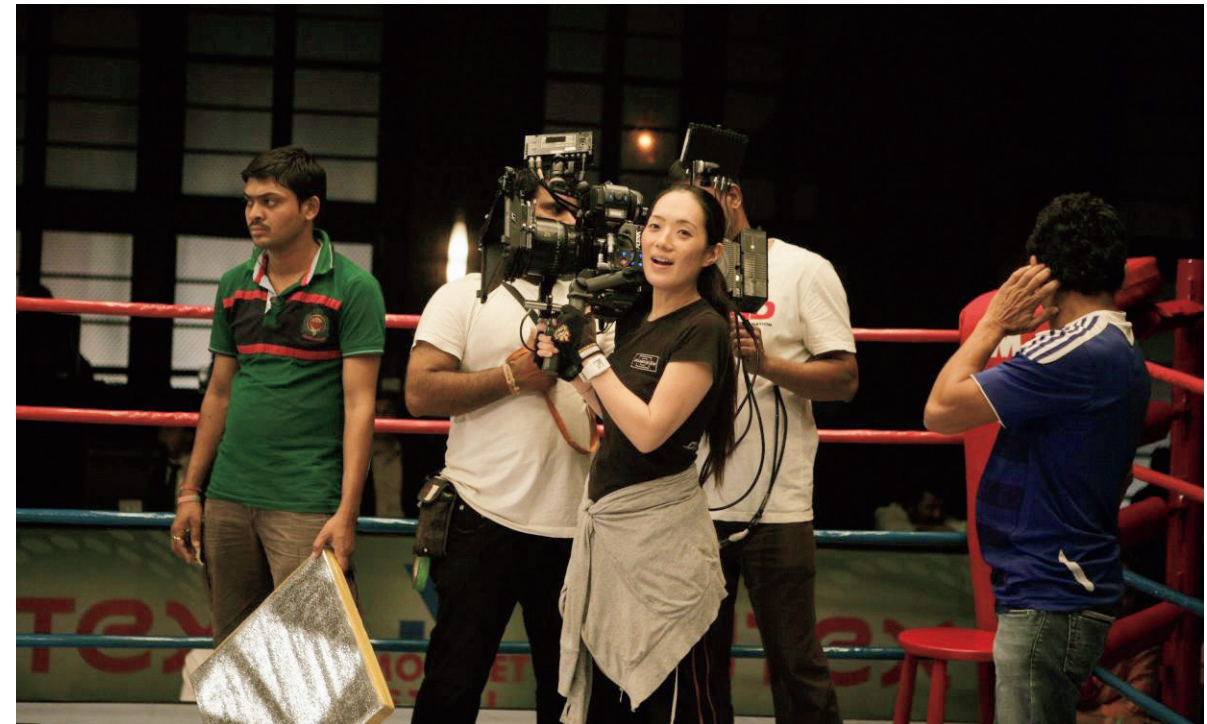
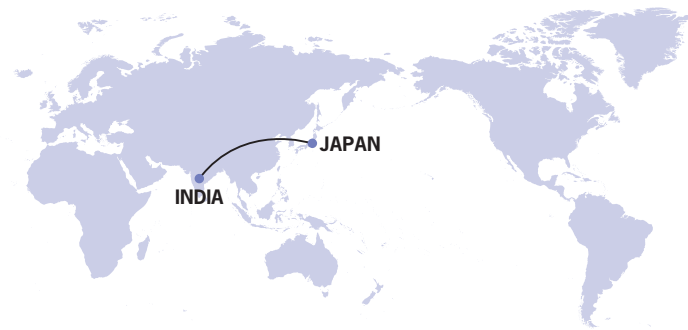
In the biopic *Mary Kom* (2013), which depicted the first half of an Indian female boxer's life, Nakahara had the camera pursue the movements of a character through completely dark rooms and expressed the twilight of early morning. For the boxing ring scenes, she used a handheld camera to move in concert

with the boxers' movements and capture an effect more intimate than any tripod camera could achieve.

The use of such realism in filming technique used to be unpopular in India, but Nakahara's style has disproven this assumption by charming not only Bollywood directors but also the audiences and media as well. She asserts, "But it's never been my intention



Bollywood is based in the large city of Mumbai. Although female DOPs are not that common in Bollywood, Nakahara reports that she never felt it was hard working there as a woman.



As her style of freely walking among the actors carrying a heavy camera is rare in India, it surprised the rest of the film crew.

Keiko Nakahara

Having studied filmmaking at San Diego State University, she was honored, in 2011, as a rising star by the American Society of Cinematographers. She is currently active as a director of photography in Mumbai, India.

to stubbornly insist on my way of doing things and say, this is my style, because the DOP's job is to visualize 'the image in the director's mind.'"

Happenings are a daily occurrence on film sets. Rather than getting caught up in the chaos, however, Nakahara remains calm as she joins in discussions with the director and gives instructions to the crew. "Japanese people consider it more virtuous to listen to another's opinion rather than to assert oneself. But rather than submissively following what someone says, I search for the path in which everyone, including me, can be happy, and work to do things well to get good results. I think this kind of Japanese culture I was raised with is proving useful in movie making, where good teamwork is essential," Nakahara muses.

From a young age, while growing up, Nakahara relocated many times on account of her father's work. When she was having a hard time settling into a new place, it was movies that saved her from her

worries. During the two hours she spent watching a movie, she could forget all her troubles and immerse herself into the world created by it. Nakahara says this fostered a wish to someday make movies that lift people's spirits, and after graduating from high school, she went to the United States, the homeland of movies.

Nakahara began to gain recognition as a DOP in the United States. Then, several years after beginning work, she received an offer from an Indian movie producer who had seen her cinematography. This led her life down an unexpected path. Nakahara later moved base to India where she has worked as a DOP. She has now been involved in over 10 films. Although most have been serious dramas, *Total Dhamaal*, released in February 2019, is a typical Bollywood comedy. Nakahara tells how she went and saw it at the cinema after its release.

"The audience really loved it. They laughed raucously, clapped

Nakahara claims to have been saved many times by the cheerfulness of her work colleagues in India. If she gets stuck thinking about something on the movie set, someone brightens her day by telling her, "Don't worry, we'll work it out somehow!"



and cheered. At that moment, it felt like I had achieved what I had long wanted to do!"

Nakahara says, "The Indian people are truly rich in emotional expression." Although a rich mix of emotions can bring forth stormy behavior on set, the same richness is also why India has a culture that enjoys movies wholeheartedly. Seeing their smiling faces is what drives Nakahara's work. *