

Arjun Hingorani

Eminent Film Producer and Director



Excavations at Mohan-jo-daro bear ample evidence of the high standards achieved in fine arts by the inhabitants of those times.

The figurine of the danseuse 'Sambhara' proves unequivocally, that even 5000 years ago, the inhabitants of Sindh were not only highly evolved in standards of living, comfort and hygiene, but were also connoisseurs of dance and drama.

Right from its inception, Sindhis have played a dominant role in the Indian Film Industry in various fields like production, acting, music, direction etc.

One such prominent and successful person is Mr. Arjun Hingorani, who despite belonging to the Zamindar class and a family of advocates, chose to dedicate his life to art and we have the privilege of having him in our midst today.

Jawhrani: Hingoraniji a hearty welcome. Tell us about your days in Jacobabad?

Hingorani: Though I was born in Jacobabad, I spent my entire life in Karachi. My primary education was also from N.J.V. High School, Karachi. After clearing matriculation from that government school, I studied at D. J. Sindh College, Karachi. After that, I studied Law at S. C. Shahani Law College, Karachi. During those days, colleges in Sindh were affiliated to the Bombay University as Sindh didn't have its own university. I cleared Law in 1947, and came to Bombay.

Jawhrani: What about the occupation of your elders?

Hingorani: My father was a Tehsildar and grandfather a Stationmaster at Shikarpur. My father would have also reached a position of power in the administrative services, like Deputy Collector or Collector, but unfortunately he died at a young age. Its all destiny.

When we migrated to Bombay, my elder brother had cleared his medical examination and he was to begin his own medical practice as there was no other earning member in our family. I had younger sisters also. At the very outset, we got ourselves a small flat and a dwelling in Kalyan Camp.

Jawhrani: But wasn't Kalyan Camp dotted with abandoned military barracks at that time?

Hingorani: Yes, there were barracks in Kalyan Camp and as we couldn't accommodate all the nine members of our family in the two rooms of the Bombay flat we had to live in separate houses and then commute between Kalyan Camp and Bombay.

Jawhrani: Did you or your elders take any part in the freedom struggle, before Partition?

Hingorani: I was a good student since childhood, and my father wanted one of his sons to become a doctor and another an engineer. Once in 1942, while walking on a road I heard a lecture and one of its lines which I still remember was, "If slavery is not a sin, there is no sin in the world". It exposed the double standards of our British masters. Actually till then, I was unaware about slavery. Next day, at our N.J.V. School, I began picketing. I didn't allow anybody to go inside the school and threatened that whoever wanted to do so, would have to step over my dead body. Even the teachers, including the Principal, did not make any attempt to enter as they felt I was in the right. From that day, I took a vow to live or die for

my motherland. My father being a Tehsildar, received a letter from the Governor, complaining against my behaviour and he wrote me a letter urging me to desist from politics, saying it was not the right age to do so. He gave some examples of Nehru and Gandhi, who had also joined politics, but only after completing their studies. I agreed, on the condition that my father would send me to London for doing Bar-at-Law, 'a la' Gandhi and Nehru. He agreed, but fate had other plans. He couldn't fulfill his promise because of his death and my destiny brought me to Bombay.

Jawhrani: So what about your plans for further studies?

Hingorani: As I told you, I came to Bombay after completing my graduation at Karachi and became an apprentice at Bombay Talkies.

Jawhrani: What was your experience at Ulhasnagar refugee camps?

Hingorani: We had to go on foot for two miles from Ulhasnagar railway station to our home. The city didn't have proper drainage system. We endured a lot of hardship.

Jawhrani: Your father had a firm belief in astrology. Didn't he want to enrol you in the Navy?

Hingorani: It was my father's dream. He wanted me to do a Naval course at Bombay, when I was just ten years old. But when his guru, whom he consulted and in whom he had complete faith, stopped him from doing so, this plan was abandoned.

Jawhrani: But he did want to make you an engineer, isn't it so?

Hingorani: Yes, but after matriculation I decided against it.

Jawhrani: Maybe, you wanted to become a Dilip Kumar, isn't it?

Hingorani: There is a Sindhi proverb, which means, "Someone is bitten by the beauty bug and someone by the brain bug". I considered myself a handsome hulk. I thought that producers and directors would welcome me with open arms and invite me to be a hero the moment they set eyes on me. But this didn't happen.

Jawhrani: Did you make attempts to become a hero?

Hingorani: Yes. Every morning I used to get ready and head towards the offices of film producers and directors, who invariably had a stereotype advice for me, "Leave your photographs, we shall let you know". When I myself became a director, I also behaved like that, towards new aspirants because to become a hero a lot more is needed and

just being handsome doesn't suffice.

Jawhrani: What made you take up direction?

Hingorani: Once I was travelling with Ashok Kumar in his car from Malad to Bandra. Ashok Kumar had his own vehicle, while others like Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand, Guru Dutt commuted by local train with me, in second class from Bombay Talkies Studio in Malad or Filmstan, Goregaon. Dilip Kumar and Kamini Kaushal traveled in first class. They had a steady relationship that time and shared a cubicle in the first class. On that ride with Ashok Kumar, he exhorted me to get into direction, saying "You are intelligent". Then, I joined "Bombay Talkies" as an apprentice director without salary. Even for tea, we paid out of our own pocket.

Jawhrani: Wasn't Bombay Talkies, at that time owned by Ashok Kumar?

Hingorani: Ashok Kumar and Sawak Vacha were partners. 'Mahal', 'Ziddi' and 'Majboor' were produced those days and they became super hits. Later, I joined D. D. Kashyap and then I proceeded to London.

Jawhrani: When Ashok Kumar gave you a chance in Bombay Talkies, why didn't you continue?

Hingorani: While I was an apprentice with Bombay Talkies, no director evinced any personal interest in me.

Jawhrani: So, what did you do then?

Hingorani: One of my friends introduced me to D. D. Kashyap, who was known as a box office wizard at that time, as he had given five jubilees in a row. When I met him, he said he had five assistants already with him and didn't need one more. But I pleaded and said that "I will work as an errand boy, even serve you tea, as I want to learn under you." He was impressed with my reply and allowed me to join him. Then because of my hard work and dedication I became his favourite assistant.

Jawhrani: In which films did you assist him?

Hingorani: There were around five to six films, like 'Bari Behen', 'Pyar ki Jeet', 'Kamal ke Phool' and 'Badnam' etc. Then, I headed for London.

Jawhrani: Why London?

Hingorani: I quit as an assistant director, as I was fed up with it by then. So I established a limited company of my own, but that also didn't succeed. Some of my friends, like actor Balraj Sahani and writer

Rajinder Singh Bedi helped me in my venture, but destiny had other plans for me in store. Then, I went to London and took apprenticeship with Ealing Studios where I literally lived from hand to mouth.

Jawhrani: And what brought you back?

Hingorani: My sister, on her way back from USA, stayed with me in London. She was pained to see my plight. She insisted that I accompany her back to Bombay saying "Although physically in London your thoughts are with the Bombay Film Industry." I was depressed and had lost all hope, as I felt I wouldn't be able to join anyone, even as an assistant, having been cut off for long. Moreover, I asked her how would I survive if I didn't find work. She said that she would support me as she had been appointed professor at Jai Hind College. "Your responsibility is mine till you yourself say you are settled."

Jawhrani: Was she to be employed with Jai Hind College?

Hingorani: As she was planning to return for good from the USA, she had obtained confirmation from Jai Hind College, as a professor of Economics. I said that I didn't like taking favours from anyone, but her reply "You will be doing me a favour," melted any resistance I had.

When I reached Bombay, I came to know about the making of the first ever Sindhi film 'Abbana' to be produced by T. M. Bihari. Dada Ram Panjwani was to write the dialogues and he recommended me to T. M. Bihari saying Arjun is my brother-in-law, intelligent and has had his training in London. We met and took to each other. Its music was already recorded by then.

Jawhrani: So, your first directorial venture was a Sindhi film 'Abbana'. But didn't Deepak Asha also work with you?

Hingorani: One of Deepak Asha's Hindi film had failed at the box office and he also wanted to work as the director of 'Abbana'. We both were desperate to get that assignment and we were competing with each other and undercutting each other.

Jawhrani: How was it settled, finally?

Hingorani: It was assigned to both of us and we were both promised Rs. 500/- each. Sadhna was that film's second lead. She was paid Rs. 250/- and she also had to bring her own wardrobe for the film.

Jawhrani: Who would you credit with the discovery of Sadhna?

Hingorani: One of my sisters Pishu was Miss Bombay at that time. Bihari proposed the role of the second lead for my sister, but she wanted the role of heroine. I could have convinced her but I myself preferred Sadhna. I had seen her earlier at Jai Hind College where she was studying in the first year. Hari Shivdasani had brought her to T. M. Bihari's office. She was his niece. I told T M Bihari that Sadhna was better, and that he shouldn't bother about my sister. As they say, the rest is history and she became a super star later on.

Jawhrani: One academic question. Suppose you had been offered a Hindi film simultaneously at that time, which film would you have preferred?

Hingorani: Look, there is no denying the fact that a Sindhi film had limited scope. Even our 'Abbana' didn't earn much and hence I got after Bihari to go in for a Hindi film. But he was initially apprehensive on the grounds that it was very risky, but eventually he agreed and then I contacted Dharmendra.

Jawhrani: How did you come in contact with Dharmendra?

Hingorani: He had won the Filmfare Contest. My cousin, Nima Jaisinghani had also won the contest in the female category. I think it was 1957 or 1958. One day Nima's brother, Sri Jaisinghani, who later went on to become the Additional Solicitor General and who also wanted to become a hero, fell ill. Nima took me, instead of her brother, and while going from 'Times of India' office to Andheri I met Dharmendra in the bus. He was going to Bimal Roy, for a screen test. When I saw him, I instantly took a liking for him and told him that he would be my hero whenever I made my first film. He didn't take me seriously. So when Bihari agreed to do a Hindi film, I went to the 'Times of India' office to obtain the address of Dharmendra. Mr. Rao, who was the editor of Filmfare told me that Dharmendra was very much depressed. S. Mukerjee had called him, and opined that he should join a football team - "You're not fit to be a hero" were his words. He intended returning to Punjab the next day. I asked him to stop Dharmendra from going back and to send him to our office. Later, when he came to our office, Bihari and his partner Man Thakur and I, all three of us approved of him. We told him about our terms and conditions - that he won't do any outside film without our consent. We committed Rs. 300/- as monthly salary. He agreed, he needed work and so we contributed Rs. 17/- each and paid him Rs. 51/- as the signing amount for the

film and told him that he was the hero of our forthcoming film.

Jawhrani: Which film was that?

Hingorani: '*Dil Bhi Tera, Hum Bhi Tere*'. Kumkum was the leading lady and the cast included Balraj Sahani and Usha Kiran. One of its song was,
*'Mujh ko is raat ki tanhai mein awaz na do,
Jis ki awaz rulade, mujhe woh saaz na do.'*

The song became a rage. It was sung by Lata and Mukesh and composed by Kalyanji Anandji. But the film didn't do well. Dharmendra was not accepted by the public. I had been to the first show of the movie to gauge the reaction of the viewers. A young boy while coming out said, "Music hit, film flop, hero flop." I felt depressed. People are supreme. They didn't like the movie. But Dharmendra didn't lose courage, continued his struggle and became a hit with the passage of time.

Jawhrani: Besides having a close relationship with Dharmendra, it is said that you were also close to his mother, true?

Hingorani: He in turn also loved my mother. We share an intimate relationship.

Jawhrani: What about the relations now?

Hingorani: At the moment too, he is my younger brother. Same sweet relationship. I have never made a Hindi movie without Dharmendra. Coming back to myself, I became a hopeless wreck. I used to complain to God. Once I went from my Gopal Mansion, Bandra residence to Qambar Darbar, Kandivili, barefoot, and prayed. My brother was a doctor and had saved one lakh rupees at that time. I jokingly told him to make a movie. He said he had liked the story I had related to him after returning from London. He said he would invest this money if I could arrange for Dharmendra and Kalyanji Anandji. Dharmendra was working in 'Phool Aur Pathar' at that time and I could visualize that he would become a big star once the film was released. I asked him, if he would work with me free of cost to which he replied "Where do I sign". Such large-hearted persons are extremely rare to find.

Jawhrani: Would you unravel the mystery of 3 Ks - the title of every film of yours?

Hingorani: I produced a movie '*Kahani Kismat Ki*', which went on to become a superhit. This made me somewhat superstitious, that probably triple K was lucky for me. So all my subsequent films had such

titles, like '*Khel Khiladi Ka*', '*Katilon Ke Katil*' or '*Karishma Kudrat Ka*'. Thereafter, I made '*Sultana*', which didn't click at the box office and this reinforced my superstition regarding triple 'K' titles.

Jawhrani: All along you have had a cordial relationship with Dharmendra, but have you come across anyone in the film industry whom you hated?

Hingorani: Sir, the word 'Hate' doesn't exist in my vocabulary.

Jawhrani: Has anyone caused you sorrow or anguish?

Hingorani: By the grace of God, I have had no such experience. Filmstar Rekha was notorious for her whims. Once, we had planned an outdoor shoot and I had informed Rekha that she should come to Dharmendra's bungalow at 7 a.m., so that we could go for our outdoor shooting, towards Pune. But the next day, she didn't turn up at the predetermined time. Our production manager kept phoning her, but her staff kept on reiterating that she was not at home as she hadn't returned the previous night. Time was running out and I consulted Dharmendra, as to what should be done under those circumstances. He replied that we could get away with a long shot of some duplicate in place of Rekha. The moment we started out of Dharmendra's bungalow for Pune, her car entered. I asked her where she was till that time. To which she replied that she was sleeping on the terrace of her bungalow.

Jawhrani: You yourself wanted to be an actor. Were you able to satisfy your artistic urge by acting in your own films?

Hingorani: I have literally worked in each of my films from '*Kab Kyun Aur Kahan*' to '*Kahani Kismat Ki*'. In '*Kahani Kismat Ki*', I played the role of a super-villain. Ajit was the main villain of the movie and I was blackmailing even him. People liked my character very much, and my punchline in the movie was '*Kya Samjhe-Nahin Samjhe*' which was well received by viewers.

Jawhrani: Now, we bring our conversation to our Sindhi society. You made '*Abbana*'. Have you ever thought that after reaching an established stage, you should pay back your community by making Sindhi films?

Hingorani: It is not necessary to make Sindhi films as a payback to our community. The attainment of a position of recognition by any Sindhi is itself a matter of pride. After all film-making is also a business and no one would like to lose in his business. But, there

are many affluent Sindhis, like the Hinduja Brothers, who can afford to spend a few crores and still not feel the pinch. They should come forward and make Sindhi movies.

Jawhrani: Aren't the main financiers in Bollywood Sindhis?

Hingorani: Financiers are not philanthropists. If they fund any film, they charge interest on their investments.

Jawhrani: Then, how can Sindhi literature prosper under these trying times?

Hingorani: I admit, keeping Sindhi language alive is a must for the survival of Sindhi literature and culture. There are many hurdles in the path of progress of Sindhi language, but the keys lie with a single Sindhi person, none other than Ram Jethmalani.

Jawhrani: Ram Jethmalani is an intellectual person. Wherever there is his need, he never shies away. But the question still remains how can Sindhi language survive?

Hingorani: Ram Jethmalani can bring all the affluent Sindhis on a single platform. And another Sindhi, who has influenced me is Srichand Hinduja. He told us that his father believed in charity. So, he and his brothers must have inherited those genes too. Such persons, who have love and affection for our language can come forward and make a difference. Another big problem of Sindhis is their disunity. The moment all Sindhis join hands, they can move mountains.

A world class school can be established in Mumbai and Delhi, which should have Sindhi subject compulsory in its curriculum. This way, our future generation can be introduced to our rich language and literature. We can also encourage Sindhi writers by giving out prizes on an annual basis.

Jawhrani: You are right in offering a few steps in this direction but all this needs a lot of money. Will we be able to create dedicated manpower and create awareness and love for our language?

Hingorani: I admit, not all people are as dedicated as yourself. But availability of funds can be used for hiring people to implement the programme. You, Ranjit, Chander and Prem Lalvani, the organizers of the International Sindhi Sammelan, have sown the seed, which by the grace of God will turn into a huge tree and the one who can make that happen is Ram Jethmalani.

Jawhrani: I understand that you are a very religious person but the same is not reflected in your films. Why?

Hingorani: Whatever is the storyline of my film, they invariably have songs dedicated to God, the almighty. You may have seen one such song in 'Katilon Ke Katil', which exhorts the values of connection to God. We must realize that 'Right is more powerful than wrong'. The lyrics of that song were 'Tu hai kamal Maula, Tu hai kamal'.

Jawhrani: Film producers of other communities show a few glimpses of their linguistic folk music or other folk arts in their movies. Why have our Sindhi producers not promoted Sindhi folk music etc?

Hingorani: I have adopted a few Sindhi tunes in our Hindi film music too.

Jawhrani: Can you give us an example?

Hingorani: There are many such instances, but I cannot recollect any one at present. There was a Sindhi tune in my last film and I had sought the services of Kajal for that. She had accompanied me to the music director. Even in my very first Hindi movie 'Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere', Kalyanji Anandji had composed a few songs on Sindhi folk music.

Jawhrani: Have you noticed the change in attitudes between the era of Bombay Talkies, Ashok- Dilip - Dev Anand and present times?

Hingorani: The basic difference lies in the dedication. In our times, we used to be intimately involved with the films. We used to travel in suburban railway and everyone including Dev Anand, Guru Dutt or Raj Khosla used to discuss various aspects of the film intensely.

Jawhrani: Can you tell me something about your close association with Kalyanji Bhai?

Hingorani: He suffered from gastric problems and for that he avoided tours outside Bombay. Once he said to me, "I pray to God that he may deprive me of my harmonium but relieve me of this gastric problem". Finally, he was cured to some extent.

Jawhrani: You have good relations with Dilip Kumar, too. Any cherished memories about moments shared?

Hingorani: Once, we were sitting in Kalyanji Bhai's music room and Dilip Kumar looked worried as Kardar had complained against him with the Income Tax authorities. He had lost his peace of mind. He said that he had seen a worm climbing up the wall and thought even

the worm was more fortunate than him (Dilip Kumar), because it didn't have any problems at all. I wondered at this paradox of life, where crores of people would gladly exchange their place with Dilip Kumar and here - this man was also unhappy.

Jawhrani: Do you think everything is linked to our karma?

Hingorani: Yes indeed, as you sow, so shall you reap.

Jawhrani: Do you believe in reincarnation?

Hingorani: Cent percent. A person's soul will certainly come back, but in which form it is not known. Everybody's cup of happiness and woe is the same, wherever he may be. No one is superior or inferior, as Baba Guru Nanak Dev has said:

*Hukme Andar Sabhko Bahar Hukum Na Koi,
Nanak Hukme Je Bhujhe Ta Hau Me Kahe Na Koi!*

(Everything is preordained; whoever believes in it will live with contentment.) One should abandon his ego.

Jawhrani: Did you know that once Ram Jethmalani had applied to Excise Department for employment, but destiny had other things in store for him and eventually he became a lawyer?

Hingorani: Yes. A senior advocate had stopped him for opting for any other profession other than law. I am also a firm believer in God and destiny. He has given us life and he is solely responsible for our survival.

Jawhrani: Does faith in God increase with advancing age?

Hingorani: Yes, intelligence too advances with age and intelligence breeds love for God. Newton had once said, "We are only picking pebbles on the seashore. Knowledge is an ocean". No one knows. This earth is a dot in the universe. His ways are unimaginable!

Jawhrani: You have had experience in various fields - films, glamour, spiritual etc. What would be your message for our younger generation derived from this experience.

Hingorani: I emphasize the need for remembering four things:

- Do not hate anyone
- God is the Creator
- Work hard
- Work is worship!

One should work hard in his youth and God would reward us

certainly. Never ever be arrogant. Be patient, and you would never fail in life. This is guaranteed not by Arjun Hingorani but by God.

Jawhrani: Any message for the Sindhi mother?

Hingorani: How can I forget my language, in which my mother sang me a lullaby? I feel sorry to say that current generation mothers do not sing Sindhi lullabies. They don't even speak Sindhi language. It is imperative that Sindhi mothers speak in Sindhi with their children and teach them Sindhi. This is my message.

Jawhrani: What about your case, is Sindhi spoken at home?

Hingorani: My wife is a Maharashtrian, a non-Sindhi woman. Then too, my mother had taught her Sindhi and she can very well understand it. My mother used to teach Sindhi language even to our housemaids.

Jawhrani: Can you tell us something about the book you have written based on your philosophy of life?

Hingorani: I have penned a book on life and living. God has enabled me to do so. Otherwise who is Arjun Hingorani? A zero! I want you to give it due publicity. Whoever reads it will get the courage to face all difficulties in life. Whatever I earn out of it I shall donate towards charity.

Jawhrani: You shared your experiences with us and also offered us your suggestions. We are thankful to you.

Hingorani: Thank you.