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Lights, Camera...

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Moving picture's caught your fancy? There are a host of options to choose from in the world of films and TV.

Johnny Carson, the famous American actor and comedian, was spot on when he said: "People will pay more to be entertained than educated". Especially today, when the Indian film industry or Bollywood aspires to go global and television is growing parallelly in stature, Johnny's words ring as true as ever. Moreover from a business perspective, the film and television industry seems to be getting more structured.

In the context of a formal business, a number of established film personalities with professional degrees have decided to switch to film-making to satisfy their creative urges. Shekhar Kapoor of Bandit Queen, who qualified as a chartered accountant, is one such example; as is Nagesh Kuknoor of Iqbal fame, who is a formally qualified chemical engineer.

So let's explore what comprises the world of film and television and what it takes to make a career in an industry that's becoming India's global ambassador — though the IT industry may disagree.

Bollywood as an Industry

KPMG put the size of India's total entertainment industry in '03 at Rs 16,600 crore. Another analysis claims that Bollywood's current annual revenue is Rs 6,500 crore (\$1.3bn), and could grow 16% every year for the next five years to reach Rs 14,300 crore (\$3.2bn). As per BusinessWeek, theatres worldwide sold some 3.6bn tickets for Bollywood films in '02.

What Jobs Are Available? In this industry, you need to be a specialist at most times. Very few take on multiple roles. Like most other careers, experience makes you better, but there is a lot of room available for extraordinary creative minds. Jobs are contract-based and remuneration is per project completed.

Formal training helps, especially in the technical areas of film-making, although a large number of Bollywood's talents have learnt their task on-the-job by assisting senior film-makers. Various specialist roles available in the film and TV industry are in the areas of acting, film-making, directing, screenplay writing, cinematography, audiography, editing, art direction, and animation & computer graphics.

Formal Education

Let's explore one film academy each from the US and India to see what's on offer as far as formal training and education in film and television is concerned.

Acting: Can acting be taught? Well as mentioned on the website of New York Film Academy (NYFA), "The best way to learn

how to act in films is to actually work on films.” While saying this, they offer a formal one-year acting-for-film programme as also a number of short courses on acting skills at their various campuses located in New York City, Los Angeles, Paris, at Harvard and Princeton universities.

Fees for their eight-week programme are \$4,000 (non-residential) as against \$19,000 for a year-long course. Back in India, the one and only Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), based in Pune, offers a two-year post-graduate diploma in acting skills.

There are just 20 seats available for this course and the fee is Rs 110,000 per year including hostel charges. This is the only non-subsidised course at FTII and admission to this is based on an entrance exam conducted once-a-year across select Indian cities. Eligibility for taking this exam is a bachelor's degree.

As you grow in your acting career, you can venture into areas such as production and direction after acquiring experience in the art and craft of film-making. Some examples are Shah Rukh Khan (produced *Main Hoon Naa*), Amol, Palekar (directed *Paheli*) and Clint Eastwood (directed Oscar-winning *Million Dollar Baby*).

Direction

This function is the most critical in the process of film-making and as a director you are akin to the captain of a ship. The function involves application of the most effective and expressive visual means to tell stories on celluloid.

An ideal director is aesthetically gifted in understanding composition and floor-plans, picture plane, and the implications of camera movement on final expression. This is a sophisticated art.

NYFA offers a course in direction as part of its one year (two semesters) film-making course with fee of \$15,000 per semester. Once again the course is offered in multiple campuses across the US, and in Florence (Italy) as well as St Catherine's College in Oxford University. FTII offers a three-year residential post-graduate diploma in direction with 12 seats. Admission is again through an entrance exam. Fee for the course is Rs 38,000 per year including hostel charges.

Production

No movie can be made without a producer, a person or group that can be termed as 'creative entrepreneur(s)'. Production is misunderstood as simply financing a film. However, it is a complex function that requires an understanding of the logistics and creative demands, aesthetic treatment, script, ability to recruit the right talent (casting), ability to carry out budgeting, scheduling and planning for marketing and distribution of the end product (the film), in addition to understanding legalities and regulatory issues (like the censor system).

This is a fast-paced job that requires good networking, negotiating as well as man-management skills. Producers can be individuals such as Subhash Ghai or groups, such as the big Studios in Hollywood like Universal Studios. While NYFA offers a hands-on one-year course in movie producing at a fee of \$9,000 per semester, there is no corresponding course offered at FTII.

Screen play writing

The saying goes that “you can make a bad movie with a good screenplay, but you can’t make a good movie with a bad screenplay.” Screen play writing is now being treated at par with direction. It is a function that demands perseverance and discipline. And it is one of the areas of film-making that can be taught in a structured fashion. It is also one area that can be practised by writing continuously.

Courses in screen play writing are available in short and one-year formats in NYFA, while FTII offers 12 seats in its one-year certificate course for a fee of Rs 65,000 including hostel charges.

Editing: This is similar to the process of packaging in the manufacturing sector. The difference lies in the fact that for editing computer software is used instead of packaging machines. This job function, though very mechanised, still requires an eye for detail and an artistic flair. Apple’s Final Cut Pro is the software used frequently by most production houses.

NYFA offers a four-week intensive lab-driven course in editing for \$3,000. FTII offers 12 seats in its three-year post graduate diploma at the cost of Rs 38,000 per year including hostel charges.

Animation & Digital film making

This is one of the fastest-growing areas of film-making. Nearly all films these days have some or the other special effect using animation techniques. These may include little items like the crow and squirrel that are shown teasing Rani Mukherjee in Paheli or the elaborate and mesmerising armies in Lord Of The Rings.

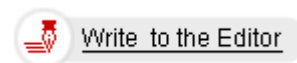
In fact, a number of recent films are 100% animated in their content and have managed to hold their own against regular films in terms of critical acclaim and ticket sales. Two Indian examples are the recent films Hanuman and Ramayana.

While NYFA offers a one-year course in 3-D animation and special effects at \$15,000 per semester; FTII offers a one-and-a-half year 12-seater certificate course in animation and computer graphics at a fee of Rs 1.5 lakh.

How to go about it?

There are several other specialist options available including sound editing and art direction. A number of short duration courses specifically aimed at career building in the television industry are also available. For more information, it would be worth visiting www.nyfa.com or www.ftiindia.com.

(The author is Head Academics, Indian Retail School, New Delhi.)



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