KAAGAZ KE PHOOL (1959)

*Kaagaz Ke Phool* bears the distinction of being the first Indian film shot in CinemaScope. It also remains the last official work by actor-director-producer Guru Dutt who stopped taking directional credit after the commercial failure on its release in 1959. The story, most often understood in quasi-autobiographical terms, concerns a director shooting another filmic version of Bengali novel *Devdas* (most famously adapted in 1935 and 1955 by P.C. Barua and Bimal Roy respectively) while struggling with the separation from his wife and daughter and his budding relationship with the newcomer he found to play Paro. A companion piece to *Pyaasa* (1957), the dark, melancholic mood is partly attributable to the film’s imaginative black-and-white photography created by Dutt’s key collaborator and eminent director of photography V.K. Murthy. The delicate *chiaroscuro* effects and complex *mise-en-scène* conceived by Dutt and Murthy evoke the expressionist style of classical Hollywood productions like *Citizen Kane* (1941, Orson Welles). After *Kaagaz Ke Phool*, Dutt ghost-directed *Chaudhvin Ka Chand* (1960, M.Sadiq) and *Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam* (1962, Abrar Alvi) (Rajadhyaksha/Willemen: 93), eventually committing suicide in 1964. Today, Guru Dutt is seen as a major, albeit eccentric figure within Indian Popular Cinema – with *Kaagaz Ke Phool* as his most radical expression.

References and further reading:

Cooper, D. (1988) “The Hindi Film Song and Guru Dutt”, *East-West Journal* 2 (2): 49-65.

----- (2005) *In Black and White. Hollywood and the Melodrama of Guru Dutt*, Calcutta and New Delhi: Seagull Books.

Doraiswamy, R. (2008) *Guru Dutt. Through Light and Shade*. New Delhi: Wisdom Tree.

Dwyer, R. (2005) *100 Bollywood Films*, London: BFI, 131-133.

Kabir, N.M. (1997) *Guru Dutt: A Life in Cinema*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Khopkar, A. (2012) *Guru Dutt: A Tragedy in Three Acts*, New Delhi: Penguin India.

Raghavendra, M.K. (2009) *50 Indian Film Classics*, Noida: HarperCollins, 70-75.

Rajadhyaksha, A.; Willemen, P. (1999) *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema. New revised edition*, London: BFI, 359-360.

Sengupta, S. (1999) “Reflected Readings in Available Light: Cameramen in the Shadows of Hindi Cinema”, *Bollyworld. Popular Indian Cinema through a Transnational Lens*, eds. R. Kaur; A.J. Sinha, New Delhi: Sage, 118-140.

Vasudevan, R. (1989) “The Melodramatic Mode and the Commercial Hindi Cinema: Notes on Film History, Narrative and Performance in the 1950s”, *Screen* 30 (3): 29-50.

Stefan Borsos

University of Cologne, Cologne