**INTERVIEW ARTICLE**

**Dr. DHANAJAYAN**

**T**wo time national award winner and former CEO of UTV, Dr. Dhanajayan is a film producer, columnist and a writer. He has won two national awards for best book on cinema and best film critic. He is also the chairman of one of the best film institutes in India, BOFTA.

Here’s a conversation with the film producer on his experience and personal favourites in film industry.

**You were working as an employee for corporate companies, what made you step into film industry?**

So, I started watching films, I started watching tamil films, telugu films and a lot of films. So I became addicted to cinema because my mother was so passionate about it. Ever since cinema is built in my blood. So what happens when you’re so much into cinema , all you think will be about cinema. My father was insisting about my studies so I did my mba, I was good at studies as well. I did my diploma in specialised computers, at NIT then I got my job in Asian paints. Everywhere I used to talk about cinema. I worked in many companies but something I wasn’t satisfied about it. So, that’s when I entered cinema industry and, that’s when my opportunity came in from sa re ga ma pa, a music label. From there i went to UTV. Thanks to my mother, she aspired me to be here, in this place.

**How was your experience when you moved from being the CEO of UTV to now being the chairman of your own production company?**

When you work for a corporate company, you’re not taking any financial risks, you can decide anything, if something goes wrong you can give excuse, if it doesn’t work you give excuse and ask sorry because it’s not your loss. The difference is, when you are an entrepreneur, the loss is yours. For example, I produced a film called Mr. Chandramouli, I lost around 3 crores, what happens to your own life? My personal savings and all gone in one night. That’s the difference between working for a corporate company and being an entrepreneur. You can’t blame anyone but yourself. But in any industry when we lose nobody is responsible but we are. so I made a movie called katrin mozhi and it became a success, I got some money back so like that we must keep playing the game, I wouldn’t say I learnt it, I’m still learning because being an entrepreneur is highly risky, there’s no guarantee, working for a company is easy, you can always give excuses, blame somebody and escape, you can blame end number of people , you can say story didn’t come out good , audience didn’t like it and so on.

**Have you ever had to handle a difficult conflict in your career? If so, what did you learn from it?**

Several times I’ve went through conflicts as long as I was in a corporate world or telecoms, conflicts are very professional. Entertainment industry alone the conflicts are very personal. Sometimes I’ll be very fond of the story but my team wouldn’t like that. Now that I want to produce the film , my team says it’s going to be a flop, so now I have to think twice before I do it. So the conflict is always constant. You’re all the time fighting with yourself , there’ll be two people saying and eight people saying no, sir it’ll not be working. So conflict is a constant process in entertainment industry, it’s the only industry where there’s a constant conflicts occurring . Suppose, take a product, they won’t say this mobile is bad , they only say it could have been done better or this feature would have been better. But in cinema it’s either good or bad , if they don’t like it’s a disaster, they say this film is bad and that’s it. So product marketing is very easy , when it comes to art marketing that is film, there’s no guarantee, you’re 100% taking the risk. And you don’t know how people are going to react. So conflicts start from the first day, you’re fighting with the investors, partners , creative team, production and everything finally when the product comes in, you’re fighting with the reviewers and the audience and if it doesn’t click, it’s a loss. So conflict is constant, every film you have to face the conflicts. Every film gets you sleepless nights, unless someone buys the film from me, if they do, they’re going to be having sleepless nights and I’ll be having a nice sleep.

**What would you change in a movie you produced that you believe would make it better ?**

I would not have produced, that’s all I can say. If you choose a wrong story, whatever you do, you cant make any changes. Story is the foundation of any content. When I made Mr. Chandhramouli with Karthik, Goutham Karthik and Regina and lot of people. We spent almost 7 crores to make it and we only got 4 crores and lost 3 crores, now if you look at that film, when the story was narrated by writer and director I had my worries when the revelation of the villain comes at the end but he comes through out the film that surprise element was not really surprising to me , somewhere it’s not having my conviction that “wow” was not coming and I told him somewhere i am worried about this and he was like no in the making you will see it, you’ll see the magic in the making and I believed him blindly and lost 3 crores. But instead I should have believed in myself and asked if the story was appealing to me. The failure of the movie is the story. When I chose the right story I got success and when I chose the wrong story I faced a failure . A story must excite you and give Goosebumps and not doubts.

**What’s your favourite project ?**

One of my favourite projects is katrin mozhi with Jyothika ma’am. You know we struggled so much to make Mr. Chandhramouli but we didn’t struggle at all we got success in katrin mozhi. You know katrin mozhi happened like a poem like an organic poem. I requested Jyothika ma’am to watch the film in Hindi and she said she had already watched it and loved it and she will be very happy to do the film. Look at it so smoothly she says and I suggested can I add Radhamohan sir to do it and she said yeah she would be very happy. and within one month we finished the shooting. And she said this iwas the finest film she has ever made where she didn’t even feel like she was being shot. We made it so comfortable, in 33 days we completed the film and Jyothika ma’am was so involved , every actor was so involved. And Karthik sir and Suriya everyone loved the outcome of it. And at the end of it Jyothika ma’am come and said , it was like my own production never have I ever felt like this before, I enjoyed everyday, I’m feeling so bad that you finished it so fast. Jyothika ma’am gave a lot of gifts to everybody, because you know she really felt very nice about it . Now that’s what the experience is like to work with great creative team. Recently we did a film called Ratham with Vijay Antony and C.S Amudhan. Same experience, in 41 days the film was over only foreign shoot is 3 or 4 days pending. Everything was smooth and we never bothered about what can go wrong, they did so perfectly .C.S Amudham, he’s an ad film maker also he’s your college senior, he studied at Loyola , Vijay Antony is also from Loyola so both of them are Loyola students and they came out beautifully with this film. Came out so good, we watched the film, it was lovely , now look at it how pleasant the experience is.

**-Riaa Joseph**