

Mohammed Ali Faisal

# THE YOUNG FILMMAKER



**W**ell begun is half the battle won! It begins with the right dream and hard work to achieve it. Meet Mohamed Ali Faisal, a talented young lad who aspires to become a filmmaker of the likes of Steven Spielberg and Christopher Nolan.

Mohammed has established his name in the local young film community with his much appreciated short films, namely *Sincerely Bahadur* and *Human Capital*, both films won People's Choice Award at consecutive editions of THIMUN Qatar Northwestern University Film Festival, 2015 and 2016 respectively.

The THIMUN Qatar Northwestern University Film Festival attracts young filmmakers from around the world. The festival serves as a platform for young people to create advocacy movies on local or global issues.

While I watched both his movies, *Human Capital* and *Sincerely Bahadur*, the depth of this young lad's thinking amazes me. At this young age, being thoughtful of about these global concepts requires maturity. Handling sensitive subjects like child labour and life of blue collar employee is an art itself. What takes it further is his strength to convert his thoughts beautifully into an interesting story without overloading it in content or information. There are two known destinations in the world of cinema, one is self-discovery, while the other is to try and see how you can replicate some truth. Mohammed's strength is in depicting the truth with simplicity and innocence.

Hailing from a country like India, where if not all, but majority of the parental and child group is all about education for Job and getting set for a life of corporate drone, such creativity does not get support or platform. Mohammed's parents, the management of his school-Birla Public School in Doha and his friends deserve a mention for encouraging him.

I was honoured to share space with him and have a conversation where we mainly chatted about his recent award winning film "Human Capital."

**Q What made you think of child labour as core idea of your film - Human Capital?**

**A** While I was enjoying a quiet walk on Marine Drive in Cochin, I noticed a small girl with innocence on her face coupled with hardship of life. I could not resist but capture it in my lenses. The girl was with her brother and mother selling beads to make a living. At this point the capture was for my photography blog, Third Eye. I engaged in a discussion with the family, made a few purchases and took a few more shots. I came back home, did a little research on child labour in India and was saddened by the discovery that India had the highest liberate population in the world and consequently, ranked highest in the number of child labours. This realisation set my direction on child labour as the prime theme of my film.

**Q What was the objective of this movie and your key central message?**

**A** Child labour and illiteracy are well

known to our society. I wanted to show the interconnectedness of all these problems that is how poverty leads to illiteracy and in turn results in child labour. People also don't see that the increased opportunities for cheap child labour in workplaces are also a reason for adult unemployment. This relation together affects the nation's human capital as a whole and thus the film's name, *The Human Capital*. My prime view was that, there'd be much improvement if the nation cared more about its children than its defense.

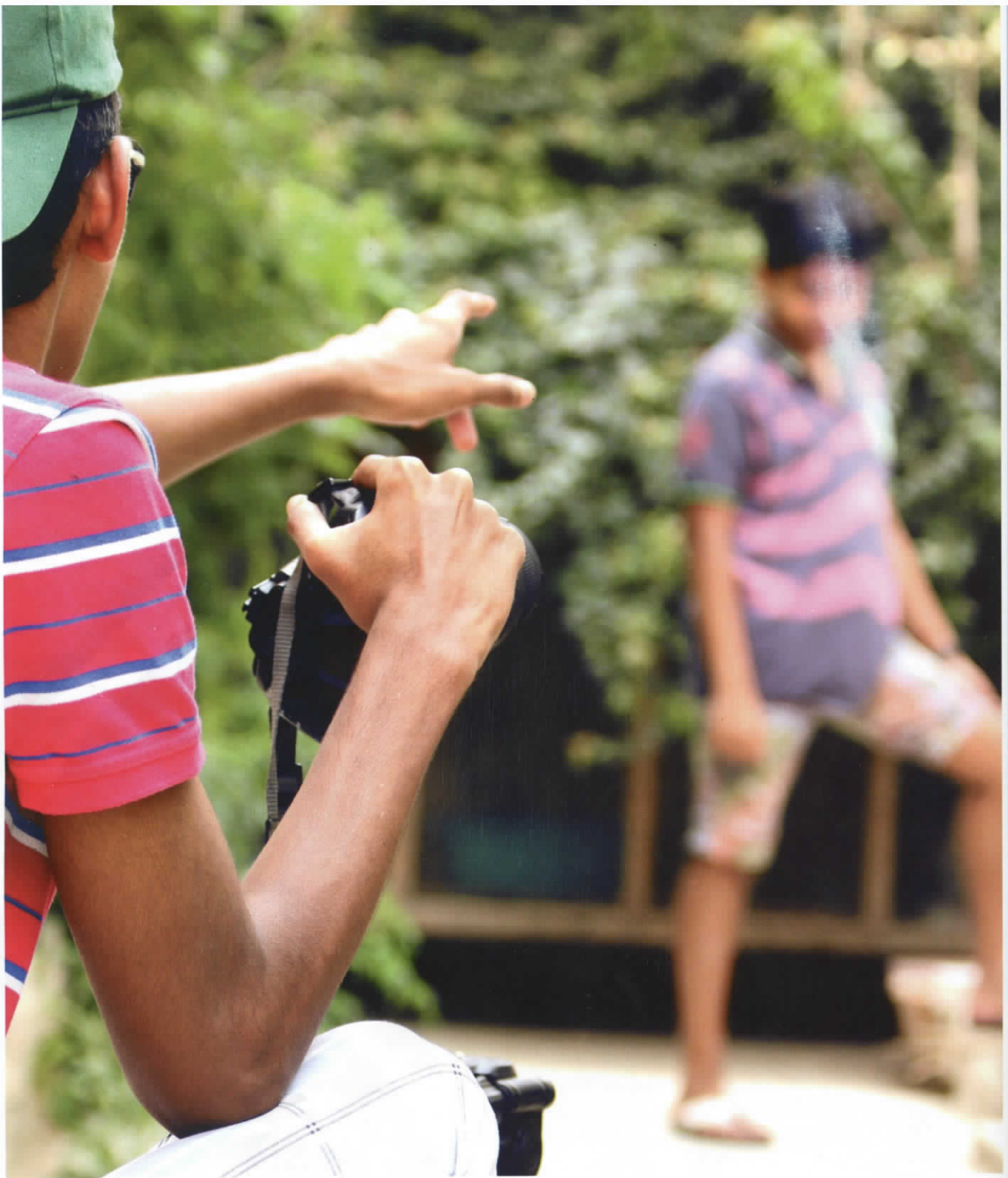
**Q If you had to choose the most impactful scene in the movie, which one would it be?**

**A** I am personally inspired by the scene from the movie, where an earthworm is shown struggling to escape from hundreds of ants savouring on it. Symbolism that portrays the reality; the worm being the child labourer and the ants signifying the society.

**The young Indian expat, Mohammed Ali Faisal, has established his name among the local movie buffs after his short films - Sincerely Bahadur and Human Capital- won awards at the recently held THIMUN Qatar Northwestern University Film Festival.**

By Ayesha Masood





Mohammed Ali during his initial stages of film production

**Q As a child growing up in the Middle East, how do you feel when compared to your peers in India?**

**A** I feel both happy and sad at the same time. There are pros and cons for everything. As being close to the roots, there might be no better place in the world for me other than India - the climate, the vigour, the diversity and colour is amazing. I miss all these. But, in terms of opportunities, especially for youth, Qatar is a heaven for professions like film-

making. There are many opportunities.

**Q Do you feel like a celebrity now that you have won two prestigious awards?**

**A** I am enjoying this fame and popularity to an extent, as I have had a couple of strangers come up to me and congratulate me on my film. With all humbleness, I consider myself like a celebrity in the making. Just as Schindler's List or Inception inspired me, I would like to be an

inspiration for future generations. That's when I would call myself a celebrity - until then I am in the making.

**Q Celebrity status changes a few things. Do your friends see you differently now that you are a celebrity in the making?**

**A** I have gained a lot of recognition and respect among my juniours at school as a successful filmmaker and a photographer. However, with my close friends I am more



Mohammed Ali receiving the award from Emily Wilson, community relations manager, Northwestern University in Qatar

or less the same old Ali who happens to have a very poor sense of humour and one who overeats. I don't know how the film celebrities manage, but I am already exhausted with this minimal amount of fame.

**Q What was the most difficult part of movie making?**

**A** Being an amateur and desire to accurately translate my vision to reality, I decided to personally manage the aspect of production by myself. Plus, that was the most economical option. It was challenging, especially as I was juggling with my twelfth grade exams. Balancing film making and exams was quite a task. The beauty of the film lies in how successful the director is in bringing the film close to what he visualised. So the "making" took

quite long because I basically managed everything from direction, script, camera to narration.

**Q Qatar being a land of opportunities in filmmaking, did you receive financial support from any entity?**

**A** Other than my dad Faisal V A, who funded for my camera and transportation, no one was there to financially support the film's production. I was all by myself.

My Mom, Jaseena Faisal provided the emotional support and environment required at home to foster my creativity.

**Q Where do you see yourself in the future?**

**A** There seems to be a lot of uncertainty in one's position in the film industry. I do have faith in my talent and with God's grace I hope to excel. In fact, in preparation for this, I have already started writing my dream project. Where I see myself in, say, 10 years - well, I am not sure. I know it's hard to make an impactful debut in the film industry, so I'm prepared for both realities - a successful filmmaker or still a celebrity in the making. It may take time but I will get there.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents, teachers, friends, Birla Public School, AK Shrivastava (Principal, BPS), George Edison (Vice-Principal, BPS), Lisa Martin, THIMUN Qatar, and Northwestern University Qatar ●