

## From Vision to Victor(y) – Filmmaker's Journey

IIFTC Knowledge Series had a one-on-one chat with the OG maverick of his generation, Vijay Krishna Acharya (Victor). From the cult 'Dhoom' franchise to stylish 'Tashan' and ambitious 'Thugs of Hindostan', he created big cinema experiences with lots of panache.

### Moderator: Truls Kontny

International Producer, former head of Norway Film Commission (15 years), and former President of European Union Film Commissions Network - EUFCN (6 years)

**Truls Kontny** : So Victor, let's start from the beginning. What made you decide to go into filmmaking? Can you share a bit of your journey?

**Victor** : Let's see, you wake up very early, you get to a set, you have hundred and fifty people around you and you are all trying to create some images, which were once written on paper and hopefully an audience will come to see it and be moved. So it feels like foolish but a very worthwhile task. Obviously its sure that you are not ready for mainstream life and perhaps some deep psychological problems which kind of push us towards films. (Chuckles)

I am a literature student, I used to do theatre in college. I think with some happy accidents I ended up here.

**Truls Kontny** : When you create a project, what inspires you?

**Victor** : I come from a generation when films were not as accessible as they are today. There is a, sort of chemical reaction that we have with the story which is told in the theatres. I grew up in the eighties when Mr. Bachchan was called Vijay in most of his films. So I thought I was part of some exclusive club of people called Vijay. There was some pull that we have towards these

stories where we go in for entertainment and hopefully come back moved. I think that's what keeps you going, the love, for films.

**Truls Kontny** : Do you have any special message you want to tell your audience through your films?

**Victor** : I think every film has some message that is engraved. Most of the films that I have worked on are in the mainstream entertainment space. I don't go to see a film to receive a message. Something which elevates a story from sheer entertainment or something deeper is always welcome but as Billy Wilder said, 'Just entertain first and we will get to the rest later.'

**Truls Kontny** : You are known as both a script writer and a director. You wrote the first and second 'Dhoom' movies. What made you decide to direct the third one?

**Victor** : The writing of 'Dhoom' was a lot of fun. Dhoom ended up opening a new chapter for me and for the popular cinema of that time.

I had come to this city to be a filmmaker. Writing is something that discovered me. The challenge was to see whether we could buck the trend and do something within the brand 'Dhoom' which doesn't belong to that world. That has been the idea behind each of these films. But it felt good to direct something which I had written

**Truls Kontny** : Has the big success of 'Dhoom' changed your attitude towards films? How it has influenced you?

**Victor** : No, I see each time something works, I think it's the people behind the camera are the ones who are most surprised. It feels like an exam each time and you are never sure whether you will pass.

I feel that success or failure of a creative endeavour is not something that I can worry too much about. The question is, creatively am I managing to push any boundaries with each one of them?

**Truls Kontny** : You worked for both, film and television. Do you see a big difference between that? How do you approach that?

**Victor** : I think television allows for a development and play of characters a lot better. It probably can tell stories which are very large in emotions but it doesn't need the big canvas. But in film, the visuals does count. It about how the drama of the human emotions is played out and against what backdrop? So I think that's more do with the format but both are equally challenging.

**Truls Kontny** : What is your driving force? Why do you make movies?

**Victor** : I am still trying to figure that out. (Laughs). I think, the joy of being able to tell a story.

And there is a visceral experience for me as a filmmaker and for me as an audience. I like the excitement of the house lights going dim in a theatre. I think for me that is probably the biggest excitement. Is there a world out there which I have not seen? Are there

characters who have done something which I can't in my life? and how they overcome those obstacles? I think it's ordinary people in extra ordinary circumstances and that's really my sort of films. You just have to re-invent it for a newer audience. That's pretty much my take on it.

**Truls Kontny** : I know it might be a difficult question but which of your projects are you most proud of?

**Victor** : I think 'Dhoom' and 'Thugs of Hindustan' are large format films. 'Dhoom' comes branded, it comes with a territory. It's very mainstream, it's very much looking for an audience which comes to see 'Dhoom'. With 'Thugs' my desire was to do something else but I don't think it got the kind of love that I thought it should have. For me the most personal film has been 'The Great Indian Family' because it's the most intimate. The film sort of bothers me and moves me and it was me as a filmmaker responding to what was happening to the world around me. 'Tashan' was my first film and I think it's the most anarchic and I love that about

it. I would happily go into that space again. So personally I think 'Tashan' is very much my voice and 'The Great Indian Family' is very much my heart.

**Truls Kontny** : Let's talk a little bit about locations. You have been shooting a lot abroad as I understand. Do you have any countries on your bucket list?

**Victor** : Oh I have two hundred and eighteen countries on my bucket list (Chuckles). I think the Nordic countries and Latin America are two spaces which cinematically I feel haven't been explored much and I think the holy grail of natural beauty would be Africa. I would definitely like to shoot something there but you have to have a story which goes there.

**Truls Kontny** : When you are writing do you have some specific locations in mind or do you first write and then go search for locations?

**Victor** : A lot of times during the writing process, there is an image of some sort. It helps to make it more granular and say okay this can only happen here. For example 'Dhoom 3' was this story which was a little dark which was about a family, about two brother who are dealing with loss in their own ways. There is an ambition to them which needs to be visually seen in the landscape of the film. In Chicago, I thought with the skyscrapers, it felt like this is man's ambition to conquer something, everything is skywards. So in a very lateral way, it fit with the world of the film. It kind of brought a little grit to it. The same story if it was in sunny California would just feel different. So, by and large I would like to discover a space once the writing is done.

**Truls Kontny** : So I believe that 'Dhoom 4' is in pre- production. Can you tell us anything more about that?

**Victor** : I have seen that in many newspapers myself. I wish I could tell you more but right now everybody else seems to know a lot more than me. (Laughs)

