



## Indian cinema: Road to resurrection

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MUMBAI: Imagine all those black and white [films](#) dating back to the early days of Indian cinema gathering dust in climate-controlled vaults of film archives and production houses with no thought of resurrecting them.

It was K L Saigal's *Devdas* that instigated filmmakers to take the film restoration route when the [movie](#), stored in vaults of productions houses and archives, deteriorated with time and was lost forever.

Initially, restoration of films would be done by studios abroad for want of expert professionals in India. It was the Australia-based colourisation and restoration of motion pictures company Time-Brush Technologies that restored and coloured V Shataram's classic *Do Anken Barah Haath* in 2007.

But slowly, as digital technology came at hand and new technique gained ground, many Indian studios like Prasad Film Laboratories (EFX), Film Lab, Shemaroo [Entertainment](#), Reliance MediaWorks and Prime Focus ventured into the film restoration business.

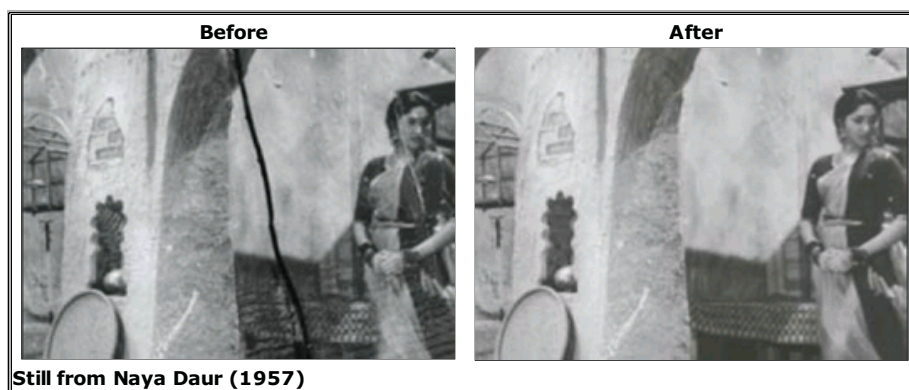


Still from *Ek Duije Ke Liye* (1981)

Film Lab, which set up its film restoration plant two years ago, has restored MS Sathyu's film *Garam Hawa*. "We have completed the restoration work and are awaiting the release of the film sometime in August," averred Film Lab Business Associate Rajiv Dwivedi. "The work included full grading, 2K scanning and complete restoration. The audio restoration work was however carried on in the US. The film was then recorded back to 35 mm film. All this was done at a cost of Rs 2 million."

Film Lab has restored approximately 20 films, mostly those from [Hollywood](#), which involved full restoration and dust-busting work.

Prasad Film Laboratories' film restoration wing EFX too has restored as many as 200 Hollywood films in a span of three to four years that include 12 Academy Award and 7 Golden Globe Award winners. Recently, EFX restored films like *Kabhie Kabhie*, *Dost* and the 1948 English Film *The Red Shoes*, directed by Michael Powell.



Still from *Naya Daur* (1957)

The Mrinal Sen-directed *Khandahar* had developed scratches and image warps apart from being torn at many places. Its audio quality too had deteriorated and it needed complete restoration. It was Reliance MediaWorks Ltd that took the task on hand and at a cost of Rs 50 the movie was resurrected before being sent to the Cannes Film Festival.

The other prominent films restored by Reliance MediaWorks include the 1899 silent film *Panorama of Calcutta* and *Saraswati Chandra*.

"Generally, it takes around 10 to 12 days in an eight hour's work to restore a film," says Reliance MediaWorks CEO Anil Arjun. "And, on average, restoring [Indian films](#) could cost anywhere up to Rs 5 million."

According to Dwivedi, the current size of the restoration market is around \$2 million and by 2012 it is likely to grow to \$15 million at the rate of 200 per cent. "This could be achieved with the restoration of the huge archives of the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and National Film Archive of India (NFAI)," feels Dwivedi.

According to Arjun, around 500 films are set to be restored by the end of 2010 and the country needs more professionals in the field. Which is why the Information and broadcasting Ministry recently declared its plans to offer courses in film restoration at various institutes like the Pune Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), the Kolkata-based Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute and many other government-run mass communication colleges.

Says Arjun, "I am happy that the I&B Ministry has declared plans to offer courses in film restoration. In fact, we have very few professionals in the trade and for the industry to reach its [zenith](#), we need a surge in the number of professionals in the trade."

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