

How did you personally learn filmmaking?

In 2002 there was a camera training course for Afghan women in Kabul, organised by the Afghan Media Culture Center AINA. I was taking part in that and there were about twenty more girls participating. After this training, we started to make documentary films about women's rights in Afghanistan.

Why did you decide to make films?

Mostly because of these five years of staying at home. I wanted to make films to show all those problems of Afghan women to my friends. I wanted to make films about women's rights and show them to other people.

Where and how does one learn to make films?

Now at this moment, I think that there are some private production companies. But I am not really sure if they are teaching or not. I don't know whether even AINA is still training women, but they did in 2004, when I was a student. I don't think that there are many facilities to learn filmmaking in Afghanistan. I think that there is a TV department at Kabul University. But I don't think that there is anything about film. I think that the private companies might be interested in teaching.

What role do organisations such as the aid organisation AINA or the initiative of the Varan projects play in training?

AINA was in charge of training Afghan journalists in media: in video, photography and print media. They also had a radio station at AINA at that time. It was mainly to help Afghan journalists to become independent, to train them. I think it was a very great activity that AINA started with. I mean, we were the first Afghan camerawomen ever in Afghanistan. At that time, they had some cooperation with Afghan Films and they made educational films together for the Mobile Cinema. They also had cooperations with other media. But nowadays I don't know if AINA is still the centre it used to be when I studied there.

What opportunities do women have?

It is not easy. You know, there have been many years of war in Afghanistan, and people are a bit closed towards filmmaking. There are a lot of problems. They do not accept it. I remember, when I started to work, people, like some men, when they saw the camera with me when we were filming in the streets, it was like a threat to them. Some of them even made fun of it or joked about it at that time. But it takes time. You know, there are those things that you have to fight for and I think that I am one of those kind of women facing these problems and trying not to care about what people have heard about me. I just did what I wanted to do. You have to be strong and follow your way. Still, I think that over time everything will change. The last time I was in Afghanistan in 2008, I saw that there were a lot of TV stations and women who were making programs there and I saw a lot of women filmmakers. I think it is getting easier, but it is not that easy.

Which films were important for you when you learned film making?

I was not influenced by any other films in my work. I don't know why, but I always had in my mind that I would become a documentary filmmaker one day and that my films will be only about women.

Does it mean that there weren't any films that were important for you, even during the last years when you were in Finland?

I always admired this film *Five in the afternoon* by Samira Makhmalbaf. I watched this film and I really liked it at the time I was in Afghanistan. It happened that this woman wanted to be president in Afghanistan and she tried to act as if she were the president.

What kind of films do you make?

I would like to continue with documentary. I don't know until when. I would like to try to do some fiction as well. I see many stories in the reality of our culture which I really like. But right now I cannot do it, because people are not willing to be part of it. But I have always thought that I could make some fiction out of it, one day maybe.

How did you finance your films?

The last film I made, *Zakia did stand up*, from 2008, was supported by UNESCO, but only the postproduction. But the film before that, *A girl from Kabul*, I did independently with my own money. Nobody supported me with it. Of course I used the camera from the school where I study.

For whom do you make your films?

Women and men, everybody. Lately, whatever film I made, it was not possible to show it in Afghanistan. The people in my films didn't want the film to be shown in Afghanistan, because they talked about their problems. If it is shown in Afghanistan, it will be dangerous for them. So, the majority of my audience now is Western.

Where are your films shown?

They have been shown at some festivals. But they have not been screened on any TV channel yet.

How was the reaction of the audience?

The audience was very proud of me. All my films are very important for me, it does not matter if I produced them independently or not, as all of them have a very important message. I think the audience was very happy to see my films and amazed by my work.

Did the perception of your films in Afghanistan differ from the one in Finland, for example?

Yes, of course. It is a big difference between showing my films in Kabul and showing them here. If I show my film *A girl from Kabul* in Afghanistan, nobody will like it and nobody will support me. They don't think that there is anything wrong with the situation that I show. They think that it is part of the culture and that it has to be like this.

Were there any differences in the perception abroad?

Yes, there have been different reactions. But I have not been to all those places where the films were shown to see how people react. Here, my people were very interested to see and get to know things about Afghanistan. They also want to see how people are working there - how can it be possible or why is it not possible?

Which role does the national and international market play for your colleagues and friends in Afghanistan?

When I was in Afghanistan in 2008, I heard that there was a company that was supporting Roya's film. I think that it is very important for her, as it gives her the possibility to do what she wants to do. I think it is also very important for the Afghans to come out of Afghanistan to meet other filmmakers and to see other people's work. And it is also good that films from abroad are screened at the festivals in Afghanistan. So that not only filmmakers but regular people can see those films.

Why did you decide to go to Finland?

I came to Finland in 2004 to work as a trainee at YLE Finnish Broadcasting Company. Currently you are finishing your studies on radio, television and documentary film production at North Carelian College in Outokumpu. What do you want to do after your studies? I would like to continue my studies to acquire higher education in this field. And after that I would maybe do my own films or work in TV companies.

You faced serious problems during your last shooting in Afghanistan in 2008. What happened?

I went to Afghanistan to do the second part of a documentary of which I did the first part in 2004. There were four women in that documentary. One of those women was killed. I went back to the family and some other people to talk about what had happened to her and how. After this I received several warnings that I should not make anything about her. They told me that I should not follow and not come to her family anymore.

Are you able to go back to Afghanistan at the moment?

Not really, as there were not only those warnings. It got very serious when I was still there and I had a very difficult time during the last few weeks of my stay in Afghanistan. It was even difficult to get out of Afghanistan. I think that I cannot go back at this moment, not for a few years at least. And it is not only about me. Now it looks as if even my family is involved in it.

Does it mean that you have to change the subject that you are working on?

It looks like that. I will continue to work with Afghan women. Perhaps I will work on the life of Afghan women abroad.

Shakiba Adil, Outokumpu (Finland), 22nd of January 2009