

An American in Madras (2013)



Synopsis

- Traces filmmaker Ellis R Dungan's years in India from 1935-50 & his contribution to the early Tamil film industry in South India.



Importance

- Puts Ellis Dungan's contribution in proper historic context.
- Focuses on a rarely documented period of Indian cinema.

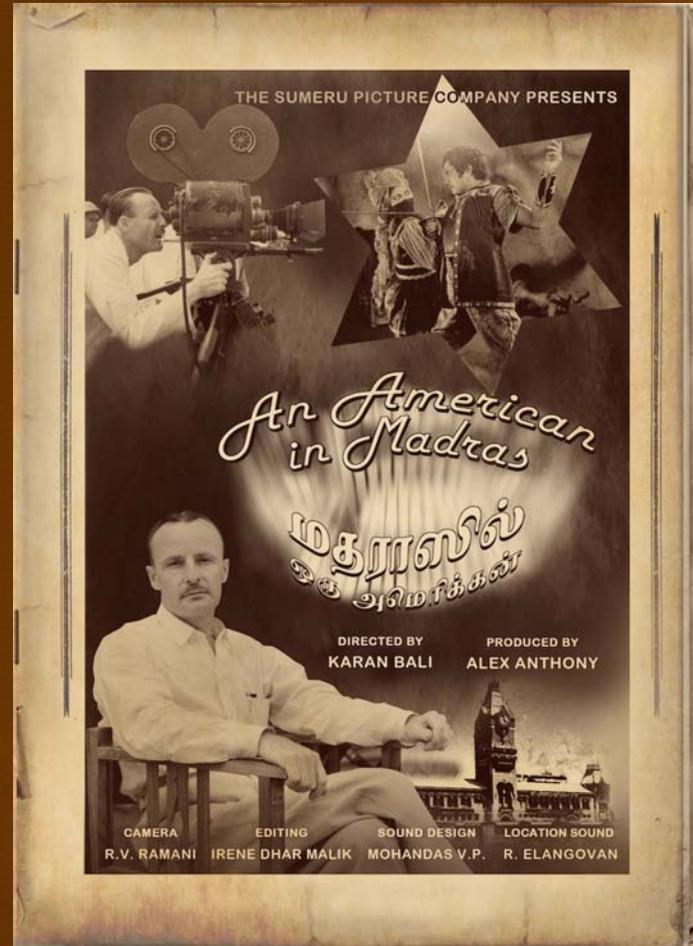


Archival Material used

- Clips from Dungan's feature films
- Clips from other feature films
- Clips from Dungan's documentaries
- Live footage of Dungan on the sets
- Interview with Dungan taken in 1994
- Interview with Dungan taken in 1995
- Photographs
- Newspaper articles
- Film periodicals
- Tamil film memorabilia – song booklets



Poster of the film



Primary sources, USA

- West Virginia State Archives
- Water and Power Associates
- St Clairsville High School



India

- National Film Archive of India (NFAI)
- Doordarshan
- The Modern Theatres Ltd
- Roja Muthiah Research Library
- Films Division
- Kalki Magazine
- Collectors and personal memorabilia of individuals



Malaysia

- Columbia Video Films



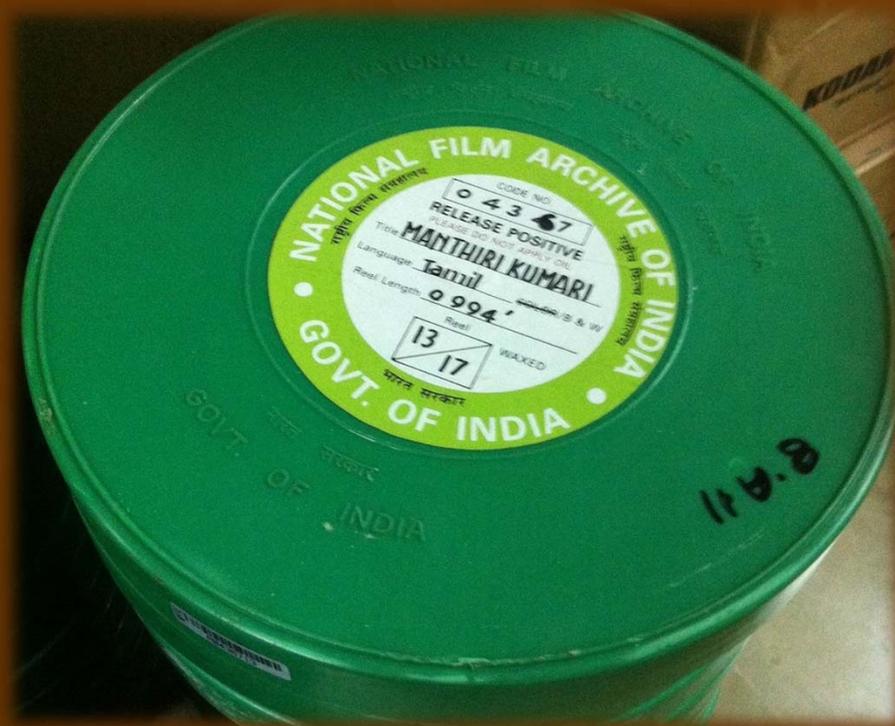
Relevance

- Helped to weave a story of Ellis Dungan's life in India.



Film archiving in India

- 51 years after its first feature film, *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), NFAI established in 1964.



1913-1931: The silent era

- Out of 1700 films made, the NFAI has just 5 or 6 complete films and 12 incomplete ones.
- Our first film *Raja Harishchandra* has just 2 reels existing...



1931-1941: 1st decade of sound

- More than 1500 films made. Less than 10% survive.
- Tragically lost forever is India's first talkie, *Alam Ara* (1931), it's reels sold for silver...



Present Scenario

- 1724 films certified in 32 languages in 2013.
- Total number of Indian films in NFAI is about 6000.



Film preservation

- The NFAI, the only official archive in India, is a government body run by bureaucrats.
- Preservation of films in NFAI too leaves much to be desired.
- In 2003, a fire at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) destroyed many of Indian cinema's old classics.
- In July 2014, the Bombay Talkies office in Mumbai caught fire destroying prints of its films of the 1930s and '40s.



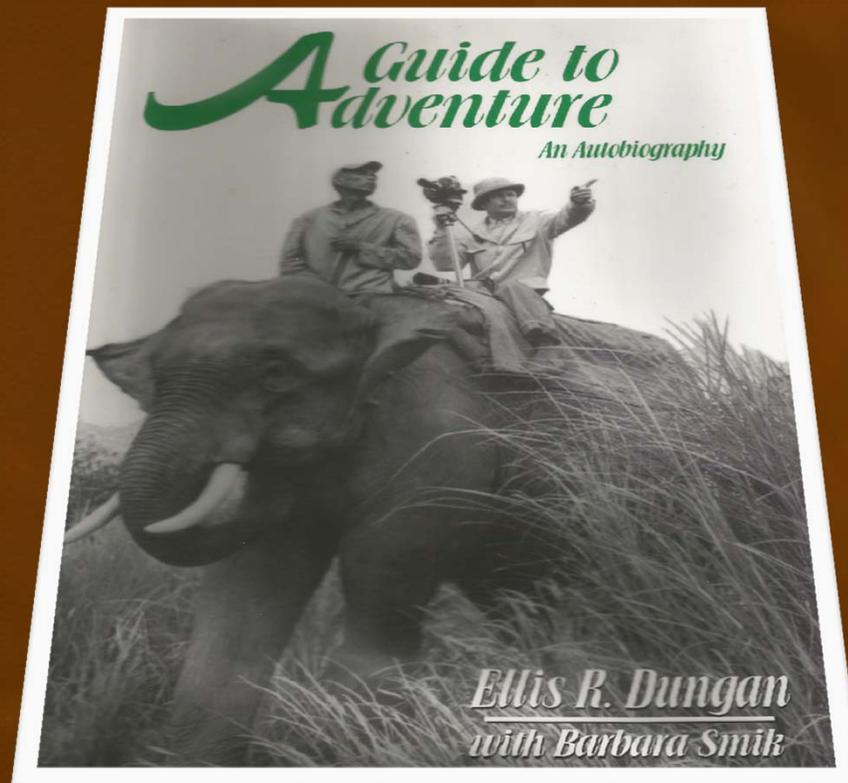
Dungan's feature films

- From his 13 feature films, 5 were sourced from NFAI.
- 1 was got from Columbia Video films, Malaysia.



The Ellis Dungan collection

- Being an American, Dungan had archiving in his blood.
- His autobiography played a major role in basic research.
- He realized the importance of preserving his material.



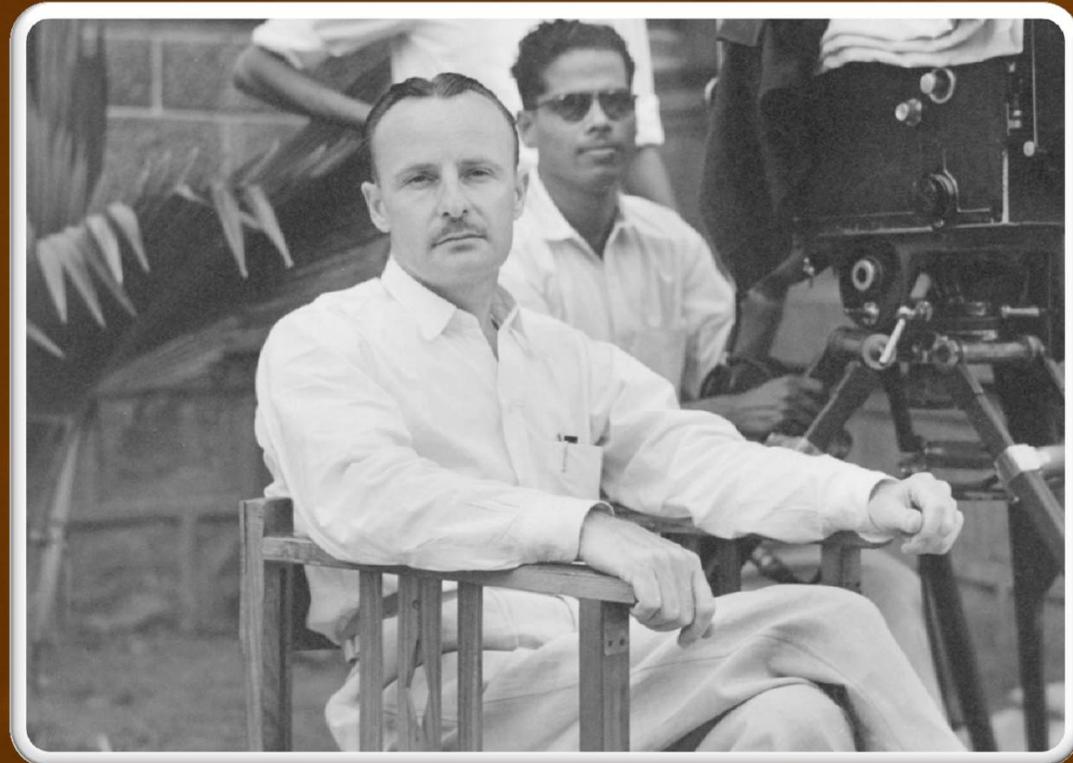
The West Virginia State Archives

- Photographs.
- Live footage of Dungan on the sets of his first three films.
- Extracts from two documentaries in India.



What the film achieves

- Gives its due to a pioneer of early Tamil cinema.
- Documents an early era of Indian cinema.
- Provides historical context to the archival material



The End!

