

Boot Polish

India : 1954 : dir. : ? min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
Ratan Kumar (Syed Nazir Ali); Baby Naaz
 Cast unknown

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ € Z ⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5067	1½	1	1	479	3 - - - -	No	<i>unseen</i>



*In the 1950s, third world urchins would polish the shoes of the affluent. Today they manufacture them.
 Source: The Moving Picture Boy*

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Kumar:

“ "Master Ratan" - whose real name was Syed Nazir Ali - studied in Bombay and had leading roles in many films, most notably "**DO BIGHA ZAMIN**" ("Two Acres of Land") and "**BOOT POLISH**".

The latter begins as a traditionally roguish Indian proletarian musical, then plunges into sentimental drama and reaches an almost operatic climax of pathos as the children are separated and a surprisingly plump Ratan "starves" in the streets while his little sister (Baby Naaz) is pampered by rich adopters. A similar suspension of disbelief is required when watching Pavarotti taking the role of a starving poet.”

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. One has visions of this cherubic bootblack keening like a thrush of his misery and desolation while chorus girls wheel and twist, Busby Berkeley style, in radiant colours through the gutters and market bustle. Such are the bizarre entertainments of mainstream Indian cinema. Holmstrom attributes this still to another Kumar title – "**DO BIGHA ZAMIN**" in 1953 – but it's a fair bet it properly belongs here.

Master Rattan, or Syed Nazir Ali, was 12, with more than two dozen movies already to his credit, though I've next to no information on any of them. The titles of those films – "Mother's Love", "The Handkerchief", "The Story", "The Trader", "Our Daughter", "The New House" – are nothing if not prosaic. "**BOOT POLISH**" is the only one given as a title originally in English. Nothing else is known of Baby Naaz.

The privations of third world street children (90% of whom are engaged in prostitution, if one believes the western media) have received far more sombre treatment in recent decades, and this film would presumably stand in startling contrast to the likes of "**SALAAM BOMBAY!**", but such a double-bill would at least offer audiences a healthy reminder that the cinema, then as now, presents reality as it chooses, not as it is.

See subject index under **ASIA, MUSICALS, ORPHANS / ADOPTION, STREET KIDS, WORKING BOYS / WORKING GIRLS** and presumably **DEATH / DYING CHILDREN**.