

Hiralal Sen



Bengali filmmaker

The son of a lawyer, Sen was running a successful photography business when in 1898 he saw a film presentation by one Professor Stevenson that featured alongside the stage show *The Flower of Persia* at Calcutta's Star Theatre. With Stevenson's encouragement and camera Sen made his first film, of scenes from *The Flower of Persia* which then featured in the Star Theatre programme. After Stevenson had moved on Sen purchased an [Urban Bioscope](#) from the Warwick Trading Company in London and in 1899 with his brother Motilal Sen formed the Royal Bioscope company. Sen was initially dependent on imported film, generally exhibited at the Classic Theatre, Calcutta, where the films featured in the intervals in the stage shows. When he began producing his own films regularly they chiefly were, as with Stevenson, scenes from stage productions at the Classic, such as *Bhramar*, *Hariraj* and *Buddhadev*, all between 1901 and 1904. This phase of his career culminated with his longest film, *Alibaba and the Forty Thieves* (1903), again based on an original Classic Theatre staging. He also made many local views and newsfilms, took commissions, made advertising films and put on private shows for members of high society. As newer film ventures entered the market place Royal Bioscope's fortunes declined, and production ceased in 1913. Shortly afterwards all of Sen's films were accidentally destroyed by fire.

Luke McKernan

1868-1958)