

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Gondi Alap



The crossover of two Bengals was the highlight for the recently released film, 'Gondi'. The Fakhrul Arefeen Khan directed film starred iconic actors, like Suborna Mustafa, also Member of the Parliament, and Kolkata-based actor Sabyasachi Chakrabarty. Previously, for the exclusive edition of the series, 'Uncensored with Rafi Hossain', the duo shared their experiences of working with each other and more. Following that thread, we present our readers with insights to what these legendary stars think about the current scenario of their respected industries.

Rafi Hossain: *Why do you think viewers in Bangladesh do not prefer to go to cinema halls to watch movies nowadays?*

Suborna Mustafa: The cultural scenario in Bangladesh is quite different from Kolkata. In India, watching films in cinema halls has become a part of their culture, and the government also helps develop more cinema halls for their audiences. They have well maintained cineplexes and even IMAX. Then again, in Bangladesh, no matter how much buzz you create on the social media platforms, without developing and increasing the number of cineplexes, audience will not go to watch movies.

Sabyasachi Chakrabarty: We had a similar problem in Kolkata as well. But, when we started to have better multiplexes, the number of movie goers increased. People became interested to go watch movies on the big screen because of the well maintained cinema halls. However, it has become harder to determine which types of films actually draw huge number of viewers to the halls. Sometimes, loud commercial films are well-received by the audience, and sometimes it's subtle and unique storylines. So, it is not always easy to understand or calculate which film is considered to be a good film for the masses.

Rafi Hossain: *With time, we have observed many changes in our television and film industries. Where do you think we are headed towards with the changes happening?*

Suborna Mustafa: I think that the Bangladeshi film industry will recover with time. We have a pool of young and rising filmmakers coming up with great stories. Even cineplexes are being made, and our

government will be working on renovating the halls. So, eventually, our film industry will revive. Unfortunately, I do not feel the same for our television industry.

Sabyasachi Chakrabarty: I beg to differ; I feel television will improve. The change is bound to happen because our audiences do not prefer to see the run-of-the-mill programs anymore. Viewers are not appreciating those storylines, and gradually, it will come to an end.

Suborna Mustafa: In Bangladesh, the problem does not lie in the stories, rather in the system. The agencies are the ones deciding on which show will go on-air.

Sabyasachi Chakrabarty: Even in Kolkata, the television channels are the decision makers, not the directors.

Suborna Mustafa: For our industry, the agencies are making all the final decisions.

Sabyasachi Chakrabarty: I agree. The agencies, as in the sponsors, do implement their marketing scheme in the stories in such ways that it becomes a little too extreme at times. For example, if a gold company is sponsoring the program, the show will have all the actors wearing their jewellery, even if the story may not ask for the actors to be all dressed-up.

Suborna Mustafa: I feel Bangladeshi television industry has lost its way. It's mostly the agency dictating the budget and the cast, neglecting the story of the drama.

Sabyasachi Chakrabarty: It is the same for Kolkata television programs. And because of this, I left the television industry and continued doing different kinds of films.

Rafi Hossain: *What do you think should be*

done to overcome this situation?

Suborna Mustafa: According to our country's context, agencies should stop interfering. Channels should outsource like before and carry out in-house productions. Agencies should only focus on selling the advertisements, rather than deciding on the cast.

Sabyasachi Chakrabarty: I am no one to give suggestions because those who passionately work for this industry will surely come up with a solution. I am indeed criticising and pointing out the negative sides, but sadly, I have no answer or advice on how to bring an end to this crisis. But, if I have to say something, the first step should be understanding the audience and bringing forth versatile stories.

Rafi Hossain: *'Gondi' was released on the 7th of February. Could you point out why the audience should go and watch the film?*

Suborna Mustafa: First of all, they should watch it for the story. The film will bring forward a different element of friendship: friendship without boundaries, since it narrates the story of an older couple and how the society responds to their relationship. Then, of course, for the cast, music, and location.

Sabyasachi Chakrabarty: The audience can relate to the story very deeply as the film tries to depict several aspects from our everyday life. The main attractions are the cinematography, music, location, and the biggest one for me is that viewers will get to see me share screen-time with Suborna Mustafa.

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