

Anjan Chowdhury

The Mind Behind

Dhaka International Folk Fest

Anjan Chowdhury has many accolades to his name.

Being the Director of Square Group, Managing Director of Maasranga Television and the Chairman of Sun Communications, he has added another accomplishment in being the organizer of the Dhaka International Folk Fest; the third installment of which took place from 9th to 11th November, 2017. In this exclusive interview with Star Showbiz, Anjan Chowdhury talks about his goals with Dhaka International Folk Fest and his interest in arts and culture.



First of all, congratulations on hosting the 3rd Dhaka International Folk Fest. From what idea did this unique innovation stem from?

First and foremost, my hometown is in Pabna, which is the origin of Baul music. Thus, I have always been a fan of folk music. The idea of Dhaka International Folk Fest started from the desire to have a folk music festival on an international scale, which would include folk musicians from other countries. We wanted to give international recognition to local musicians through this initiative, and social media helped in bolstering our popularity.

There have been complaints recently, even by musicians, that in terms of culture we are becoming directionless. What is your take on that?

I do agree that lack of culture is ruining us. But it is also true that recently, the practice of cultural arts has seen an increase. For example, Pohela Boishakh is now the biggest celebration of the year in Bangladesh. Even ten years ago, in my opinion, that wasn't the case. The young generation is also playing their part in upholding local culture.

Since you have hosted Dhaka International Folk Fest successfully for 3 years, do you think there will be an initiative in foreign countries with folk musicians from Bangladesh?

Instead of bringing the local musicians to foreign countries, I would rather bring the foreign talents here so they can perform alongside us. Some of the countries still don't have a good image of Bangladesh, so hosting big events in Bangladesh is what we need in order

to go further and build a positive international image.

Do you have anything similar to Dhaka International Folk Fest planned for the future?

The thing I have noticed about folk music is that, despite a folk musician's immense popularity, they hardly get paid for their work. You will find this in other countries: If you want to listen, you pay. But remote folk musicians here don't know how to apply such a regulation. I think the economic status of these musicians

has to be improved. Sure, they don't want much, but it's a shame that their songs are being heard by so many people and they aren't getting any money out of it. I have started a foundation which will look into this matter, among other things.

You are also involved in the film industry.

Do you have any plans regarding that?

I have always involved myself in creating healthy films. I have plans to work on films in the future, but there is a need of a good story. Since I was a freedom fighter myself, naturally,

I have my own story to tell. I haven't finalized any director yet for the project.

You have a lot of interest in art and culture.

How did such interest come to be?

Pabna was always a center point of drama and songs, and growing up there I gained interest in cultural practices as well. There were a lot of famous actors and singers who originated from my hometown and places nearby. Plus, my parents had a lot of interest in songs as well.

You are attempting some other projects for promoting cultural arts? Could you tell us

about them?

We have a non-profit organization named Society for Promotion of Bangladeshi Arts, which aims to promote young Bangladeshi artists. We are also teaming with Proyash School, a school for children with special needs, to host workshops.

Do you think other large-scale organizations should also promote art and culture?

The more the better, in my opinion. It's a win-win situation for everyone. I will admit that if there is more exposure to cultural arts, there are more chances of the general public being more interested in upholding cultural practice. The thing is, we don't really understand the value of art. However, the situation is vastly changing. We have a lot of singers now due to the rise of electronic media. They are receiving opportunities through talent search contests and the likes. That's a good thing, because we didn't have such things in the past.

As a successful businessman, who would you credit your success to?

Definitely my father, Samson H. Chowdhury. I have never seen someone more disciplined than him. We don't have any control over where we are born, so I feel fortunate for being born as a son of such a great man. My mother, siblings and I still live together, even after so many years. You will not see such a scene in the corporate world. This discipline of living is by choice, and was something that we gained from our parents. My father always taught us the importance of being together, as well as being loyal to the country and its people.

