

'PESSIMISM HAS ITS OWN RARE KIND OF ESCAPE!'

IRESH ZAKER

Let's start with your recent works. What have you been busy with these days? There's a project of an anthology of short films based on Dhaka city. I had been acting in that. I have also done some dramas for Eid-ul-Adha, with directors like Shihab Shaheen and Tuhin Hossain. Since I am the Managing Director of *Asiatic 360*, I have to deal with many corporate affairs. With the technology now available, we are seeing projects related to augmented and virtual reality. Such technologies are inevitably becoming existential for us, so at one point we must indulge deeply in this sector. It's no longer a choice. We work with some of the top tier clients of the country who expect only the best from us. So we are working hard all the time to develop our level of efficiency to live up to all the expectations.

Tell us more about the current situation of the ad agencies in our country?

The advertising agencies need to be very clear about their goals and optimize whatever is available to earn a name in the competitive market. We cannot be afraid of new technologies. We have to learn to swim in the ocean of newly introduced techniques. I think there are going to be some major shifts in the Bangladeshi advertising scenario in the years to come. What we traditionally think of as elements of ad is shrinking! TV, in total, is shrinking. Print is losing its impact. Overall, a lot is going on globally, that needs us to adapt with new innovative approaches in local spheres. Our advertising approach is diverting from 'mass media driven' to 'individually targeted audience driven'. What we used to call 360 communications before is transforming into more targeted group based communication. The modality of advertising is changing. I think the future will really depend on how this individual or group audience based agencies adapt to face their newer challenges. Perhaps this is what we have seen in the previous years as well. There was a time when we only had BTV, after that only a handful of channels. And then the gigantic wave of commercializing TV industry hit us, coming hand in hand with advertising business. Phases of newer advertising methods kept coming, and those who could not adapt themselves with the new waves, died off in no time. Day by day, we are seeing larger shifts, and so we are in requirement of stronger adaptability.

Do you think that in order to survive in the changing scenario, incorporating acknowledgeable persons in advertisements by the agencies is a solution?

Of course! Like I said, our commitment remains unchanged to our client brands. But we need sufficient and quality human resources for that, along with proper technological resources. Without the right personnel in charge, it will be difficult to survive.

We often see ads in social network platforms that are not aired on TV. What do you think might be the reason?

You have to think about certain aspects of targeting audience. The target group is exclusive for each media platform. TV allows a brand to reach audiences of almost all the sectors of a society, whereas social media can help reach a smaller group, specifically the youth. So it depends on factors like the product type, market condition, possibility of successful reach and many more. Before, I used to go online to seek for TVC inspirations. Many of the good contents made for global audience has been limited for specific audience groups over the recent few years. Let's face it, if they have no practical benefit from showcasing their product to someone, why would they even arrange for it?

How do you maintain the balance between your family life and professional life?

It is very tough to allot my time accordingly to balance the harmony. But I have no complains! In fact, I am enjoying my life much more since I got married. Work is something that I HAVE to be with. It is like an absolute mandatory for me to have a good night's sleep. So I do not compromise with my corporate affairs. But I have taken some pressure off by accepting less acting proposals now. At the end of the day, it all comes down to being satisfied with whatever you have, and equally satisfying those you care about.

If you had to describe yourself using only one word, what would it be?

'Pessimist'! (Laughter) No seriously, pessimism has its own rare kind of escape! Maybe even 'Nervous'! There's a British philosopher called Alain de Botton, who is also the maker of *The School of Life*. If you follow him, you will be amazed to know how pessimism could also be a good option, considering from certain perspectives of life!

Do you have any special message for the audience?

Pray for me so I can deliver you with what you want from me. And watch us, only if you like to watch us. Though I'm sure that's what you are going to do anyway! (Laughter)

By Tasbir Iftekhar

