

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6-7**

**FERDOUS:** I feel that our film industry is going through a transition period right now. And to improve the situation, we need the involvement of this generation. Until and unless, they become passionately engaged into the betterment of this industry, we cannot create a proper balance. Every day new technology and systems are being developed, and it is difficult for the older generation to embrace these changes. Entertainment platforms have evolved as well. People now want multipurpose entertainment centres rather than cinema halls. So, cinema halls are gradually going extinct. When I entered the industry, there were 1400 cinema halls and now it has gone down to around 200. We have been hearing about the plan of building cineplexes in every district of Bangladesh, but until this plan is executed, we cannot change the medium of entertainment for our viewers. Already, we can watch movies, web series in the comfort of our homes, so why step out? However, I do not think that the film industry will be completely wiped out because this is the ultimate form of entertainment. People still enjoy watching movies on the big screen as it gives them a thrilling experience; there is no substitute for this. So, to make sure our audiences enjoy the movies we make, we need to alter our contents. And yet again, the lack of sponsorship and funding also contributes to our failure. If one has to knock every door to get financial support for their films then no one will be interested to work in this industry. Previously a six-digit budget was needed to make a drama, but these days dramas are being made with five-digit budgets. Everything around us is improving but our finances seems to have taken the wrong turn. If we were focused on promoting the good movies we are making, the scenario would have been different today. Quality movies are still being made but in limited numbers because of a lack of patronage.

**IQBAL:** Media has a key role to play in addressing this situation. Every sector of the media needs to improve their content based on the evolving tastes of their audience. When Habibur Rahman produced *Padma Nadir Majhi*, do you think he received huge patronage? He had to struggle a lot, but in the midst of all the hurdles, he gained immense appreciation. The government, film critics and many others helped him during the production process. But now it is all about quick production, lack of investment and innovation. Be it music, art, poem, lyrics or anything, people want quick service and this culture of taking shortcuts has developed right in front of our eyes. We got so absorbed in the quick culture that we allowed it to become a new normal for us.

**RAFI:** Rubana apa and Iqbal bhai, you both are very successful in your professions, you are also closely involved with literature and the arts. Your roles in the society can bring about the changes needed for the industry to turnaround. Both of you had previously taken initiatives to bring likeminded people under one roof. Similarly, what else can be done to improve the current situation of the industry?

**IQBAL:** We always discuss about the problems of urbanization, but we never try to find solutions. And based on those issues, Rubana and I along with some of our friends, felt the need to do something as citizens of this country and formed *Urban Lab*. When we witnessed the birth of *Nagorik* television, the dream project of Rubana and Late DNCC Mayor Annisul Huq, we came up with the idea of making a program called *Shomadhan Jatra*, adapted from his mayoral campaign. We decided to turn the television box into a platform where, day to day issues related to urbanization could be solved. The program focused on finding solutions and the outcome was brilliant. When we got a versatile batch of people together under one roof, all sorts of fun and innovative solutions came up for implementation. We started to connect with our viewers. Television and social media both are influential platforms and if we can connect everyone through the strengths of these mediums, change will be visible.

**RUBANA:** I am going interrupt my friend



here because, the program *Shomadhan Jatra* was created with the motive to turn television into a public service platform to get our viewers hooked.

**RAFI:** Why are we not doing it then?

**RUBANA:** There is no fund; Iqbal's *Shomadhan Jatra* will not gain TRP. The show will only come to attention when we will rope in superstars like Ferdous for promotion. So, if we want to incorporate better contents in our business schemes, we need to be clever and work together with humility. Everyone starting from channel owners to program designers need to think together, work together and support each other to improve the industry. I feel that we will not be seeing improvement any time soon, but I am hopeful for the future. And I talk about business over here because it is related to the budget issue which we spoke about earlier. The reason behind low budgets is mass production. So, the business minded

people are getting what they need in a short span of time. They will not pay extra penny if they are getting what they want so quick and easy.

**RAFI:** I get amazed when I see the young generations embracing our culture and I have seen on social media platforms that they are interested to know more about their roots. I believe that it is our responsibility to get them involved with our entertainment industry. I think that if we can come up with a constructive plan and work together hand in hand our mediums of entertainment will not be lost. Ferdous, I am coming back to you again. What sort of idea or practical plan can be implemented?

**FERDOUS:** I think that we should start doing what Rubana apa had previously suggested about getting celebrities to promote *Shomadhan Jatra*. We should use what the audience wants for the benefit of television programs. I feel that we need the combination of both entertainment and intellect to provide our viewers with good quality programs. If we do so, we would be able to get quality work without

having to make compromises. Truth be told, not everything can be achieved with money. I recall Basu Chatterjee once saying to me, that even if someone gave him 5 crores to make a cinema, he will not be able to make it because his story doesn't demand such a huge amount. So, money alone cannot make better content; teamwork, determination and intellect can result in good programs, films, music and so on. If I go back to what I said earlier, films were made, are still being made and will be made. It is just going through a phase because of the ever changing world around us, but soon we will learn to adapt and create better platforms for our audience to find the joy of watching cinema on the big screen again. I believe we can bring change if we help each other during this transitional phase.

**RAFI:** So, Rubana apa would you like to take the helm to steer us towards this change?

**RUBANA:** More responsibilities!

(Laughs). I am always ready to take on responsibilities and that is why I believe in our youths and I love their energy and youthfulness. If we can loop in our next generation into the work we do then this nation will be able to see overarching glory in every sector. There are groups of likeminded people in this country, and they should start growing in numbers. I also feel that people like me, Ferdous, Iqbal and many others should join that force. And referring to our earlier conversation regarding *Urban Lab*, I feel that we need more collaborative platforms for our vision and culture to not only promote entertainment but also help shape the interest of the masses. We are failing so badly in this, that we are not being able to give proper direction to the next generation. We have drifted so far away from our roots just to embrace the changes around us that now we cannot guide them back to where we all began. In the era of fusion, we see everyone is trying to blend the old and the new together, forgetting our rich cultural aspects. It is not just my responsibility, and I would like to request everyone to take time out of their busy schedules to sit with their younger ones and share about our old music, cinemas and dramas. I was so delighted the other day when I saw my younger daughter watching a Satajit Ray movie. Even *Netflix* has old movie collections, so we can actually take a stand on reaching them through all these different platforms. We should stop complaining and start taking action. If we take the time to explain to the youths the situation and speak the truth, then they will listen and help form a unified platform. I believe when we speak the truth we talk about our failures and we talk about our modesty. Our youths are always eager to hear these stories because they understand them easily. They understand that we have lost our base and we need reformation to rise. All we have to do is, agree to the failures and speak up about them. If we are to be the guiding example for them, then first we need to start working with humility and honesty.

**FERDOUS:** I would like to add that proper research and background studies are also necessary when it comes to planning and reforming.

**IQBAL:** We cannot do anything individually. We need to come together and create a platform where our ideas can collide and coincide for the betterment of the industry.

**RUBANA:** Be it culture, profession or passion, people are always running after money. If you do good work you will receive recognition and fame. I feel that if you are able to affect many lives through your work then money does not matter, your true reward will be your good influence on the others. One must always think about the welfare of the society, because that is the ultimate goal or purpose of our lives.

**RAFI:** Through this interview I would like to invite everyone from the entertainment industry to step up and join this likeminded force and create a better platform for our next generation. Thank you so much for this wonderful conversation.

.....  
*Transcribed by Joana Nomrata Mazumder*