

CENTRE STAGE

JOSIM AHMED

Josim Ahmed is a captivating independent filmmaker, taking Bangladeshi films to international platforms. His film 'Daag' was the first ever Bangladeshi film to be selected in the 'Short Film Corner' category at the 'Cannes Film Festival'. Today, he opens up about his personal and professional life.

Tell us something about yourself.

I'd call myself a struggling filmmaker. I've made a few fiction based films, but I mostly make documentaries. One of my recent works, *A Pair of Sandal* depicts the life of the Rohingyas. It was both shot and edited on a phone. It was heavily acclaimed, and even received a few awards. At the moment, I'm producing a full length Indo-Bangla joint venture film.

Did you have any film for 'Cannes' this year?

We didn't have any film because the projects are still ongoing. However, we'll still be present at the festival. If the film was done before March, we would've been able to submit it, but we're still going to be looking for distributors and agents.

When did the passion for filmmaking begin?

I started as a political reporter in a newspaper. Then I joined BTV. That was when I made my first documentary, around 1998. It was about the events in Kushtia in 1971, when the general public had driven out the Pakistanis. That made me realise that I was capable of making films.

It can be seen that commercial films are more popular in the Bangladeshi film industry. Have you ever thought about making such films?

I don't distinguish films like that. Commercial and art films, all hold the same worth. It's true that we all have a target audience. If the audience watch an art film, it's still commercially successful. Although films are made for profit, to some extent they are art in themselves.

Which film inspired you?

Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. It's a brilliant film. Film schools teach us that the protagonist and antagonist must be present until the end of the film. However, *Psycho* completely destroys this notion.

Who's your favourite director?

Alfred Hitchcock, obviously.



Do you have any advice for aspiring Bangladeshi directors?

I believe our industry has many talented directors. They have the capability to make films of international standard. However, they might not have the proper resources or technical know-how to fully explore their potential. They should study about the available opportunities. Our problem is that we want quick fame, which is not something we should go for. We have to first learn the art properly.

Do you have any passion other than filmmaking?

Honestly, I can't do anything other than filmmaking and producing at the moment. I never thought I'd be a filmmaker; I wanted to be a musician.

What can you tell us about your upcoming project?

The joint production is what I'm working on right now as a producer. However, I'm not working as an investor; I'm more inclined towards the creative wing. Before finishing this project, I really can't tell about any future projects. If say, any plot or character sticks out to me, I'll start with it. For now, I don't know.

Do you make films with specific actors in mind, or do you choose actors based on the characters?

I've never based my characters upon any actor. My most recent short film was about violence against women, based on a true story. It follows a mother who gets anxious about her daughter whenever male relatives come over. It is

later revealed that her behaviour is due to the trauma after being harassed by a close relative as a child. I picked the actor based on the character of the mother.

Do you have any message for the readers?

There are many incredible films being made now, and even though there may be limitations, in the form of unfavourable cinema hall conditions, I urge the readers to watch Bangla films, especially independent ones. Otherwise, independent filmmakers will feel demotivated. The cinema halls are improving, and many new cineplexes are being built, so there is more incentive to watch films now.

Interviewed by Joana Nomrata Mazumder
Transcribed by Amina Hossain

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