

AMITABH REZA

Eminent director Amitabh Reza Chowdhury has an incorrigible knack for narrating stories through his lenses. He catapulted his career from making TVCs, to directing the critically-acclaimed film, 'Aynabaji'. His portfolio flaunts national and international critical acclamations. Recently, the storyteller sat down with Star Showbiz to talk about his first international production, 'Rickshaw Girl', and share insights on filmmaking.



Tell us about the progress of your new film, 'Rickshaw Girl'.

The majority of the shooting for the movie has been completed, and we are hoping to finish the work by the end of this month. Nobonita is currently working on the editing.

When can we anticipate its release?

I hope to release the movie next year.

You kept the dialect of the movie in English. Is there any specific reason for this?

Well, seventy percent of the film is in English. The film is an adaptation of the eponymous novel, *Rickshaw Girl*, written by Mitali Perkins. As it is quite popular amongst the youngsters in America, they're my target audience. Even the producer of the film is from San Francisco.

After your successful directorial debut, 'Aynabaji', this is the first big project you are working on. What is the reason behind the long hiatus?

The greatest struggle of every filmmaker is the lack of sustainable resources or capital. For instance, independent filmmakers who develop films for international festivals get the support

of proper organisations or production houses to further complete their projects. However, people who make movies for the local audience lack patronage. Bangladesh does not have any production house which will invest and help fund local movies, in return for greater capital.

Why do you think there is an evident lack of investors in our film industry? Do you think directors are responsible for this?

Bangladesh has a small number of producers, and that is where the problem lies. To name a few, Rubaiyat Hossain, Arif, and Mahjabin Reza are the ones who are renowned producers in the country. Rubaiyat and Arif made a name for themselves in the international film scene as well. Young talented directors are losing interest in this field, only because they cannot find good producers. I believe, in this era of technology, online or virtual platforms are the best way to reach the masses. Creating web-series or movies for online streaming is a smart way of approaching the audience with your story. However, proper investment, good producers and

production houses are required to get any industry running; may it be digital or mainstream media.

Are you currently making any web-series?

Dhaka Metro was my first original online series, released on the streaming platform, *Hoichoi*. Besides, I am currently working on four web-series, some as a director, and some as a producer. If I find more platforms to release my work, I will surely offer my audience more stories.

Why do you think young filmmakers are not flourishing in their home ground, rather taking their projects to international festivals?

Nobody can reach the peak of their career without a few let-downs in life. The films that are being made for the international fests are made in English to connect with the foreign masses. So, it is difficult to reach the local audience with that. Actually, people make movies for the money; be it in or out of Bangladesh. During the screening of *Aynabaji* at Balaka cinema hall, I was thrilled to see the audience's reaction. They were screaming in excitement and praising the movie. Later, when I

went to the projection room, one of the employees embraced me and told me that 'the golden era of cinema has returned.' I was honoured and delighted with the amount of love I received from my first film. At the end of the day, our only aim is to entertain the audience and connect with them. I feel accomplished whenever I see people enjoying my stories.

Any message for our readers?

I would like to let the readers know that a director's main motive is to offer good movies with engaging plots in Bangla, and that is all I want as well. Success will come eventually, if you enjoy working and have a positive outlook on life. I would also advise the audience to not fall prey to fake news. The internet or social media can be extremely influential, and people are falling victim to cyber harassment. There are plenty of fake accounts in my name, and people try to reach to me through them. But, I just want my followers to be careful and use the internet wisely.

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Transcribed by Joana Nomrata Mazumder