

Tales from MAYAR JONJAL

'Debris of Desire' or 'Mayar Jonjal' is a joint production of Bangladesh and Kolkata, which was premiered in an esteemed film festival in Shanghai. The film is based on Manik Bandopadhyay's two short stories, titled 'Bishakto Prem' and 'Shubala'. The director and cast of the film recently joined in for an exclusive interview with Rafi Hossain, where they talked about their film and shared their experiences on working with each other.

Sohel Mondal

Rafi Hossain: *Shohel, is this your first film?*

Sohel Mondal: No, I have been in four other films before.

Rafi Hossain: *What are your opinions on the entertainment industries of the two Bengals collaborating?*

Sohel Mondal: I believe that the two Bengals working together in the entertainment industry would be financially beneficial, and this should be pursued further.

Rafi Hossain: *Tell us more about your experience.*

Sohel Mondal: Being a part of such a project at the beginning of my career has been a valuable experience for me, and it will definitely help me in the future. Working with such renowned directors and actors has been an honour, and I have learnt a lot.

Shreya Shomoyeeta

PHOTO COURTESY: SOHEL MONDAL'S FACEBOOK



Indranil Roy Chowdhury

Rafi Hossain: *Congratulations on the film. I have watched it and I really loved it. You combined two of Manik Bandopadhyay's stories. Did you add your own flair to it?*

Indranil Roychowdhury: I would say that the plot has almost no similarities with the original story. The true similarity lies in the aura and sentiment. The original is set in the beginning of 1950, but our plot is set in Kolkata in 2018-2019. The social settings are completely different. What remains the same is the the relationships between the people, the lack of reliance and the common insecurities. The external dynamics are not the same at all.

Rafi Hossain: *Can you talk about the title of the film?*

Indranil Roychowdhury: There is an underlying sense of destruction in the film. The film also heavily expresses how people don't know what to do with each other. They can't love no matter how much they want to. They can't rely on



someone when they need to. They are in a constant state of mentally tormenting themselves. Most characters in the film are like this. That is where the title came from.

Rafi Hossain: *Do you think there is any difference between the filmmakers and actors in Bangladesh and West Bengal?*

Indranil Roychowdhury: I haven't worked with too many people, but there is a difference in favour of Bangladesh. Most Kolkata-based filmmakers live in the cities, but Bangladeshi filmmakers live in a dual reality because even if they live in Dhaka, their hometowns are different. So, actors can express themselves with vastly different characters as they have more options in this regard. West Bengali filmmakers are trying and experimenting, but it is very marginal, and I don't think it is making any contribution to the big picture. In saying that, I have to clarify that I know there are lots of talented individuals in Kolkata.

Rafi Hossain: *Any final thought you would like to share?*

Indranil Roychowdhury: Although being featured in a festival is amazing, it leads to some people thinking that the film will be unpalatable. They think that they won't understand the film, or it will be too slow-paced and not plot-heavy. I strongly disagree with that. This film will strike a chord in everyone, I believe. The story is about ordinary people, so I advise against rejecting it simply because it is being featured in festivals. It was a beautiful journey creating this film. I had complete freedom in the creative process, for which I am grateful.

Amina Hossain

Bratya Basu

Rafi Hossain: *Do you purposefully portray different kinds of characters? How do you go on about getting into the role?*

Bratya Basu: Even though I want to play vastly different roles, there may be some repetitions. Literary personas say that there are only eight kinds of stories around which every creation is made. So, how truly different can characters be if the base is these eight stories? If an actor wants to play in one film in three years, it would not be financially possible in this country. Daniel Day Lewis has only played in twenty films in his lifetime, but that will not be possible for an actor here. They have to work a lot. It isn't possible to create new and different things if someone is not given a break. Even in this, there are amazing works coming out and that is a credit to them.

Rafi Hossain: *I think that joint productions lead to the creation of great projects that will benefit both the Bengals. Do you agree?*

Bratya Basu: I completely agree with you. Technological advancements have helped us stay connected in such ways that were previously unimaginable, and this connection and communication will lead to the assimilation of different cultural aspects across people. Joint productions like these help to strengthen the communication and help people understand each other, which will, in turn, open up a series of opportunities for both the nation, be it politically or economically. I think our film has been successful in achieving that somewhat.

Ritwick Chakraborty

Rafi Hossain: *Ritwick, we have seen you do so many different types of roles. How do you make sure that your roles do not become too similar, and when you pick a role, how do you decide how the character will be like?*

Ritwick Chakraborty: When picking roles, I make sure to see if it is too similar to any character I have played in the past. However, since I act a lot, there will be some characters that are similar to each other. When that does happen, I pay a lot of attention to the script and try to find ways to make the character different. Instead of making ideas up in my head regarding the character, I follow what the script says and make the character unique. I don't have any specific method which I use to make sure that I don't pick similar characters.

Rafi: *You have done many experimental and mainstream films. What has your experience in the industry been like?*

Ritwick Chakraborty: When I first started acting, I used to hear that my face is not very suited to play the role of a hero. But, I never paid much heed to those because I was not very interested in playing that role. However, my look has proved to help me now. Whenever there is a character about someone who is not from South Kolkata, I am the first person they come to. So, whenever there is a very different kind of role, I have a high chance of being able to play it. With the rise of unique characters like the ones I play, I feel that I will be able to play more characters in the years to come. I consider myself extremely fortunate for this.

Rafi: *How was your experience working with Aupee Karim?*

Ritwick Chakraborty: In this project, we had many events not occurring in the foreground, and we had to rely a lot on our expressions, rather than the use of too many dialogues. This was especially the case for Aupee as her character relied a lot on her expressions. To portray this character perfectly, we needed a very good actor,



Rafi Hossain: *Would you like to share any final sentiment?*

Bratya Basu: We are thrilled that this film is being featured in big film festivals. I hope that the pandemic is over soon, so that people can go to cinema halls again and watch films to their hearts' content. I hope that they start with *Mayar Jonjal*.

Amina Hossain

and after watching the film, I realised that Aupee did a fantastic job. While filming, I did not realise just how good she is. I think that if anyone else except her did this, the character would not have been portrayed this perfectly. Sometimes, when working with other actors, I have come across people who make you purposefully uncomfortable, but Aupee was not like that. She would do whatever she could to make me comfortable. She was very professional and would work with a lot of effort. To me, that is the sign of a good actor. So, working with Aupee was a great experience.

Rafi: *How do you feel about Bangladesh and West Bengal doing joint venture films?*

Ritwick Chakraborty: As an actor, I would always want joint ventures like this to happen as this enables people from both sides to showcase their talents to a much larger audience. I think that if we work together and utilise the talents from both sides, we can actually get out of the crisis we are currently facing. And, I would love to have more people working with me and also getting to show my work to a larger market. I think that since we have very similar cultures, we should explore the slight differences there are. Joint venture projects can only help us, so we should always keep on doing them.

Rafi: *Do you have any parting message?*

Ritwick Chakraborty: *Mayar Jonjal* has been featured in a very prominent film festival. All of us involved with this film want people from both sides to watch it. We worked very hard on this project, and it would mean a lot to all of us if our work is appreciated. And, since we are talking about both Bengals doing joint venture films, I think that we should all be very vocal about our interest in doing them.

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub

Aupee Karim

Rafi Hossain: *Aupee, I want to start by congratulating you on the movie coming out. I personally believe you were outstanding in it. Could you share your experience with us?*

Aupee Karim: I always try to follow the guidelines provided by the director. I studied the script and tried to understand his perspective, and carried out the work the way I was asked. All the credits go to the creator of the movie. The script itself was also very captivating, and so, when the director was reading it out loud, I could already picture the scenes in my head.

Rafi Hossain: *Tell us about your experience working with Ritwick.*

Aupee Karim: Firstly, I would like to thank Ritwick for saying such kind words about me. It has been an honour to share a screen with him as I truly admire his work. As for his talents as an actor, I have no words that would do him justice. I always enjoy working if my co-workers are as dedicated to the project as I am. That is one of the reasons I loved working with him. Moreover, his acting is always natural and not over-the-top, which made every scene seem just like a regular conversation. Overall, it was an amazing experience, and I want to continue being a part of projects such as this. I want to thank Ritwick and Indranil Roy Chowdhury for this experience.

Rafi Hossain: *What are your opinions on the two Bengals collaborating in terms of the entertainment industry?*

Aupee Karim: This is one of the reasons I starred in a film after so long. The story and the crew were wonderful and it also brought the two Bengals together. The internet has made it easy for us to access movies and television shows from all over the world. So, I believe it will only be beneficial for the entertainment industry if the two Bengals to work with each other, be it from a financial, political or cultural standpoint.

Rafi Hossain: *Do you have any parting message?*

Aupee Karim: Because of the festival, the film has already reached the audience. As an actor, however, I am still looking forward to the day the film will be released in cinema halls in both countries.

Shreya Shomoyeeta

