

Artistes' royalties in Bangladesh: Pipe dream or imminent reality?

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banks are interested in providing us with loans, when they learn about our profession, as we are not financially secure," he says.

"We are considered freelancers with no professional benefits that are often provided in a 'secure' job," he pointed out.

"Since it is strongly associated with commerce and economy, a guideline for artists' gradation should be mandatorily made and implemented," Shampa Reza said.

She also stressed on the need for establishing 'professionalism'. "We are talking about the traditional and digital economy," she asserts. "Sadly, we have not been settled with the traditional economy as of yet. We don't have any system of formally signing contracts, no money receipt is provided when we get our payments—how can we talk about residuals?"

She mentioned that BTV followed a pay-scale for the artists—a guideline



made since its inception. "We have developed so much digitally, and everything on digital platforms comes under the ICT Act," she says. "What is stopping us from maintaining transparency in monetising our creativity in this era?"

Shahed Ali, on this note, added another point. "BTV used to follow a ratio sharing policy, where profits were shared upon broadcasting," says the actor. "However, private channels never followed this policy."

Whatever input an artiste is giving into this industry is mostly out of passion.

Actress Moutushi Biswas shared her concern in this regard. "If I ask for a ratio from revenue, I can easily be replaced," she comments.

"However, I feel we still need to ask, and it will definitely benefit the artistes in the long run."

Biswas also pointed out that there are other issues that media workers encounter on a daily basis. "We don't get paid on a monthly basis, thus there is a financial uncertainty that remains all the time," asserts the actress. "Most of us cannot afford a manager, or take help from experts. There are no professional agencies who can deal with our financial arrears with the producers. Television artistes don't even get costumes, they have to manage from their personal

wallets."

Director Tanim Noor has a different point of view regarding the royalty system. "Artistes are in no way lawfully entitled to get any royalties," he said. "Since the work is commissioned, they are selling the rights to their work. Even in OTT platforms, directors and producers cannot claim royalty as all the rights are taken by the streaming service."

He explained that even international platforms have not fully integrated into this system. "When did the lead cast of the popular television series Friends start getting royalties? It happened when the producers began to earn huge revenues digitally after broadcasting numerous times." He suggests that a system of profit

"When actors work on 15 projects in 30 days, it leads to a compromise in quality, which cannot be a sign of a proper industry," says Iresh Zaker, adding that if a better monetisation system is introduced, artists can also rest a bit.

"Viewership is driven because of the face value, and not for the product quality. For instance, a project that features popular faces like Mosharraf Karim, Apurba or Afran Nisho, will obviously get a good sponsorship, as viewers will not pay the same amount of attention to anyone else. However, artists should definitely ask for revenues for digital broadcasting," he says.

He also added that supporting cast members are not in the position to ask

"We have to consider it as a global race, if we can facilitate the commission and licensing then we can acquire the market properly."

Shankha Dasgupta



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Moutushi Biswas



sharing can be introduced by negotiating with producers.

The film industry in Bangladesh has been at a vulnerable stage for many years. The scenario with television is quite similar. The lead cast of a project are paid more than anyone else in a production. This drastically hampers the quality of the project.

for such revenues. "Even in television, the projects are not driven by stories, people are interested because they are entertained with a limited group of favourites."

Zaker suggested that guilds can introduce a guideline with pay scales. "If a project earns enough, the digital earnings

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