



#CHECK IT OUT

Amitabh Reza on Puran Dhaka, Afzal Hossain, and his latest web series

A retired judge haunted by his past asks, "Was my judgment all wrong?" That is the premise of *Bodh*, the recently released web series by Amitabh Reza Chowdhury on the OTT platform, Hoichoi. We sat down with this celebrated filmmaker to discuss *Bodh*, his experience of working with the eminent actor Afzal Hossain, and life after *Aynabaji*'s success.

First things first, why watch *Bodh*? Well, there can be many reasons – the stellar performance of Afzal Hossain and a few other actors, a gripping story, or perhaps the brilliant way Amitabh Reza always portrays Dhaka on screen.

Amitabh Reza says, "I can't tell why people should watch *Bodh*. I have a specific objective for making cinema. I want to present scenarios that happen around us, and with that, I want to start a dialogue with my audience. I think cinema should begin conversations."

For him, the biggest achievement from *Bodh* was the experience of working with Afzal Hossain.

"I worked with a great human being, not just a great artiste," he comments. "With people like him, it is not simply about how good the acting is, or how promising it will be for the audience. Working with Afzal Hossain, conversing with Afzal Hossain, teaches you a lot; it enriches your mind.



Also, he is the kind of person from whom the younger generation has a lot to learn – how a person should be humble, how a man of high stature should be accessible, and so on."

When watching the series, you will be pleasantly surprised to see a glimpse of Amitabh Reza as an actor too, with a cameo appearance as a hotel receptionist.

"Without giving any spoilers, the context is that two lovers wanted to spend intimate time with each other in a hotel. Now, closeness or intimacy is a very beautiful thing on earth. But this society doesn't allow that in many cases, for example, the authorities at parks will often interfere. With my role on screen, I wanted to confront this reality," he explains.

The director does not shy away from presenting realities around us and starting

conversations. Another such aspect he brings forth is the city itself.

After watching some works of Amitabh Reza, including *Bodh*, one becomes aware of his fascination with Dhaka. Time and again he somehow makes Dhaka a 'character' in its own right — in all its beauty and ugliness, dreams and nightmares.

Bodh, one may argue, is in a way a story of Dhaka; a narrative you and I can relate to, of people we encounter in our lives.



"I have the same relationship with Dhaka as one has with a lover. At times I may get angry at Dhaka, but I can't also live outside this city for long. Dhaka is the love of my life," Amitabh declares.

Quite a bit of *Bodh* is shot at the historic hotel and eatery, *Beauty Boarding* in Old Dhaka, where a talented and unorthodox

investigator resides. *Beauty Boarding* is a place that Amitabh Reza revisits.

"I love Puran Dhaka. I don't get the smell of this city anywhere else, and I love shooting in Old Dhaka," he informs. As for *Beauty Boarding* in particular, he is intrigued by its memories. "So many great poets used to visit this place. In every wall, there is someone talking; someone saying something to me."

And hence, with enough hints and glimpses given on *Bodh*, it's for you to decide whether to watch it or not and then whether to like it or not. Just one thing, though: don't compare it with *Aynabaji*!

After *Aynabaji*, whatever this filmmaker brings onscreen, people always refer back to that one film.

"It's a trauma for me. I hate that *Aynabaji* became so successful. It bothers me when someone comments about some other work of mine not being like *Aynabaji*. Well, I didn't want it to be like *Aynabaji*!" he expresses his frustration, leaving you with a thought, "Filmmaking is just a presentation of ideas, a conversation; storytelling. People will have their favourites as well as their dislikes. The works that are disliked, aren't those works too?"

By M H Haider
Photo: Shovy Zibran