

## 'YOU HAVE MORE ROOM TO ACCOMMODATE CHARACTERS AND MORE SPACE TO WEAVE YOUR STORY' — IPS OFFICER PRASUN BANERJEE ON DIRECTING A WEB SERIES AND PLAYING AN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN A TV SHOW

**I**PS officer-actor-director Prasun Banerjee, who is a familiar face in Bengali TV serials, has his hands full. Apart from acting in the serial *Guddi*, he is now busy directing a new web show and a play. A t2 chat...

**Congratulations on winning a prestigious award!**  
Getting the Star Jalsa Parivaar Award is something that every television actor aspires for. It's big, and naturally the feelings of winning a prestigious one gives you the satisfaction of reaching a milestone. I'm extremely happy and hungry for more.

**Was it a dream for you to get an acting award?**  
To be honest, yes. Every performer longs for recognition. Particularly in the television industry where so many talented artistes are putting everything into every punch, it's extremely important to secure a place. When you go to the set, you must set a target. That raises the bar. For me acting is serious business and I work really hard on it. Television is the most popular medium. A dream really comes true when you hear that you are in that bracket. It actually indicates how much you are loved by your audience. And who doesn't dream of being loved by millions?

**How do you study acting? Do you follow a method or observe or do workshops?**  
My favourite domain... one thing for which I can practise and rehearse endlessly without an iota of tiredness. Rule one of the game is never try to act, just be the character. The acting will come automatically. But that's easier said than done. So to be the character you have to assimilate the script, understand the demand of the storyline, remain aware technically... whether you are in for a master shot, close-up or extreme close-up. You need to understand the focal length used for a particular shot and the angle.

A seamless integration of all factors will produce a smooth effect that people will love. So I prepare minutely.

Yes I am a keen follower of method acting. I also watch great acting performances to hone the skill. For instance, you can watch Om Puri in *Droh Kaal*, Utpal Dutt in *Bhuvan Shome*, Marlon Brando in *The Godfather*, Eric Bana in *Black Hawk Down* and many more. That helps you to understand the grammar of acting.

**Why did you decide to direct a web series?**  
Web series has revolutionised cinema, it has redefined the way of making and watching a movie. It's formidable as a format. You have more freedom to be bold, more room to accommodate characters and more space to weave your story. It is much more open-ended than the formal format of cinema and every film-maker would love to utilise that



Prasun and Madhurima Basak in *Guddi*

extra free space if he has a befitting story. Cinema is eternal and will survive the onslaught for sure but web series is the new normal of cinema and presents enormous opportunities for creativity. I have a story now which demands the treatment of web and decided to go for it.

**What is the storyline of the series?**

It's about a media baron who decides to join politics to complete a circle that he believes is the ultimate power game. He is

ruthlessly power hungry and madly into the game. It's a world he had seen from the gallery but now he is inside it. His rivals both in politics and media are equally keen to ensure his defeat. It's a mind game which becomes visceral and personal. It has many twists and turns and events which change the course of life, making him more fierce and ruthless. The battle turns nasty with both sides plotting and conspiring.

**How's the shooting**



Payel Mukherjee in a web series directed by Prasun



Prasun with his award

**experience so far?**

Tremendous. Everyone is giving their best effort. Actors love playing powerful characters. The entire team is geared up. I'm happy with the way it has been shaping up so far. There was a swimming pool sequence and I was running a fever. But I decided to go for it. The other cast and crew members were a bit apprehensive but I got better the next day. Don't know any scientific correlation but it turned out to be beneficial for me. It's a strange world!

**You are also acting in the TV show *Guddi* right now. Tell us about your character?**

It's the role of an intelligence officer who normally operates in plain clothes and is deeply disturbed internally for a social injustice of a simple girl from the

hills whom he had met by chance. He takes a side and stands by that girl. This man Kingsuk Sen is emotional and righteous sometimes to the extent of encroaching in the personal space of others. It's a really star-studded show and the experience is fascinating. On one hand it's always cool when you know your co-actors are capacity players. On the other side one has to concentrate more so that the collective outcome reaches the expected levels. I have done long sequences with all of them and the audience loved each chemistry. We are a strong team and I am enjoying the company of marvellous co-stars who make things look so easy.

**What is the best part about the serial?**

The script is its strength. The story is sweet but the narrative is powerful. The characters are created with a vision and each character is an essential component. The cast is very strong and each one is playing it to perfection. Lots of outdoor scenes have made the visuals extremely cinematic. The action sequences are convincing and the scenes shot in the hills are a feast for the eyes.

**You are also directing a play. Tell us about it.**

It's an adaptation of Govind Nihalani's *Droh Kaal*, one of my all-time favourites. I am playing the role of a captured terrorist who is brutally interrogated. Priyanka Biswas is playing the role of a cop who is no-nonsense and ruthless.

Arindam Chatterjee