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BOLLYWOOD



Raghbir Yadav

RAGHUBIR YADAV TALKS ABOUT THEATRE BEING HIS FIRST LOVE AND MORE IN A t2 CHAT



Raghbir Yadav with Arundhati Roy in *Massey Sahib*

village. It was released in 1985 but we finished filming it in 1983-84. Post that film she wrote two more scripts, *Electric Moon* and *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones*, and I was part of both. I met her before Covid. She has the same energy as she did years ago.

We last saw you in *Panchayat* and you have been doing roles that are somewhat similar. How are you trying not to get stereotyped? I am doing different kinds of roles and I try to not repeat myself. *1942: A Love Story* was different, *Lagaan* was also different. I have done a few TV series and among them are *Mullah Naseeruddin*, *Chacha Chaudhury* and others. I refuse to do same characters. I want to do a job that I would love to do. The formula is simple: If you don't enjoy the role, the viewers won't enjoy.

You are here for a musical performance and you have been working on musicals. Tell us about them.

Yes, I have been doing *Maare Gaye Gulfaan* and *Piano* as musicals. *Maare Gaye Gulfaan* is actually inspired by the film *Teesri Kasam*, though the film and the musical are poles apart. I did the musical in *nautanki* style, something that I enjoy.

Between theatre, musicals and films, what do you enjoy the most?

I enjoy all but it is theatre that gives me more satisfaction.

What are your future screen projects?

There are a few web series that I am a part of, including *Panchayat 4* and *5*. Then there are a few other projects like *God of Sin* and *Hari Om*.

Farah Khatoon
Picture: Kolkata Centre for Creativity

Actor Raghbir Yadav stands out for his simplicity. Having worked in the industry for four decades and reprised many memorable roles, including the easygoing Pradhaan in the web series *Panchayat*, Yadav remains grounded. A man whose first love is the stage, was in the city to pass on the skills that he had learnt and mastered, and celebrate theatre maverick Habib Tanvir with Dekh Rahe Hai Nayan organised by Kolkata Centre for Creativity. As the actor warmed up to Calcutta for his sessions and performance, he spoke to t2 about his love for theatre, working with Habib Tanvir and more.

Welcome to Calcutta. After how long are you coming to Calcutta and what do you like about the city?

I came here two years ago for Kaushik Ganguly's film *Manohar Pandey*. I like the people here and the theatre. The way people enjoy theatre here is what I love and admire. *Yahan ki audience badi kamaal ki hai*. Their reaction is on point. I have performed at a lot of places, all over India, but the environment is very different here. I have done a lot of theatre here when I was with the National School of Drama, and also after that.

Do you remember your last play here?

I think I did *Piano* last, which is around four-five years ago. I am

now trying to develop it into a musical. Let's see how that turns out.

We are here to celebrate Habib Tanvir. Tell us about working with him.

I studied at National School of Drama so my first association was with Ebrahim Alkazi. It was in my first year that I did *Agra Bazar*, in 1974, with Habib Tanvir. I learnt a lot from him. Habib and Alkazi have influenced me a lot. While Alkazi was very regimented and disciplined, Habib *sahab* was very calm and easygoing, though I have heard that he used to scold people at times but I never experienced that side of him. I kept meeting Habib *sahab* and even watched his subsequent

plays but I never got the opportunity to act in his other productions as he went to Bhopal.

Which are your favourite Habib Tanvir plays?

All his plays are my favourite. Whether it is *Charandas Chor* or *Gaon ka Naam Sasural* and *Mor Naam Damad* or *Kamdeo ka Apna Basant Ritu ka Sapna*. I acted in *Agra Bazar* so that has a special place in my heart.

You have completed four decades in the industry. Your first film *Massey Sahib* was released in 1985. Arundhati Roy was your heroine...

Yes, that was my first film and Arundhati Roy played an Adivasi. We have good memories of the film; we used to roam about in the