

## BEHIND THE LENS

# The small screen is not 'small' anymore - Producer Sumeet Mittal

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Sumeet Mittal, Founder Director of Shashi – Sumeet Mittal Productions Pvt. Ltd. has over the years penned many stories as writer along with his wife Shashi Mittal. As a new chapter in their long professional career, the couple as Producers has given the industry successful shows like *Sajan Ghar Jaana Hai*, *Diya Aur Baati Hum*, *Punar Vivah* amongst others.

In our segment of Behind the Lens, we have Producer Sumeet Mittal talking about his journey as a visionary...

**After having a prolific professional phase as writer, you have gone on to become a renowned producer churning out meaningful concepts. How has this journey been?**

The journey has been fantastic, to say the least! We have been fortunate that our shows have seen such tremendous response and the faith that our audiences have bestowed on us in giving them quality content over and over again. Going forward, we stand committed to providing our viewers with content that are engaging and entertaining at the same time.

**Shashi-Sumeet Mittal Productions' long-running show for Star, Diya Aur Baati Hum has been doing consistently well on the ratings chart. What do you think has been the USP for the show's success?**

At Shashi Sumeet Productions, we strive to create stories that form a lasting connect with the viewers. *Diya Aur Baati Hum* has managed to do just that. While the story is inspirational and unusual with a regular *halwai* wanting to make sure his wife becomes an IPS officer, the characters are extremely relatable and identifiable and that's what has given this sustained life to our show.

**As a producer, do you believe in looking for faces that fit your characters, or for good actors who will carry the role better?**

Good actors, always! They can bring any character to life.

**You have had a long career in the industry. How do you think the scenario of television has changed over the years?**

The television industry has undergone mammoth changes. The production values and scale, the variety in content available on the platform, the marketing & PR push that's available for shows today, film integrations...all this were not present 10 years back. Also today the viewer is spoilt for choice; he/she has the option to choose a multitude of shows across channels, again, a phenomenon that's grown in the past few years.

To sum up, I would like to say that the small screen is not 'small' anymore.

## **What do you think is the future of TV?**

It's a great time to be in this space. The viewers are more receptive towards fresh and experimental concepts and that gives us an opportunity to bring diversity in our creativity. The future will see more scale, more variety, more experiments and more genres of television content.

## **Would you like to attempt a new genre when it comes to fiction, something different from the saas bahu sagas and family dramas?**

I think it would be unfair to say that all fiction revolves around saas bahu sagas. Today we are seeing a lot of innovative concepts. We have tried to tell a dramatically different story through *Punar Vivah*, which we are now growing as a brand through its second season. We also did *Haar Jeet* on Imagine TV which was a show focused on children, their dreams & aspirations.

At Shashi-Sumeet we don't limit ourselves in thinking in saas-bahu styles but our effort is to tell stories that have a lasting impact on the hearts of our audiences across the country and the globe.

## **Anas Rashid and Deepika Singh have become household names today, courtesy the success of Diya Aur Baati Hum. Tell us about them?**

Anas and Deepika are fantastic actors who have given so much to the characters Sooraj and Sandhya. They are a delight to work with.

## **Punar Vivah as a brand was a trendsetter on TV. How and why did the idea of coming up with a new storyline under the same brand arise?**

The answer lies in your question (smiles). Because it was such a path-breaking and trend setting show, it was an obvious choice for us to make the brand grow and the second season is a step in that very

direction. We didn't want to prolong the show just because it was getting good ratings. We wanted to end the story on a high and bring forth a new story under the same brand name.

**The new chapter of Punar Vivah has not been great in terms of ratings as of now. What's your take on it?**

The ratings have been decent and I am sure with the exciting changes we are going to do in the track in the coming months, it will see a significant boost.

**Khoobsurat on Sony had a long waiting phase before it went on air. However, the show is being taken off now due to poor ratings. What's the feeling within the camp?**

Obviously when the show doesn't fare well, it is disappointing. But I always encourage the team to look at such instances as great learning opportunities. I strongly believe that failure contributes more to your learning curve than success.

**What do you think is the reason for the show not faring well?**

Well, there is no set formula of a successful show. Both us and the channel, believed in the story and hence we went ahead with it. It did not resonate with the audience and hence didn't garner the response we expected it would.

**Diya Aur Baati Hum completed 500 episodes. Take us through the highs and lows when it comes to this show? What are the future goals set for DABH?**

The show has been on a constant high and we can't thank our audiences enough for such a positive response. So much love & support...it's quite overwhelming.

While numbers like '500 episodes' are good and a strong validation of the content we are providing, personally for me what is critical is

the audience response. My only goal for DABH is that as long as it is on air, it should continue to garner the same amount of love from the viewers.

**Talks in media about a new show made for Life OK by you is presently on for which big names like Iqbal Khan and Shraddha Arya have been signed. Can you comment on it?**

I would not like to comment at this stage as it's very premature.

**Also, there is a show made for SAB TV is what the buzz is. Any comments?**

Currently, we have a shot a pilot for the channel. We will make a formal announcement at the right time.

**Which are the recent shows according to you, which have been rich in concept and have made a difference on TV?**

I think *Mahadev* on Life OK is a great show, rich in concept.

**What is your take on reality shows of today?**

Reality shows are critical to boost viewership for channels. They bring in the audiences but eventually the stickiness comes with fiction. If fiction is the daal-chawal of a broadcaster, reality shows are like exotic desserts! Reality shows are an area where Shashi-Sumeet Productions would be making a foray into very soon.

**What is the reason according to you, for shows not having a long life on television these days?**

It is because of the vast array of shows available to the audience. The onus thus lies on us to provide them content which has high engagement value and they keep coming back to our shows.

**TAM has been boycotted by many broadcasters. What is your take on the same?**

The broadcasters have their valid points but I do believe that a central system of ratings is required to judge the success/failure of the show. How else do we gauge audience response?

### **How important is the weekly ratings for you as a producer?**

Without doubt, it is important...it is a barometer for judging the audience reaction to the show across the country.

### **Any future plans for Bollywood?**

We are making our tiny steps into film production and making a foray currently into Marathi films.