

What made you take up a project on the theme of disability?

I have been involved with persons with disabilities over the years – through my research on Artificial Intelligence and autism to find early intervention methods. Through this journey, I got a chance to work with many organisations, children with disabilities, parents and educational institutions, and I was intrigued to bring their life-stories to the big screen.

Despite the large, global population dealing with disability, the surrounding stigma in society takes away from the amazing ability of many individuals. I wanted to raise awareness on this important human rights issue, while promoting inclusion and diversity.

What is the response that you are getting for it?

The film has rapidly attained international recognition. With over 27 laurels so far, *One Little Finger* has been officially selected at film festivals in Los Angeles, Florida, San Diego, Hawaii, Ohio, Italy, London, Spain, Delhi, and others. Awards were never our goal, but they have been motivating our kids, and transforming their lives.

You have involved around 80 people with disabilities in this film... how was that experience as a filmmaker?

It was quite challenging. It opened my eyes. Our thoughts, words, and actions matter a lot. In this project, I grew up with these kids; I worked hard to feel like I was one of them. Until that time, I was not ready to write the screenplay, I did not feel like I was knowledgeable enough! It was a great teamwork. Our amazing core team from USA, Assam and Kolkata worked together towards a shared goal.

Moviemaking is generally considered a money-making venture, how does *One Little Finger* fare in that regard?

Not only moviemaking, but most of the creative arts are becoming commercially-motivated, sadly – even education. Economics of survival is necessary. However, we cannot lose sight of the bigger picture of doing good for others. We have to give up many things to gain something. As artistes, journalists, politicians, filmmakers, teachers, we have a responsibility to carry out the messages; we cannot weigh everything commercially. During the production of *One Little Finger*, we had a few investors initially who backed out as they did not like the idea of casting these children with disabilities. They insisted on hiring only commercial actors. I refused to do that as it defeats our purpose of showing 'ability in disability'.

Many Assamese youngsters are getting into filmmaking now. What do you have to say about this trend?

It is really great to revive our Assamese film and mobile theatre industry. In fact, the trend in cinema we're experiencing isn't just a revival of classic stories but new forms and ideas taking shape. We want more realistic stories depicting kids we've never seen, conveying stories of our rich culture, engaging diversity, arranging it all in shapes and structures we've never contemplated. One good song, one good movie, one good book, one good speech can transform a whole society, unite us all. We need more of this from younger filmmakers, singers, teachers, writers, journalists, and parents.

