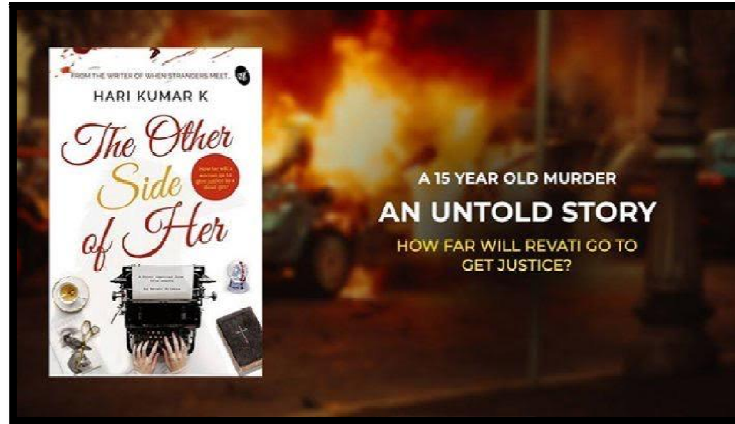


THE 'BHRAM' INTERVIEW

K. HARIKUMAR

Interviewed by Anirban Bhattacharya for
www.there will betime.com



1. What attracted you to the genre of psychological thriller? Are the Indian audiences prepared for this genre yet?

I have felt that *most* of the *strange* phenomenon can be attributed to the whimsies of the mind. Also, I have been a horror buff ever since I can remember. Club the two and one naturally develops a taste for psychological horror/thriller.

Indian audience is a broad term. People liked *Yakshi* in 1968 and *Ratchasan* in 2018, but yes, these movies pertain to a niche audience.

I would not blame the audience though. They thrive on what is fed to them.

If suddenly, Bollywood starts producing psycho-stuff then initially they might bomb but eventually the audience will start liking them and develop a taste (again, it is all in the mind). However, nobody wants to take a risk (since money is involved).

Personally, I love psychological thrillers and most of those (that I loved) didn't even last for week in the theatre (so, the dilemma is understandable).

Thankfully, we have web-platforms now that are exploring horror and thriller like never before (in India).

2. Structurally, for a psychological thriller, how do you retain audience interest? What are the narrative techniques? Maybe you can refer to the techniques used in *Bhram*?

First and foremost, you need to have characters that are fighting against their inner demons even before she proceeds towards her actual conflict in the story.

For example, Kalki's character, Alisha Khanna (Revati Krishna) is recovering from an accident in which she lost her unborn baby and husband.

This would probably be one of the most horrific situations to put a person; audience would also agree. Similarly, you have a priest who is flagellating himself. But why?

It is up to us how we need audience's reactions to be- one of sympathy or suspicion. Feed what you need. You can use these characters as a red herring or such literary device. It is important to seed the minutest of the details in the exposition.

Once you have such characters, you need narrative hooks that capture the audience right when the episode begins. For me, the cold open of *The Da Vinci Code* (Dan Brown's book as well as the Ron Howard movie) remains one of the best hooks in recent times.

Originally, our idea was to start the first episode with a murder in the woods but eventually we went with a car crash. A cliff-hanger for every episode is very much preferred.

3. When the script was developed for the feature – what was the seed of the idea?

Idea was noble – a woman who starts getting visions of a murder and even her husband thinks that she's lost her mind. It was her fight to prove that she was not crazy.



Sangeeth Sivan & K Harikumar on the sets of *Bhram*

4. In general – when you are adapting a novella for a web series – what are the steps involved? Do you break it down into episodes first? How do you go about it?

Now that I have done that, I would stick to breaking down the story into individual episodes, I mean, just the hooks.

While writing a book, I follow this rule; Decide the beginning and the end first.

I apply this to everything I write, including the fifty short stories that I wrote in India's Most Haunted: Tales of Terrifying Places.

It makes the path defined. The path taken seldom changes the *pre-determined* end.

When it comes to adapting a book to screen (for the web), we already have a set-story, you just have to choose breakpoints for each episode from the story, and then apply the rule all-over again (into each episode).

5. What was the purpose behind adding new characters to the storyline – say, for instance, the third friend from school, or the father of Yakub? Is it just to expand the story into a longer format – or they have a special purpose?

If Bhram were to be a feature film, then these characters and sub-plots wouldn't have mushroomed.

In my personal opinion- a book or a film is usually about the protagonist and we kind of stick to that character. A web series gives an opportunity to explore the character's universe.

Everyone (mostly) loved Baahubali – The Conclusion. The film was all about that character. However, a web series could explore the lives of the Mahishmati kingdom or a secondary character like Sivagami.

Having said that, the web series would also revolve around the protagonist and each of these characters should serve a purpose and help towards fulfilling the protagonist's goal/conflict in some way, otherwise it will be all over the place. If there is a gun in the first episode then it should be fired in the next (attributing this to Anton Chekhov).

Like Yaqub's father was there as the man who was drastically affected by the injustice met out to his son. However, his placement in a clichéd opening scene makes the mind believe that there is a ghost or maybe Alisha is going to a haunted house.

It is like, "Hey! Here is a cliché. I am telling you she is possessed, coz I saw it in that movie too". That is exactly how I want the audience to think when they watch the episode.

6. And how about the new plot twists – the 'Alfie' sub-plot with Meera, for instance. Does it serve the purpose of having a hook at the end of each episode?

There were many subplots; Alfie-Meera, Rawat-Dr Saini, Kritika-Sarah and there was even an exorcism!

However, we could only adapt a few in the final stuff. Like I mentioned in the previous answer, each sub-plot needs to have a purpose (some vaporized in post-production).

Having a hook at the end of each episode is an individual's choice. I try to put myself on a viewer's place objectively. Not all shows/stories follow rules, and we can always take the liberty to break them.

And yes, when you have an experienced filmmaker like Sangeeth Sivan (sir) helming the ship, you can definitely take liberties with more confidence.

ASIA'S BIGGEST PARANORMAL CONVENTION

SCARECON

BOOK LAUNCH

Tales of terrifying places

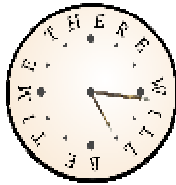
INDIA'S MOST HAUNTED
K. HARI KUMAR

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AUTHOR/SCREEN WRITER

LAUNCH BY
VIKRAM KHAKHAR
FILM PRODUCER
MAIN AUR CHARLES, DOBARA
SEE YOUR EVIL, ANJAAN
(UPCOMING WITH ARJUN RAMPAL)

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