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KAALA PAANI ACTOR
BREAKS THE BARRIER OF TYPECASTING

VIKAS KUMAR



TYPECASTING DOESN'T BOTHER ME: VIKAS KUMAR

kaala paani actor breaks the barrier of typecasting

As an actor, **Vikas Kumar** has done commendable work in films like Handover, Prithipal Singh, Parmanu, Hamid, Ajji, Dhamaka, apart from the much popular web series Aarya and the most recent Kaala Paani. Before this, Vikas has acted in TV shows like Powder, Khotey Sikkey and CID.

Apart from acting, he has also been Dialogue Coach to Katrina Kaif, John Abraham, Naseeruddin Shah, Nargis Fakhri, Kalki Koechlin, Vidya Balan, Jacqueline Fernandez, Kartik Aryan and Babil Khan among others.

This **EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW** by **CINEYATRA INDIA** is a sneak peek into the personal and professional journey of **VIKAS KUMAR**. To understand him better, our editor **RAVIRAAJ PAATEL** spoke to him.

WHO IS VIKAS KUMAR? WHERE HAS HE COME FROM, WHAT BROUGHT HIM HERE AND WHAT DOES HE DO?

I am an actor and dialogue coach and also turned producer three years ago. I come from Bihar Sharif, a small town around 72 kms from Patna.

I studied at Welham Boys' School in Dehra Dun. After finishing Class 12, I lived in Delhi for a bit where I was preparing for medical entrance exams. During my time in Delhi, I got interested in theatre. Since I was a fan of Shah Rukh Khan and Manoj Bajpai, I enrolled into a three month workshop conducted by their guru, Barry John. I acted in a few plays directed by Barry and by Aamir Raza Husain and after a few years, shifted to Mumbai to look for work in television and films.

I got my first big acting assignment in 2009. It was Yash Raj Films' first TV production, 'Powder'. Since then I have been a part of a few TV shows, films and web-series.

Before I started getting regular work as an actor, I had started doing projects as Dialogue Coach. I started in 2004 with a Hollywood film titled 'One Night With The King'. As work increased I formed a training firm called 'Strictly Speaking'. My wife, Raavi Sehgal, joined me, followed by a few actor friends. At Strictly Speaking, we try and offer training for everything related to speaking. While we coach actors on film projects, we've also worked with journalists, and are visiting consultants at Star Sports where we train commentators and presenters. We also groom winners at Miss India and help them prepare for International pageants as their Public Speaking Coach.

YOU ARE PART OF A BIG SERIES LIKE KAALA PAANI WHERE UNLIKE SOME OF YOUR EARLIER WORK, YOU AREN'T PLAYING A COP. HOW DO YOU FEEL COMING OUT OF TYPECASTING?

'Typecasting' doesn't bother me. If casting directors/filmmakers want to see me only as a cop, it's their hassle. If I get a call and the role (cop or otherwise) doesn't excite me, all I have to do is say 'No', and then wait for the right call...like it came with 'Kaala Paani'. The audition scenes were very well written, and also challenging to perform. The makers - Sameer Saxena, Amit Golani, Biswapati Sarkar, have done wonderful work in the past. I had no reason to say 'No'. Fortunately, the audition went well and I was on.

'Santosh Savla' - my character in Kaala Paani, is a once in a lifetime opportunity. I am extremely happy with the way our show and my performance have been received.

HOW IS KAALA PAANI DIFFERENT FROM YOUR EARLIER EXPERIENCES?

'Kaala Paani' is probably the bravest and most honest filmmaking I have been a part of. Right from scripting to casting to shooting - the makers have made choices based on whatever works best for their story and not keeping in mind any trend or saleability. Also, Sameer and Amit were very prepared in terms of the shots they wanted and the edit that would follow. They had a very good hold on the actors' performances.

For my part - I think 'Santosh Savla' is the most challenging part I have got to play till now. As a simpleton arriving in Andaman with his family for a holiday, the journey he goes through in fighting for his and his family's survival after tragedy strikes, is any actor's dream to portray on screen. And that arc - has to be among the best, at least in the web-series space...Let's just say, I got to do what actors don't get to do in 4-5 projects put together.

WITH KAALA PAANI, YOU HAVE PROVED THAT YOU ARE A VERSATILE ACTOR, HOPEFULLY IN THE FUTURE, DIFFERENT FILMMAKERS WILL TRY YOU IN DIFFERENT CHALLENGING ROLES?

I'm extremely happy with the appreciation I have received for Kaala Paani. I don't really work to prove anything to anyone...but yes, hopefully, casting directors will consider me for different kind of interesting and challenging projects. I would love to do something that's a little 'lighter' now. May be romance or comedy.



Vikas Kumar as Santosh Savla in the Netflix series Kaala Paani.

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Photo : Netflix
Clicked by: Anu Pattnaik

WHAT'S NEXT IN THE PIPELINE, IF YOU CARE TO SHARE?

An independent film called 'Uljhan', produced by Kartikeya Singh and directed by Ashish Pant. It's a Lucknow based story about an upper middle-class couple who accidentally run over a rickshaw driver with their car and must face the moral implications of their actions when the victim's younger brother shows up at their main door. 'Uljhan' has had a good festival run. Can't wait for it to stream on one of the OTT platforms.