

## **NAYA ZAMANA**

### Raising relevant issues

**A**FTER writing around 300 episodes of the first Indian daily soap *Shanti*, a few plays and game shows, Rajesh Kumar Singh is now scripting *Naya Zamana*, the serial which marks his directorial debut on the telly. Singh is also producing the serial which will commence on Zee from July 14, to be shown every Wednesday at 9 pm.

Starring Zarina Wahab, Kavita Kapoor, Amar Talwar, Sadia Siddique and Ravi Gosai among others, *Naya Zamana* attempts to take a perceptive look at the happenings around us. It dwells on issues that have come about due to the socio-cultural changes in contemporary society.

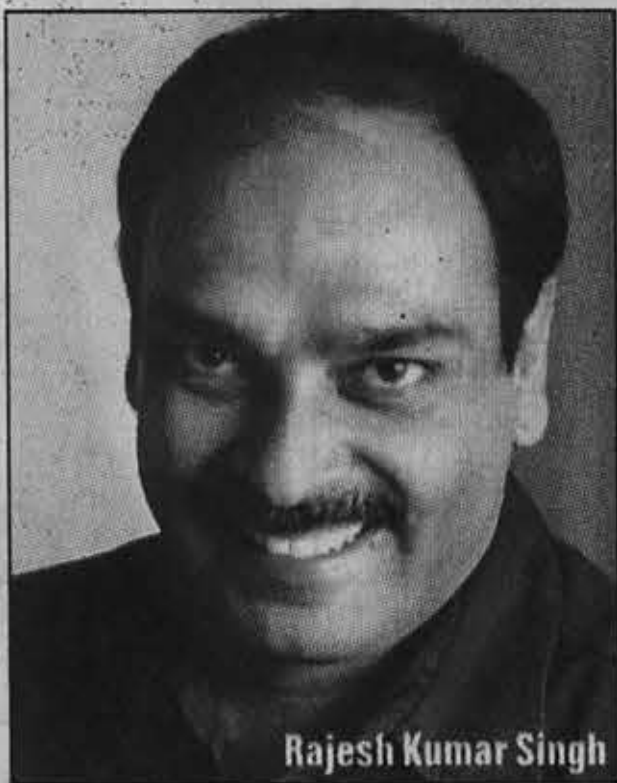
Acid attacks and nude modelling, for instance, are some of the burning topics the serial touches upon. "We will be addressing a cross-section of society, from slum-dwellers to prostitutes to student-teacher relationships and many others. The idea is to explore every aspect of an issue and find out what exactly is happening and whether there is a middle-path to every issue," explains Rajesh. He points out that the serial never tries to be judgmental nor does it provide any solutions. "What it does is create a kind of a debate which is lively and



Zarina Wahab

thought-provoking accompanied by high-voltage drama," claims Rajesh.

The idea was conceived by Rajesh, three and a half years ago. It was while watching the talk-shows that the idea first struck him. It occurred to him that "the host and the guests don't really participate in the show." "They mouth cliched things. And a person who is keenly involved with the subject feels very frustrated," says Rajesh. So he decided to take up topical issues and televise it as



Rajesh Kumar Singh

an "episodic TV series".

*Naya Zamana* comprises a family of Zarina Wahab, Amar Talwar and their two daughters. While Zarina plays a principal who's a strict disciplinarian, Amar Talwar is a lawyer with a liberal attitude. Then there's Kavita Kapoor who runs an ad agency.

The first episode unfolds with Kavita Kapoor creating an ad for a designer fashion wear using nude models. The incident is inspired from the Turf ad which had Milind Soman and Madhu Sapre posing with only a python wrapped around them.

Kavita's bold campaign upsets the art director who feels that the whole thing is morally wrong. But Kavita argues that she's doing just what the market needs. "Both seem to have valid points and it's left to the viewer to decide who's right and who's wrong," says Rajesh.

The underlying concept here is morality versus market. This concept will be brought out in the first 12 episodes under different stories and then move onto another concept. "For viewers, however, these will just be simple stories," says Rajesh who's hoping that he will strike a chord with them.

## **AGNICHAKRA**

### A crime show with a purpose

**L**AST year, Zee introduced a path-breaking show, *India's Most Wanted*, an investigative drama based on real life crimes. Not only did the show win the Screen award for the best investigative show, it has also succeeded in nabbing more than a dozen criminals with the help of the viewers. This year, the channel is launching *Agnichakra*

# ZEE'S new tales on the telly

which it claims is "not just a show, but a movement."

Produced by Vinta Nanda and directed by Anil Sharma and Selina Sheth, *Agnichakra* is another crime show, but with a definite purpose. Presented in the form of a docu-drama, the show deals with both solved and unsolved criminal cases.

But instead of merely dramatising the cases and presenting statistics, it probes into the reasons behind the occurrence of the crimes. Says Vinta Nanda, "The show's main purpose is to prevent and curtail crime by showing its futility. It will be a thought-provoking show. We want to bring about a social awareness through *Agnichakra*."

To work towards that end, besides the show, *Agnichakra*, Vinta Nanda and her team intend starting a parallel movement in the society by conducting a seminar at the end of every month in different cities. The first such seminar will be held in Delhi at the end of July. "We intend to bring together people representing the various machinery of



the state including police, psychiatrists, social workers, NGOs and the media to discuss how they could be resourceful in curbing crime," explains Vinta.

The first seminar will have Mahesh Bhatt as the moderator and the participants will include Raman Kumar, Zee TV, Kiran Bedi and Butterflies - an NGO working with children. The discussions and solutions at the seminar will be presented in the programme at the end of every episode.

The programme was conceived by Vinta and her team after she attended a seminar conducted by UNICEF. The seminar was a discussion enunciating how violence on television was affecting the children. "That triggered the thought of doing a crime show and attaching it to a movement. I feel television and films reflect the happenings in the society and vice versa. It's a vicious cycle and I don't agree that television or film is responsible for increasing violence," points out Vinta. To prove it, *Agnichakra*, telecast every Tuesday at 10 pm from July 6, finds out how demotivation and frustration leads youngsters to commit crime.

## **JANAM**

### Another sentimental saga

**A**FTER the tug-off war between *Teacher* (Zee) and *Thoda Hai Thode Ki Zaroorat Hai* (Sony) Ravi Rai is now set for another battle on the tube. Mercifully for him, this time Zee and Sony have decided to start his serials on different slots. While *Sparsh* will be aired every