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- RAJAN SHAHI,
PRODUCER

YEH RISHTA SUCCESS KEHLATA HAIN

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■ SWATI SONI

F He is a power-packed producer with TRP-ruling shows. A believer in clean, unadulterated entertainment, Rajan Shahi has given us serials such as *Hidai* and *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hain*.

With several other interesting projects in the pipeline, Shahi's struggle is a story worth telling. "Though my maternal grand-dad, Jayraji, was very popular in his days, I had a regular upbringing. I studied in Delhi and then moved to Mumbai for greener pastures. It was in Mumbai that my struggle began," smiles Shahi.

Shahi started off by assisting Gulzar, Lekh Tendon and Sanjay Khan. In 1994, he joined director/producer Ravi Rai and that was the turning point of his life. "I was actively involved in famous serials such as *Sailaaband Thoda Hai Thode Ki Jaroorat Hai*," says Shahi, adding, "I have done everything from being a spot boy to direction to production. There have been days when I've just eaten Maggi and slept on shooting floors. There have been days when I have shared one small apartment with several other strugglers as well."

Then, of course, followed a very successful stint: His first independent show as a director, *Dil Hai Ki Manta Nahi* in 1999, was a super-hit. This was followed by other directorial ventures such as *Jassi Jaisi Koi Nahi*, *Hamare Tumhare*, *Rishtey*, *Kareena Kareena*, *Reth*, *Saat Phere*, *Mantaa*, *Milee*, *Virasaat* and *Saathi Re*.

As times changed and the television industry started

beaming teary-negative family sitcoms, Shahi thought differently. "I thought, 'Why can't I make a serial which exudes positivity?'" A great believer in the Indian value system, Shahi explains his positivity. "India is a country where the young generation respects the older generation, where God plays an integral role and where one lives for another. I needed a show that reflects this positivity and lets people connect."

That's how his production house, Director's Kut, was born. He turned producer with *Sapna Babul Ka Hidai*, which won lots of accolades. The dream run continued with *Hidai* topping TRP charts for months and *Yeh Rishta...* running on even now.

Ask him why his serials target the second-tier cities and not urban India and he laughs. "Well, I work on what is in demand and that has reaped us benefits. But, yes, I am ready to do something urban, which connects with the metros."

Speak about being a resident of Lakhnawala for over a decade and he is all smiles. "This is heaven. I visited here with my grand-dad when I was 15 and I thought, 'I will have some connection here later'. And look, here I am. I enjoy the cosmopolitan feel of the place and of course, I love the food." But, above all, he grins, "What I really love about this area is that all festivals are celebrated here. People care for their vicinity, want to keep it clean and bond during festivals."

We wish him all the positivity he beams across, back to him.

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