

# Q&A: Meera Sharath Chandra

Founder and Chief Creative Officer at Tigress Tigress



Meera is the founder, Chief Executive Officer & Chief Creative Officer of Tigress Tigress, a digital-led integrated communication agency with operations in India and the UK.

Over the last 35 years she has been a consistent award winner in the USA, in Britain, in Hong Kong and in India.

She has been the Managing Director, the Creative Director and the National Creative Director of agencies in the UK and the sub-continent.

A keynote speaker at conferences and festivals around the world, it should come as no surprise to learn she is also a pro bono contributor to the WWF 'Save the Tiger' initiative.

Here Meera speaks about globalism and the value of international awards.

## Do you think awards are important?

Awards are hugely important. First, they add sheen to the agency image – they add a vital differentiator to agency credentials. Second, they are the glue – they bring great talent together around a great idea and help build a cohesive team. Third, as an individual, awards are validation – of your ability to be among the best in the world and to give your clients the most creatively effective solutions. At the agency, team and individual levels, awards are not just nice-to-win but need-to-win.

Personally, I have always found the adrenalin rush of winning to be my inspiration and impetus – it helps me set higher benchmarks for myself and stay ahead of the trend.

## Are potential clients in India at all impressed by awards won overseas?

### Don't they think shows like The Caples are irrelevant to their market and its unique conditions?

Clients are increasingly attending awards shows around the world. They are fairly well-versed with the various festivals and are quick to realise what they champion. Work that scores overseas proves that it has bettered global competition and won international acclaim. In a world where advocacy is playing such a powerful role, this adds to a brand's local storytelling as well.

To my mind, shows like The Caples are must-enters. They judge the work through the lens of their DNA, their unique slant – and this rewards the work for its excellence in that specific domain area. They also build immediate salience for the work, making it top-of-mind for the festivals that follow. If you win at The Caples, you can definitely fancy your chances of going on and winning more across the year.

**I can see why network agencies enter. They are competing amongst themselves.**

**But what's in a Caples Gold for an independent agency such as Tigress Tigress???**

Awards are great levellers. And a winner is a winner. It doesn't matter if you are the largest agency network or the smallest boutique outfit. All that matters is the power of the idea, the finesse of its execution, its disruptive energy to crack a marketing challenge and its guts to stand out among some awesome competitors.

Being an independent agency gives you a rare freedom – and leveraging that freedom makes for some refreshing, path-breaking ideation. Independent agencies have to be smarter, niftier, crazier to succeed. So do good ideas!

**What sort of work have you seen from the region that you think would do well in international awards shows?**

I have always believed that work that is true to its region is appreciated by the rest of the world. Challenges unique to a country, when showcased with a strong background and context, appeal instantly to a jury of international experts. Having been on the juries of Cannes Lions, One Show, Clio, New York Fest, Art Directors Club, D& D often multiple times, I know that we as jurors are looking for refreshing work tackling complex – and often highly local – issues.

Of late, purpose-led regional campaigns are scoring big because they are emblematic of a larger brand mission and a greater sense of corporate responsibility. It's great to see that positive change in direction, with companies and brands working towards the greater good.

**You have won plenty of metal yourself in your time. What is it that keeps you wanting to win more?**

Awards are what keep you on your toes and keep you current. You are only as good as your last campaign, as they say. With my specialisation in digital, it becomes even more of an imperative to remain at the cutting edge, exploring and exploding ideas and opportunities. You can never know it all – awards remind you to unlearn and relearn and that's what keeps me juiced up. Once you have started your winning streak and found yourself among the top talent of the world, it becomes a habit, a way of life. Having been judged and having been on juries, I have greater appreciation for the process of evaluation and immense belief in the power of an idea to effect change.

Right now, I am focussed on creating category niches and exploring multicultural marketing opportunities for global clients. Both of these demand that I stay on top of my game and give brands the best shot in the international marketplace. I also do a lot of cause-related work – and winning can help put these issues front and centre.

**You are a judge at The Caples Awards in London in May. They say they are a show that tries to recognise and reward work that actually sells stuff! What do you think they mean?**

**And is this a reminder of what advertising's primary purpose should be? Or is it a failure to recognise that the nature and role of advertising has changed completely?**

Yes, I am thrilled to be on The Caples jury this year. I look forward to seeing some amazing work. I love judging awards because the quality of work and the process of evaluation with my fellow-jurors always leaves me inspired and revitalised.

We live in an attention-challenged world. The old mantras of slowly building awareness and gradually increasing propensity-to-buy are history. Work needs to excite, entice and close the sale all at once. If the idea doesn't have the legs to do that, then it's not an idea for our times. The whole emphasis on brand engagement, hyper-customisation and immersive experiences is exactly for that reason – we need to cultivate audiences, deepen affinities, power-up relationships all in real-time. It's all about achieving exponential resonance and relevance, simultaneously and seamlessly. Newer audience sets

are emerging, newer touchpoints are being created, newer messaging mechanisms and consumption patterns are being adopted – today’s dialogue between brand and consumer is a well-curated, highly-nuanced, totally-accountable one. What better than a sales metric to say you’ve got your compelling storytelling bang on?