

Mita Noor: Transition from modelling to acting

MAHMUDA AFROZ

"I am as translucent and transparent as the finest glass. I have gained so much by being honest I don't see why I should be dishonest," says the attractive and outspoken Mita Noor. Having embarked on her career at a very young age, she has been involved with the media world for over 17 years now and has carved a niche for herself.

Mita's story began when she was a mere child going to the Bulbul Academy for her Bharatnatyam classes. Hailing from a very conservative family, her parents were against her exposure to the cultural world and so her sister used to pay for her dancing lessons. Soon she became a popular face in the local cultural festivals as well as an anchor.

"My big break came when I was asked to anchor the programme *Chhayachhondo* on BTV," reminisces Mita. In 1989 when she was still in school she got her first serial offer for Sheikh Riazuddin Badshah's *Shagor Shechar Shadh*. "My first commercial was for Hazeline Snow, though many people don't know that. I still think that was one of the best ads on BTV. I also carried off the role well. However there was a huge controversy associated with the ad. During those days non-Bangladeshi models were not allowed to do Bangladeshi ads and the government thought that I was a foreigner. They were all the more suspicious since the shooting was done in Bombay. They actually came to verify my identity and I had to show them my passport!" she adds.

While Mita's career was just taking off, she got married right after her SSC examinations. "That was a very difficult phase for me as no one approved of it. My in-laws were dead against my involvement in the media world. I had to ultimately quit." However in between she did a commercial on Sunlight battery,



which became a hit in the country. From then on she became known as the *Alo alo* girl.

Her struggle with her family and career went on for years. Ultimately she had to make a decision as she could not be equally successful in both. "While I didn't sacrifice my media career completely, I made sure that my family always came

"Earlier I used to select characters based on how long my role was, but now I select it based on the importance of the role in the serial. I also liked the character I played in the yet to be aired serial *Bijoy* (based on Sharat Chandra Chatterjee's novel *Datta*)"

In my career I know I was never at the top, I always considered myself a step behind.

Some of Mita's ongoing mega serials are *Bhoberhaat* and *Jog biyog* on Channel i, *Shona phul* on Banglavisión and *Anondo bedona gontobbo* on ATN Bangla. "I have also completed *Pathshala* and *Neelanjana*. I'm not sure when they will be aired," asserts Mita.

While Mita has her hands full with serials she also practices her first love, Bharatnatyam. She regularly anchors shows abroad and on request performs classical dance numbers there.

On the private channels that have mushroomed, Mita thinks there is nothing negative about the medium. "In our country one of the main problems is unemployment. The extra channels have helped generate employment not only for the artists but at the grassroots level as well. Another positive factor, the more the channels more the possibility of disseminating information and spreading awareness among the masses. I strongly believe that development depends on the ability of every citizen to carry out his or her responsibility and only then our leaders can coordinate our resources and represent us posi-

first. In my career I know I was never at the top, I always considered myself a step behind. But that never bothered me. I knew I had carved out a stable place, and that place rarely faltered. Overall I felt complete," recalls Mita.

The character Dholola in her ongoing mega serial *Bhoberhaat* is one of Mita's all time favourites.

'Antorotero Aaj Gaaner Bhubon': Bringing together two divas on mini screen

CULTURE DESK

The marathon Eid programmes were surely a boon for the audience as the private channels competed fiercely to woo viewers with a surfeit of entertainment, ranging from special TV plays, tele-films, musical shows to magazine programmes. While there was plenty of originality, the 24/7 bonanza meant that some programmes were bound to appear formulaic.

One programme that did stand apart from the rest was the much-awaited musical duet performance by Sabina Yasmin and

Runa Laila, titled *Antorotero Aaj Gaaner Bhubon* and aired on the second day of Eid on ntv.

The show was phenomenal and the fact that the artistes were performing together for the first time had the audience glued to the sets for the hour-long duration.

The programme was artfully compiled to include all-time golden hits and new compositions as well. The show reassured the audience that even though the artistes had shied away from the spotlight in recent times, their songs had not. One by one, the masterpieces ranging from the

romantic to the inspirational were revived. The renowned crystal-clear vocals, the delightful showmanship, the masterful execution all bore the vintage mark that have had the country humming along for over two decades.

"A lot of effort has been put into the production," said Runa. "A similar plan was taken by Arif Khan eight years back. But that didn't follow through," said Sabina.

The show was supported by a skilled film crew. The outdoor shoots as well as the grand interior setting was a fitting stage for a programme of such calibre. But

the cherry on top was definitely the two divas. The captivating songs were reminders of the tremendous talent that had drawn audiences to their work. It was an exquisite Eid gift to music lovers all around.

Runa and Sabina rendered 10 songs; of them five were composed recently by Alam Khan, Farid Ahmed, Mannan Mohammad, Si Tutul and the rest were popular songs. The duo sang four solos each and two pieces of duet.

The programme was directed by Arif Khan.



Sabina Yasmin



Runa Laila

Winners of Aawaz /Foorti quiz contest awarded



Prize winner Ela Quiah (5-L) seen with contestants and organisers

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Private radios are fast becoming popular amongst the younger generation. To establish synergy between these radio services and the listeners, Radio Foorti (a newly launched radio) and Aawaz (the local brand name of Digitania) jointly arranged a quiz contest. The prize-giving ceremony of the contest was held on November 1 at the Radio Foorti office.

The organisers pointed out that around one lakh people participated in the competition. Above 40,000 contestants sent the correct answers through sms.

The lucky winner Ella Quiah from Mohakhali, Dhaka won a PC with an LCD monitor. "It's a unique contest," said an elated Ella, the first Aawaz/Foorti sms contest winner. Aawaz and Radio Foorti also gave away attractive gifts along with Taka

1,000 worth of free talk time to the top three contestants who sent the highest number of sms'.

Anild Klokkerhaug, the head of Aawaz, asserted, "Aawaz is an sms contest facilitator working in partnership with all mobile operators. Aawaz promises to bring exciting new contests to its registered users every month. And as both the newly inaugurated private radio services as well as mobiles are popular amongst the younger generation, we are trying to create new opportunities connecting mobile service and radio service."

Anild further said that thousands of users are now registered in the Aawaz community. Aawaz will introduce more exciting sms services to its registered users soon. Anyone with a mobile phone can register by sending username, gender and area to 5455.

Photography exhibition Framing Bangladesh-Russia relationship anew

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

To mark the 35th anniversary of Russian-Bangladesh diplomatic relations, a photography exhibition titled 'President of the Russian Federation Vladimir V Putin' is being held at Russian Centre of Science and Culture in Dhaka.

The event is more than just a photography exhibition and touches on many significant events of Russian history. These portray the historical documents of Putin's life and times.

A total of 48 photographs are on

display at the exhibition. Among them are photographs of Putin with his wife Lyudmila Putina in front of the Taj Mahal, with Putin signing up on a monument dedicated to the memory of the victims of the September 11 terrorist attack on World Trade Centre, New York. Others show Putin taking the presidential oath, at the National Literature and Folklore Festival, speaking at a victory day programme and at a pottery workshop.

The exhibition will remain open for visitors till November 15.



A photograph of Vladimir V Putin (R) at the exhibition

Folk melodies Tunes from Rajasthan

ELITA KARIM

The Langas and the Mangniyars, two ancient families residing in the deserts of Rajasthan, claim ancestral lineage with the Rajputs and the Sindh Sipahis. Dressed in traditional kurta-pajama and colourful turbans, these people look like any other desert inhabitants; farming, rearing cattle and depending on the occasional rainfalls.

However, there is much more to the Langas and Mangniyars. They are famous for their Rajasthani folk music and their centuries-old traditional instruments. Besides India, they have also achieved international acclaim, travelling to the Americas, parts of Europe and also countries in Asia. Recently, they came to Dhaka to perform at a wedding where they stunned the audience with their rich music and heart-warming melody.

The group which came to Dhaka had Anwar Khan Mangniyar and Bundu Khan Langa on vocals, Ghewar Khan Mangniyar on the *khamaicha*, Firoz Khan on the *dholak* and Khete Khan on the *khadtal*. The *khamaicha* is a traditional Rajasthani instrument, which looks a lot like a smaller version of a *sarangi*. The instrument that had everyone tapping their feet along was the *khadtal*. This consists of a pair of slender teaks, which produces a 'clicking' noise, wood against wood. It would take a very strong sense of rhythm and self-composure to actually play this instrument keeping up with the music. Khete Khan amazed the audience with his feats on this instrument, creating an animated image, moving his body along to the rhythmic sounds created by the *khadtal*.

The song that they usually start off with, especially during weddings or any foreign gathering is *Kesariya balam, aani, padharo mare des mein*. A very famous folk song, rendered all across Rajasthan, this is a welcoming item where the century-old rituals



Colourfully attired performers

and traditions blend together. The aim is to welcome a new bride to her new home or foreign guests to the land. This song also speaks of how little they might have to offer to the guests, but with their innate love and care make their lives as beautiful as possible.

Another number that is very famous, even amongst many foreign music lovers, is *Nimbooda*. A fast-paced song, replete with the *dholak* and the rhythmic *khadtal*, this song is about a pregnant lady who asks her husband to bring back souvenirs from the lands that he will visit outside Rajasthan. She asks for ornaments, stones, colourful shawls and many more knick-knacks from

the far away lands. The husband laughs and says that he is just going for a stroll outside in the garden. The wife then asks for a *nimbooda* (lemon) as a souvenir.

The Langas and the Mangniyars have colour in their music. Singing about the joys and woes of both life and death, their melodies carry the poignant silence of an old mother waiting for her son to return from war. Other melodies tell the tales of happiness at the birth of a newborn. These melodies conjure up beautiful and diverse images for attentive listeners.

Around the globe

Colourful 'Day of the Dead' festival in Mexico



A decorated altar to celebrate 'Dia de los Muertos'

The Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos, Día de los Difuntos or

Día de Muertos in Spanish) is an ancient Aztec celebration of the memory of deceased ancestors that is celebrated on November 1 (All Saints' Day) and November 2 (All Souls' Day).

The holiday is especially popular in Mexico where it is a national holiday, and is celebrated in the Philippines, in Mexican-American communities in the United States, and to a lesser extent, in other Latin American countries. It is a public holiday in Brazil, where many Brazilians celebrate it by visiting cemeteries and churches, bringing flowers, lighting candles and praying.

Though the subject matter may be considered morbid by many cultures, Mexicans celebrate the Day of the Dead joyfully, and though it occurs at the same time as Halloween, All Saints' Day and All Souls Day, the traditional mood is much brighter with emphasis on celebrating and honouring the lives of the deceased, and celebrating the continuation of life; the belief is not that death is the end, but rather the beginning of a new stage in life.

The origins of the Day of the Dead celebrations in Mexico can be traced back to the indigenous peoples of the area, such as the Aztec, Maya, Purhépecha, Nahuatl, and Totonac. Rituals celebrating the lives of ancestors have been observed by these civilisations for at least the last 3000 years.

Plans for the festival are made throughout the year, including gathering the goods to be offered to the dead. During the period of October 31 and November 2, families usually clean and decorate the graves. Most visit the cemeteries where their loved ones are buried and decorate their graves with *ofrendas*, or offerings, which often include orange marigold called *Fior de Muerto*, Spanish for 'flower of the dead' which are thought to attract souls of the dead to the offerings.

Toys are brought for dead children (*los angelitos*, or little angels), and bottles of tequila, mezcal, pulque or atole for adults. Families will also offer trinkets or the deceased's favourite candies on the grave. *Ofrendas* are also put in homes, usually with foods such as candied pumpkin and *pan de muerto* or sugar skulls. Some people believe the spirits of the dead eat the "spiritual essence" of the *ofrenda* food. The pillows and blankets are left out so that the deceased can rest after their long journey. In some parts of Mexico, such as the towns of Mixquic, Pátzcuaro and Janitzio, people spend all night beside the graves of their relatives.

A common symbol of the holiday is the skull (colloquially called *calavera*), which celebrants represent in masks, called *calacas* (colloquial term for 'skeleton'), and foods such as Candy Skulls, which are inscribed with the name of the recipient on the forehead. Other holiday foods include *pan de muerto* (or 'bread of the dead'), a sweet egg bread made in various shapes, from plain rounds to skulls and rabbits often decorated with white frosting to look like twisted bones.

There is also dancing with colourful costumes, often with skull-shaped masks and devil masks in plazas or gardens in different towns. In some parts of the country, children in costumes roam the streets, asking passersby for a *calaverita*, a small gift of money; they don't knock on people's doors.

Compiled by Cultural Correspondent

Heckler strikes Streisand concert again



Barbra Streisand

The funny girl wasn't laughing.

Barbra Streisand had a drink lobbed at her last Monday after a mid-concert skit poking fun at President Bush.

Streisand's publicist, Dick Guttman, said a paper cup filled with some sort of liquid was thrown on stage but apparently did not hit Streisand during her second performance in the Fort Lauderdale suburb.

Streisand's manager said she shrugged off the incident and responded to the angry audience member by saying: "It's a free country and they're entitled to express their opinion."

It's at least the third time the skit, which includes a George W Bush impersonator, has angered Streisand's audience. A heckler targeted her at the Philadelphia opening of her 20-city comeback tour and Streisand made headlines with her response to a jeerer at Madison Square Garden last month.

"This skit has been so massively covered by media, it's impossible that it still could come as a surprise to any of the Bush admirers who bought tickets," Streisand's manager said.

Despite the controversy the skit would remain a part of the tour. Streisand, an outspoken liberal, is touring the country after a 12-year absence from the stage, offering fans a repertoire of her four decades of hits.

Source: Internet