

COVER STORY

Beauty with Brains



Zakiya Bari Mamo came into the showbiz industry through the 2006 edition of 'Lux Channel i Superstar', and since then, she has been a prominent figure in the industry. She made a name for herself by showcasing her talent in projects like 'Daruchini Dip', for which she even won a 'National Film Award'. In this interview with Rafi Hossain, she talks about the importance of education in her career, and why she feels hopeful about the new generation of actors.

Rafi Hossain: Welcome to *Uncensored* with Rafi Hossain. Today, we are joined by Zakiya Bari Mamo. Thank you for being here, Mamo. How are you spending your time nowadays?

Zakiya Bari Mamo: Thank you for having me, Rafi Bhai. It is difficult to stay well during quarantine, but I have found my own way to keep myself happy. I have been doing everything on my own time. I study, watch movies and work out, among other things. In all honesty, I am quite happy with how my life is going. Since we have never had to live during something like the pandemic, I think that this time is important in a way.

Rafi: Last time we spoke, you told me that you are doing a PhD. Did you complete the degree yet?

Mamo: I have not finished it yet. I completed the first part of it, and now, I need to get myself to complete it. I am eager to complete it, but I need to get over my laziness.

Rafi: Nowadays, there are not many people from the younger generation who want to complete a PhD. Why do you think that is?

Mamo: I think the reason varies from person to person, but from what I can understand, many people do not get to apply their education to their jobs. Many people take jobs completely different from the subject they studied. I think that could be a reason people lose interest in pursuing further education. I think I am very lucky in this as I get to utilise my education in my job.

Rafi: What do you think the Bangladeshi film industry will be like once this pandemic is over?

Mamo: I am hopeful about our industry. I think that the fact that we manage to make great projects even without much support shows how dedicated we are. The way we have planned and created our projects, I doubt that any other industry can even imagine doing it. After the pandemic ends, we need to adjust ourselves to a more different lifestyle, and then I think that our industry will have a change for the better.

Rafi: Do you think that our industry will ultimately shift to web platforms?

Mamo: The thing is, even though all news articles are available online, people still read newspapers. It is the same case with television. Television has its own structure, and I think that people will still watch it. I do not think there is any other film industry in the world where they make telefilms like us. They make series meant for TV, but we make one hour to ninety-minute-long dramas just for television. So, our television industry is unique. However, web platforms give us the scope to show our content to a bigger audience. By giving content to web platforms, we are advancing with the times. Web platforms seem like they are full of possibilities, especially since our industry is unique. Another thing that I am very hopeful about web platforms is that we will get more projects to work on. On top of that, we will also get many experimental storylines.

Rafi: Did studying in dramatics help you when you started acting?

Mamo: Many senior actors have said that you cannot act only if you just learn it. You need to have something in you to express yourself properly when you act. But, learning dramatics and studying different characters helped me differentiate between the characters I portrayed. However, if one is to act, it is most important that they have the natural

ability to act. If they do, they can easily bring it out and showcase it, and studying dramatics makes that easier. I think the reason I got this far is due to my passion for it. I immerse myself into the role and try to play it as well as I can.

Rafi: How did you decide to come into this industry?

Mamo: When I was very young, I used to always practise singing and dancing, so I was very interested in cultural activities. So, after I finished studying intermediate, I knew that I wanted to study in dramatics. At first, my father was hesitant about it as it was not certain that a degree in dramatics would guarantee me a way to earn a living. I had to pressure him a lot to let me study the subject I wanted to. One day, my father came and asked me what my plans for the future were. I told him that I would look for roles after I had finished my education. He then told me about how there was a competition called *Lux Channel i Superstar*, and if I won that competition, I would get to do a film. He told me that since I went



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

out of my way to study dramatics, I should try to go and win that contest. I told him that I did not think that I would win a beauty contest, but he still told me to go and try it anyways. I agreed to do it, and that was the start for me.

Rafi: When you registered for it, were you confident that you had a shot at winning?

Mamo: Whatever I do, I try to give it my everything. When I decided to register for the competition, I knew I had to try to win. I prepared as much as I could for the competition, so that I knew that even if I did not win, at least I tried my best. I also knew that even if I did not win, the experience I would gain from it might benefit me in the future.

Rafi: Unfortunately, we have to hear about a lot of exploitation done by people in the media. When facing exploitation like that, how did you deal with it, and what advice would you give upcoming actors regarding it?

Mamo: I think that while dealing with exploitation, the most important thing is to maintain the image. If I am not sure of what my goals are or if I am not passionate enough or if I am not sure of myself, I can get exploited by others. This is not just the case in our industry; it can happen anywhere. I think that those who are educated cannot be exploited as education helps them learn about proper values and gives them the bravery to stand up to whoever is trying to coerce them to do something. That is why I consider education very important. I think that in our society, a girl has to be more prepared to face things like this, so that she can stand up to it. I am already seeing that many new actors are prepared to stand up to it and they make me hopeful about the future of the industry.

Rafi: Are you interested to work with new actors?

Mamo: Definitely, I am eager to work with the new generation of actors. I feel that the new generation is bringing in newer and better stories which I would love to work with. As long as whoever I am working with is passionate about acting, I am more than happy to do it.

Rafi: From the new generation, who would you say is doing the best work?

Mamo: I think that there are a lot of talented actors from the new generation. Mehzabien Chowdhury has been doing a great job, so has Sabila Nur. I also really like the work of Naziba Basher. Irfan Sajjad is also a very good actor. I like the acting of Samrat and Farhan Ahmed Jovan. I think that these actors understand acting very well. I believe that the new directors who started very recently are all doing great projects. I really like the work of Rinku. I also love the work of Taneem Rahman Angshu and Abdullah Mohammad Saad. I am sure that there are many more amazing artists in the industry.

Rafi: Who are your favourite directors?

Mamo: I have a lot of directors with whom I enjoyed working with. I loved working with Mabrur Rashid Banna. He works in a very organised way. Faridur Reza Sagor is also an amazing director to work with. I never got to work with Ashfaque Nipun, but I would love to get the chance to work with him. I did one project with Adnan Al Rajeev, and I really enjoyed it. There are many other directors whose work I really enjoy.

Rafi: When picking roles, do you make sure that it does not affect your image?

Mamo: I think at times I do make sure to maintain my image as there are a lot of fans who only want to see me in a certain way. But, as an actor, I have to explore and do different types of roles. Actors have to do different kinds of roles to find happiness, so I think fans should understand that. Personally, I do not think that my fan base wants me to do only one kind of role. I think they like me as an actor overall. This lets me take on challenging roles, and my audience appreciates that. I am very thankful to my fans for that.

Rafi: Do you have any final message for the readers?

Mamo: I hope all of you will stay well in these uncertain times. Times are hard for all of us, and we will all worry, but I would ask all of you to not focus on the bad sides and learn to be okay. All of us need to stay brave and learn to stay happy in all situations.

Ridwan Intisaar Mahbub

GRAPE VINE

KONA'S new project



Singer Kona has been house-ridden for the past five months because of the ongoing pandemic, but she has still managed to keep herself busy. During this time, she has sung a few songs to raise awareness regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. Recently, she also lent her voice to the song *Bhalobashar Gaan* for the play, titled *Shamidhyar Golpo*. The lyrics of the song have been written by NI Bulbul, and it has been produced and composed by Shaan. Kona said, "I am really excited to lend my voice to a song after five months. I have been eagerly waiting to get back into work. It feels good to finally sing in a studio after a long time."

Shreya Shomoyeeta

The film of a different kind

Shakib Khan will be seen sharing the screen with Mahiya Mahi and Orchita Sporshia in the new film *Nabab LLB*, directed by Anonno Mamun. The shooting of the film will start mid-September of 2020. A new app will be launched with this film. The film is also set to be released in theatres. The director said, "Everything about this film is unique. The storyline is completely different from anything you've ever seen before in other Bengali films. I would say that this film is of international standards. I think it will make history." *Nabab LLB* is being produced under the banner of *Celebrity Production*.

Amina Hossain



POPCORN HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some binge worthy movie and series you can spend your time watching while you stay at home social distancing, keeping yourself, as well as others, safe.



Raat Akeli Hai

Raat Akeli Hai is an Indian crime drama film on Netflix. It has been directed by Honey Trehan, produced by Abhishek Chaubey and Ronnie Screwvala, and stars Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Radhika Apte and Shweta Tripathi, among others. The film tells the story of a cop who, while investigating a murder, begins discovering many secrets of the victim's family. It was initially released on July 31, 2020.

GRACEFUL FRIENDS

Graceful Friends is a South Korean mystery drama television series. It has been directed by Song Hyun-wook, produced under the banner of *Studio & NEW, JCN, and JTBC Studios*, and stars

Yoo Jun-sang, Song Yoon-ah, and Bae Soo-bin, among others. It tells the story of twenty friends whose lives are changed after a murder takes place in their town. It was first aired on July 10, 2020.



LOVE, VICTOR



Love, Victor is a teen drama web television series on Hulu. It has been created by Isaac Aptaker and Elizabeth Berger, produced by Nick Robinson and Shawn Wilt, under the banner of *20th Century Fox Television*, among others, with Michael Cimino in the lead. It has been based on the book, *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli, and the movie *Love, Simon*, which was also inspired from the same book. The series follows the journey of a student at a new school, telling the story of his troubles at home to the struggle with his sexual orientation. It was released on June 17, 2020.

Shreya Shomoyeeta