

COVER STORY

A BONDING OF MUSIC AND LOVE

One of Bangladesh's revered musician, composer and singer, Shayan Chowdhury Arnob has always mesmerized his audience with his magical numbers. His wife, Sunidhi Nayak is a professional Rabindra Sangeet singer, who has also made a name for herself in the hearts of Bangladeshi audience with her rendition of Rabindra Sangeets. On October, the singers got married amidst close family members and currently the couple is in Bangladesh. In this interview with Rafi Hossain, the popular musical duo shares their love story and their connection and devotion to music.

Rafi Hossain: Welcome to *Uncensored* with Rafi Hossain. We have lost our dearly beloved Aly Zaker recently, and we want to dedicate this episode to him. For our discussion today, we have with us our dearly loved Arnob with his lovely wife and our new guest Sunidhi. A warm welcome to you both. Tell us about how you met.

Sunidhi Nayak: Our first meeting was actually quite dramatic. Arnob first saw me when I was performing at an event for my university. When I got down from the stage, he patted me on the back and praised my singing. Back then, I didn't even recognise him, or know that the guitar that I had been singing to was actually his. I had heard one of his songs before, but that was when he had long hair (laughs). **Shayan Chowdhury Arnob:** She claims that she did not know me back then, but she did admit later that she actually did!

Rafi Hossain: How did you get to know each other better?

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob: Throughout my whole life, I never found the interest to cook. After meeting Sunidhi, especially during this lockdown, she cooked me many dishes, all of which were delicious. I also learnt to cook quite a few dishes from her during this period as well.

Sunidhi Nayak: The reason behind this is that I'm actually a bit of a perfectionist. I have been living on my own in Shantiniketan from a very young age, and if I did not enjoy the food from the hostel, I refused to eat it. So, I learnt the ropes of cooking by myself, and figured out what tasted good over the years.

Rafi Hossain: How are things going on the work front for you both?

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob: Sunidhi has been focusing on her album recently. I have been working on my own album and a few other projects as well, which I hope to give the audience more information about very soon. It has been amazing to work near Sunidhi as she understands what I'm envisioning and provides suggestions, which I really appreciate.

Rafi Hossain: When did you guys decide to get married?

Sunidhi Nayak: We actually got to know each other more as Arnob was stuck in Shantiniketan during the lockdown. In my life, only a few people have been able to truly understand me, and Arnob is one of them. He figures out the things that bother me, and tries to understand why that is or avoid doing them. He is also a person of music, which makes it easier as well.

Rafi Hossain: How would you critique Arnob's songs, Sunidhi?

Sunidhi Nayak: I enjoyed listening to his songs once we got to know each other better. We come from the same university, but he is from the art department and I am from the music



department. This actually makes me a little jealous sometimes as well. I would say it's a god gifted talent as he can do both art and music so well.

Rafi Hossain: Arnob, tell us something about Sunidhi.

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob: She's a very organised person. She also likes to be by herself a lot, which I really respect. I used to do that back when I was very young, but now I have got into a habit of going out frequently. Sunidhi, on the other hand, likes her own company to do things she enjoys. She only has a few friends whom she holds dear, and in Shantiniketan, my friends have become her friends now.

Rafi Hossain: Sunidhi, why did you choose

Shantiniketan and Rabindra sangeet specifically?

Sunidhi Nayak: I lived in Asansol for most of my life. My parents, especially my father, love music, and it was through their interest and encouragement that I am where I am today. When I was preparing for university, I knew that I wanted to study music, but I hadn't set my mind on Bishwa-Bharati specifically. My father actually decided to enroll me there. I grew up in an industrial area, so what struck out to me about Shantiniketan at first glance was how at one with nature it was. As I started studying there, I loved being independent for the first time in my life, and I got to know myself more. I would have a lot of time to myself to reflect on music and see it in a different light and understand it deeply. I used to sing a lot of classical music growing up, but once again, it was in Shantiniketan where I got to learn Rabindra Sangeet. I would say that the environment it provides is why people grow attached to it and grow from it. Moreover, there aren't a lot of things to do there, such as

shopping or going out. There are always people around you practising some kind of art form, be it art, music, or something else.

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob: I just want to add that it is in Shantiniketan where I found my passion for art. I used to do it routinely back then, which is a practice I got detached from for a long time. This lockdown gave me the opportunity to practise and get back into art again, and to spend more time doing it.

Rafi Hossain: Tell us about your experience coming to Dhaka.

Sunidhi Nayak: After my masters, I was almost completely prepared to move abroad for my PhD. So, moving to Dhaka has been quite a big change. This year overall has been mentally taxing for me. My mother got diagnosed with cancer, and she passed away recently. I am still recovering from everything.

Rafi Hossain: Tell us more about how you view Rabindra Sangeet.

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob: I have been

learning Rabindra Sangeet from a young age. I may not have understood it well back then, but as I grew up and educated myself on music, I reflected back on the songs and teachings that were already in me. I would say that is how I got into Rabindra Sangeet. Now, however, I try to create a balance between Rabindra Sangeet and Lalon Sangeet. All songs from Rabindranath Tagore are not compatible with my voice. Moreover, Lalon Sangeet is not just music, but a way of life which I do not want to disassociate from. So, I try to sing a lot of folk music as well.

Rafi Hossain: Sunidhi, since you have thoroughly learnt Rabindra Sangeet, could you tell us how you feel about experimenting with it? Why do you think some musicians fail in this practice?

Sunidhi Nayak: I believe if you understand the music and keep the notations and such in place, there is nothing wrong with presenting it in a new way. But, it is important to truly understand it, and then find a way to express what you have learnt from it. I think many musicians fail to grasp that, which might be why they don't succeed in their endeavour.

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob: Some people do research and figure out ways to express Rabindra Sangeet in their own unique way. Others often have their perspective reflected in their song, be it consciously or subconsciously.

Rafi Hossain: Arnob, do you want other people to sing your songs?

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob: Yes, I do. I also love it since I haven't learnt music the way many others, like Sunidhi, have. She even steals my songs sometimes.

Sunidhi Nayak: That is completely untrue! He, himself, asked me to give voice to one of his songs which we decided to record in our house impromptu.

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob: We even opened YouTube channels to have a friendly competition and see who can appeal more to the audience. I lost miserably because her song, *O Je Mane Na Mana*, got over 4 million views.

Rafi Hossain: On a different note, I want to ask how do you both feel about children?

Sunidhi Nayak: We haven't thought about children yet, as we are still settling into our marriage. Actually, we haven't even had a proper wedding yet. We are officially married, but since my mother has passed this year, we are waiting until next year for the wedding ceremonies to take place. We plan to hold the events in Shantiniketan as it is a place we both hold very close to our heart.

Rafi Hossain: I am really glad to see that you are being accepted and loved by everyone here. You both have all our blessings and well wishes. Do you have any message for the audience today?

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob: Thank you for having us here. All the love and prayers are truly appreciated.

Sunidhi Nayak: People have given me a lot of love, and I want to express my gratitude for it. I wish everyone well, and I hope everyone is staying safe. Once again, thank you so much for having us.

Shreya Shomoyeeta

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Shironamhin's double win

Setting a new record, popular Bangladeshi band *Shironamhin* won the *Oikko Channel 1 Music Awards 2020* for the second time in a row. Recently, on the 15th edition of *Oikko Channel 1 Music Awards 2020* powered by *Evaly*, the band was handed over the prestigious accolade, under the category of *Best Band* for their immensely popular track *Ei Obelay*. Founding member and bassist of *Shironamhin*, Ziaur Rahman Zia said, "It is always wonderful to receive recognition for your hard work, especially when there is very little of such given to the bands and band music in this country. My gratitude goes to *Oikko* and *Channel 1* for supporting our efforts." Making the win more special, *Shironamhin* won another award on the same night. The award went to Shafiqul Islam for the category *Best Sound Engineer* for *Ei Obelay*.

Shakib Khan on an online platform

To celebrate the victory day of Bangladesh, *Nabab LL.B* was released on the OTT platform *iTheater*. The film starred Shakib Khan, Mahiya Mahi and Sporshia, among others, and it was directed by Anonno Mamun. This movie was the first time a film with Shakib Khan was released only on an online platform and not a cinema hall. Shakib said, "The storyline is very important in the film. With crimes against women increasing at an alarming rate, we made this film to raise awareness about such issues." The film's director, Anonno Mamun, said, "From all the movies I have directed, this might be the best one yet."

Ridwan Intisaar Mahub



OYSHEE wins award

For the first time in her career, Oyshee is set to receive a *National Film Award* for the category *Best Singer*. For the film *Maya: The Lost Mother*, which was directed by Masud Pathik, Oyshee sang a song called *Mayare*, which was written by the director of the film, and given tune to by Emon Chowdhury. Oyshee said, "I'm at a loss for words thinking about how I am receiving such a prestigious award. When we first released *Mayare*, we received a lot of praise. I had a lot of people come and tell me that they loved the song. But, I never would have thought that I would win a *National Film Award* for this song. I'm very grateful to my teachers, family and fans for helping me come so far."

Ridwan Intisaar Mahub