

Heart to heart with Kanak and Mainul

MAHMUDA AFROZ

Was it innocent puppy love at first sight?

Mainul: Oh no!! She was too young even for puppy love. However, I must admit I was spell-bound with her voice from day one and chose her among hundreds to do the solo performance.

Kanak: I didn't even know what love was at that point.

So were you in touch with each other regularly?

Mainul: After the programme I didn't see her for several years. I had gone abroad and on my return I saw her one day with her parents at Malibagh. I had last seen her in a frock and now she was wearing a salwar kameez. However, I did notice she was absent from the *Notun Kuri* scene and asked why. I came to know about the prevalent favouritism and partiality. Recalling Kanak's vocal skills and talent, I took it as a challenge to get her the position she deserved.

Then?

Kanak: My parents trusted him completely. He used to come to our house regularly. There was a lot of gossip as we lived in conservative times. However, my parents liked him, so they thought of getting us married.

Mainul: Many people thought we were too young. Kanak had just passed her SSC exams. We were little known and financially strained. But we still went for it. It was a struggle no doubt, both financially and socially. We were criticised from all quarters, including friends and the media. But we have been married for 23 years now, are well established and have a college going son and a lovely daughter. We could have not been happier.

What is so special about him/her?

Mainul: The list is endless. She has the most amazing voice, is a talented writer, a great designer and does excellent sewing. Also she is an expert make up artist, the world's best cook, a great home-maker, an excellent mother and



Kanak Chapa met Mainul Islam Khan at a tender age when she had gone to audition for the *Notun Kuri* programme. He was an assistant music director for the junior section and was just 18. In the course of a trip down memory lane, the happily married couple shares their story with *The Daily Star*

more. Plus there is this simplicity and vulnerability about her.

Kanak: Many people have criticised Mainul because he is outspoken. But I turned a deaf ear and stuck with my husband. What I love most about him is that he is completely unaware of his own

goodness. Plus he is extremely dependable.

What about the put offs?

Mainul: There is almost nothing that puts me off about her. But if you insist, the only thing I can say is that she sleeps late, reading tons of magazines and wakes up even

later. As she is a great make up artist, often we have throngs of women lining up to her for make overs. This does get on my nerves at times.

Kanak: As much as I love his dependability, at times he makes me feel non-existent. All the major

decisions in this house are made by him, I feel like an invisible breeze at times.

In this relationship who has sacrificed more?

Kanak: On a professional level no doubt it's Mainul. He spent a significant amount of time pushing my career when he could have focused on his solo career. He never let me travel alone. The sacrifice is unimaginable.

But on a personal level I have had to sacrifice a lot as well. In a relationship in which two people are supposed to meet half way, I have always met him the complete way. He takes me for granted.

Mainul: Many say I have sacrificed my career for Kanak. Maybe I have but I wouldn't call it a sacrifice. Her father had given her hand to me and said "I have raised her to this point, please take her further" and I had promised I would. I wanted to establish her, I took it as a challenge and I have accomplished it. If I was not there at every step, Kanak Chapa might not have been today's "Kanak Chapa".

Everything said and done how would you define each other?

Mainul: She is simple at heart and never questions my decisions.

Kanak: He is like a piece of puzzle that I can never solve.

What is in stock for you both?

Mainul: On a professional level Kanak is bringing out her 24th album featuring popular songs of yesteryears titled *Padma pata*. It will be released on Valentine's Day under the Gungcheel production house and I am the music director. On the same day Trishita (of *Closeup 1* fame) is bringing out a new album with original songs. Once again it is under the Gungcheel banner and I've worked as the music director and composer.

Kanak: On a personal level we have never been an overly ambitious couple. We have taken each step as it has come. And that's why we are happy today.

In Conversation Amitabh Reza: Ad-maker with an eye on filmdom

ERSHAD KAMOL

Many a TV viewer watches catchy commercials of corporate giants such as Grameen Phone, Banglalink, Citycell, Toshiba, Labaid and Apollo Hospital. However, a sizeable section does not know the name behind these TV ads. That's the story of Amitabh Reza, director of these commercials. So far he has directed about 400 ads, of which Banglalink com-

Pune, India I developed a passion for filmmaking. However, as I did not get any producer for films at the initial stage of my career, I decided to dedicate my talent to ad making. And it's challenging and remunerative," says Reza.

Do the TV commercials have a social undertone? Reza replies, "There is no room for ethics in the world of commercials. One should know that the aim of the commercials is to sell commodities. The only responsibility of an ad maker is

single episode plays and one mega serial. Says Reza in explanation, "As TV plays make me tick, I like to take my time over them. In fact, one can get the taste of cinema in my work and this is my unique selling proposition. This is also applicable to my commercials."

On his future, Reza asserts that he plans to venture into filmdom. To quote him, "My ultimate target is filmmaking. I've already got producers and I'm working on three



mercial titled *Oi din ki aar achhe* has been nominated for Global Mobile Award-2007 in 'Making Difference in People's Life' category. Earlier his commercial titled *Grameen phone Ekushey February*, *grameen phone bhasha andolon* bagged a prestigious award in Mumbai.

"Though I'm making many TV commercials these days, I'm basically a filmmaker. While studying economics in

to present the commercials interestingly to the viewers."

Reza asserts commercials are merely his bread and butter. But he makes TV plays in pursuit of his passion.

On his return from Pune, he first made two single episode plays—*Hawa Ghar* and *Apekkhay brishti arekti goldfish-er opomniyu* for BTV and Ekushey TV respectively. Since then he has made only five

scripts. And my target viewers will be the masses."

Reza expresses the hope that better times are in store for the Bangladesh film industry and there is greater teamwork in the future. He wants that each and everybody should work dedicatedly to achieve the goal. "I believe that the need of the hour is a film institution," says Reza.

CHANNEL CLICK

Subarna, Faridee in a special TV play 'Rodela Bikel'

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Rodela Bike is a single-episode TV play based on the life and times of an aging man and woman. The play is an adaptation of the story titled *A Sunny Morning* by Sera Fin and Joaquin Alvarez Quintero.

One sunny afternoon former lovers Hyder Ali (Humayun Faridee) and Gulnagar (Subarna Mustafa) meet at a park by coincidence. Their spontaneous discussion reveals the depth of their mutual love. At the same time they delve into the unrevealed past of their ancestors.

Popular actors Humayun Faridee and Subarna Mustafa play the central characters in the play. Directed by Shahiduzzaman Selim, the play is scheduled to go on ATN Bangla on Valentine's Day.



Faridee and Subarna in the play

Aparna Sen on tonight's 'Ami Tumi R...'

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

TV show *Ami Tumi R...* will be aired tonight at 8:05 pm on Rtv. Tonight's guest is Aparna Sen, the highly acclaimed Bengali film director and actress. She has been honoured with numerous awards including the prestigious Padmashree Award by the President of India in 1986 for her contribution to Indian cinema, the Satyajit Ray Memorial Millennium Award by the Rotary Club and the Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award by the Cine Central Film Society.

On the show, Aparna speaks about her cinematic voyage and her visit to Bangladesh. Directed by Korovi Mizan the show is hosted by Nima Rahman.



Aparna (R) talks to the host of the show, Nima Rahman

'Aainar Shamney Live' on ATN Bangla

CULTURAL CORRESPONDENT

Aainar Shamney, a live talk show, currently runs on ATN Bangla every Tuesday at 5:10pm. Hosted by Rupa Chakraborty, the show features a wide range of topics in the field of fashion, glamour, lifestyle, natural and alternative medicine, fitness and human potential along with a live and interactive session. Viewers can address their queries to guests through telephone. Mokaddem Babu is the director of the show.



Host of the show, Rupa Chakraborty

For the love of acting

Roundtable with six sensational thespians

Newsweek recently held its annual roundtable with six remarkable actors of 2006: Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett, Forest Whitaker, Helen Mirren, Penelope Cruz and Leonardo DiCaprio. The actors discussed their lives, craft, passions and fears. Pitt teased DiCaprio, who said he didn't appreciate being seen as "a piece of cute meat" after *Titanic*. "That you are," Pitt told him and Blanchett, who played Pitt's wife in *Babel*, took some friendly potshots at his work ethic. Excerpts:

What did your parents think when you told them you wanted to be an actor?

Helen Mirren: My parents were very against the idea, so I trained as a teacher for three years. I was a horrible, really bad teacher. I didn't become a professional actress until I was about 22.

Cate, is it true that your first acting job was as an extra in an Arabic boxing movie?

Cate Blanchett: I was at university studying fine arts, and I took a year off and went travelling. I had 2,500 Australian dollars, which is nothing, and I travelled for a year on that, so I ended up in places like a bunker in Istanbul with water dripping from the ceiling. Later, I was staying in this place in Cairo. I literally had no money, and some Scottish guy who was printing money and passports in the foyer said, "Do you want to earn five Egyptian dollars?" It was to be an extra in this boxing movie, so I said, "Sure." They had free falafel.

Penelope, in *Jamón, Jamón* you played the daughter of a prostitute, and you became a sensation at 17. What was that like?

Penelope Cruz: One day I came out on the street for a walk with my dad, and somebody screamed from a car, "I love you!" And a minute later, somebody else screamed a profanity (Laughter). Then I knew I was famous. I was 16 when that movie came out. I

didn't tell my parents, and I was hiding the script from them. But the movie was good, and it did a lot of good things for my career.

Forest, you've played roles that weren't actually written for black actors.

Forest Whitaker: I had moments where the directors were open enough to let me do

came out of the theatre completely fascinated. I started to become obsessed with Pedro, and I decided then to become an actress.

Blanchett: The only role I wanted to play was Lucy in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. I also wanted to be Gregory Peck.



Clockwise (Top-left): Brad Pitt, Forest Whitaker, Leonardo DiCaprio, Helen Mirren, Penelope Cruz and Cate Blanchett

that. In *Good Morning, Vietnam*, my character was written as a nerdy Jewish guy. In *The Color of Money*, the character was originally a Yuppie. I was a replacement. They fired somebody, and I flew in and auditioned. That's how it happened.

Which movie made you want to become an actor?

Cruz: Pedro Almodóvar's *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* I was 13 when I saw that movie. I

Pitt: I remember sneaking into *Saturday Night Fever*, and it had a profound effect on me (Laughter).

Mirren: The first movie that caught my imagination was *L'Avventura*, by Antonioni. Until then I had seen only Rock Hudson/Doris Day movies, and I wasn't into them very much.

Whitaker: When I was a kid there weren't a lot of black actors working in films, so acting

didn't seem like a possibility. The first actor I remember being struck by was Sidney Poitier.

Helen, do you know what Queen Elizabeth thinks of your portrayal of her? Has she seen it?

Mirren: I'm sure. Who could resist? Someone who is very close to the queen, a great historian named Robert Lacey, said he thinks she would have said, as the credits rolled, "That wasn't too bad, was it? I think I'll have a gin and tonic."

You're all rich. You're all famous. You've all received critical acclaim. Why work? Why keep acting?

DiCaprio: I love it. There's no other art form in the world that affects me more. There's something so gratifying about being burned into celluloid and knowing that I can look back later in life and have stories about those experiences.

Whitaker: It's magic. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that?

Cruz: It gives me so much happiness to know that I will never know everything about acting. That fear of not knowing will always be with me, no matter what happens.

Pitt: It's the love for the story, and a respect for the business. I want to be better in it, and better for it. I'm still striving for that. And I believe in the power of films.

Blanchett: Krzysztof Kieslowski said that filmmaking is a conversation with an audience. When you're connecting with other people, it's utterly thrilling. I feel alive when I'm acting. It's tragic, but true. I would die in a rehearsal room if I could.

Mirren: Money. (Laughter) And it's incredibly good fun. Of course, there are some intense artistic reasons, but I'm not going to go into them. So, yeah, fun and money.

Source: Newsweek

79th Academy Awards 'Water' faces tough competition

Deepa Mehta candidly admits she was more than surprised when she heard that her *Water*, a Canadian entry, has been selected as one of the five foreign film nominees, because the competition was intense.

And yet those who know that her Hollywood admirers include *Star Wars* creator George Lucas and producer Ashok Amritraj, and have read the glowing reviews the film received in publications like the *Los Angeles Times* were not surprised in the least.

Lucas, for whom Mehta directed segments of *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* over 12 years ago, published advertisements in *Variety* magazine when the shooting of *Water* was shut down in India because fundamentalist groups had perceived the film, which deals with the plight and exploitation of widows in Varanasi, to be anti-Hindu.

"It's been very fulfilling to have that kind of recognition," Mehta told the Canadian media, "and it's important for people who are marginalised in the world."

She said while awards and honours are always welcome, it was quite gratifying to her that a film about widow exploitation and the Gandhian quest for a better world resonated with audiences across Canada and America.

"On campuses and at special screenings in smaller cities I have met people from Italy, Greece, Mexico -- you name it -- who were marginalised or severely exploited. Or they knew who were exploited, but did not always have the courage to stand up and fight."

Water faces formidable competition from two films. The German entry, *The Lives of Others*, is a taut thriller

that examines the obsessive espionage of suspected dissidents during the last years of the communist regime in East Germany in the 1980s. And then there is Mexico's *Pan's Labyrinth*, a dark, haunting political fantasy, which has been nominated in five other categories including best original screenplay.

Other nominees are Denmark's *After the Wedding*, which is partly set in an orphanage in Mumbai and has quite a bit of Hindi dialogue, and Algeria's *Days of Glory*.

Sixty one films from across the world were in the competition. A shortlist of nine films was released last week. Many people were surprised that Pedro Almodóvar's highly acclaimed *Volver* did not make the final cut. It received just one nomination -- in the Best Actress category for Penelope Cruz.

Water became the fourth Hindi-language film to be nominated for the Oscar, starting with *Mother India* in the mid 1950s, followed by *Salaam Bombay* and *Lagaan*.

Incidentally *Water* pushes Mehta's stature in Hollywood. She has already been signed by Focus Films to direct a love story involving an American working class woman who marries a Korean prince and is shunned by the royal family because she cannot give him a child. Ironically, it is the man who is impotent. And yet the woman falls in love with her adopted country.

"I can never tire of making films about outsiders, and the marginalised people," says Mehta.

Source: Internet



Lisa Ray in Deepa Mehta's *Water*