

Articulating myriad emotions

In conversation with Pragna Laboni

AUREEN AHSAN

Pragna Laboni is gifted with a voice that evokes myriad emotions. She is a dreamer, a passionate artiste who knows how to work toward her goals, and most importantly she believes in herself. Primarily identified as an accomplished recitor, she juggles many roles with aplomb — from being an anchor to an actor, a director to a scriptwriter, and a teacher to a loving mother.

Currently working as a teacher at the University of Liberal Arts and Daffodil University, she epitomises the indomitable woman of every girl's dreams.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Pragna talked to *The Daily Star* and shared her views on the current position of women around the world and in the media. Here are some excerpts from the conversation:

The Daily Star (TDS): Do you feel we live in a male-dominated society?

Pragna: Most certainly. This is true not only of our society, but the world over. However much the lip service paid to the equality of men and women, I strongly believe women are not acknowledged with their rightful position and privileges.

TDS: How did you come into the world of media?

Pragna: My father Shamsul Haque was a university professor and I was brought up amidst the vibrant cultural scene on campus. My affinity towards the media was inherent, and it was quite natural for me to choose this path. My family was regularly involved with cultural activities, and following their lead I walked into the world of media.

TDS: Would you say you got full support from your family?

Pragna: Absolutely. My family presented no obstacles for me, and I am rather fortunate that I received their whole hearted encouragement. My husband has been very supportive throughout; being a media person he understands my needs and obligations well.

TDS: Can you cite a few changes in the position of women in the media now, compared to what the situation was, say 15 years back?

Pragna: Previously very few young women ventured into this profession, but nowadays a lot of women are showing interest. Where quantity has risen, the quality has deteriorated relatively. Formerly, we had to give auditions and go through a rigorous process of scrutiny. It is much easier now, if one has good contacts at the right places. Focus has drifted from passion and



dedication for work to the enchantment of stardom and fame.

TDS: But at the same time, a lot of successful female directors and scriptwriters are emerging too. What is your opinion of them?

Pragna: I truly appreciate them and believe more such women should join this industry. The media needs talented women like them. But at the same time, the young artistes should acquire proper training, guidance and experience in order to maintain an acceptable standard of work.

TDS: What is your take on the term "feminism"?

Pragna: I do not want to focus on such a con-

troversial term. I mean, why not fight for "human rights" rather than just "women's rights"? That is our first identity -- people should firstly try to recognise and respect us as human beings.

TDS: On a lighter note, how did you land up on the sets of 'Aha!'?

Pragna: Acting is not my cup of tea but when the director, Nirjhar, offered me the role in the movie, I consented. I have written the script of 13 plays and directed them, written two books but this was the first time I acted in a movie.

TDS: Do you have any unfulfilled wishes?

Pragna: Not really. But I would like to do a show akin to Simi Garewal's some day.

A gem of an artiste

In remembrance of Malika Pukhraj

KAVITA CHARANJI, New Delhi

Late songstress Malika Pukhraj is best known for her rendition of the *nazm*, *Abhi to main jawan hoon*. However, many other interesting facets of the great singer came to light at a recent programme in Delhi, "A tribute to Malika Pukhraj: The Magic of Malika Pukhraj from Gramophone to radio-TV era."

The evening began with author-scholar Pran Neville's speech on Malika, whose family he is acquainted with. Some vignettes stood out: According to a family member, the late singer wore her signature sunglasses all the time to conceal the wrinkles around her eyes. Another side of the artiste was her embroidery skills and her portrait of Guru Nanak, which is now at the gurudwara in Toronto. Even more fascinating is her encounter in PC Hotel, Lahore, with famous artist MF Hussain, described by her granddaughter Roshaney Zafar in an article in *Friday Times* of Lahore. Apparently Hussain expressed interest in doing her portrait. Promptly Malika questioned, "Can you draw?" and his answer was positive. On the completion of the painting, she responded with a punchline: "It proves how poor your art is."

Neville was effusive in his praise for Malika: "She had an abiding passion for music and was a versatile artiste. In addition to *ghazals*, she performed *naghmas*, *nazms*, *dogri* and *pahari* songs. She spent time in Chamba to learn *pahari* songs from some talented folk singers who would come to her every evening for practice and she would do *riyaz* every morning."

Neville then recalled when her new gramophone records were released and her songs played in shops in Lahore, crowds would gather while the albums sold like hotcakes. He also described Malika as a "feminist" for her insistence that her two daughters have access to the best education and later careers.

The evening wore on with the renditions of Malika's songs by Rashmi Agarwal. Beginning with the famous *Abhi to main jawan hoon* (by lyricist Hafiz Jullundari), she went on to delight the audience with other renditions such as the *naghma*, *Le ja wafa ke khwab mohabbat ka asra* (with lyrics by Ahmed Faraz) and *ghazal*, *Bezubani zuban na ho jaiye* (lyricist Hafiz Hoshiyarpuri).

Malika was born in the village Mirpur, 16 miles from Jammu. Named Pukhraj (Topaz) by her aunt, her mother was insistent that she be

properly educated. The family moved to Jammu town, where she learnt Urdu and Farsi from a distant uncle Gulzar Hussain Shah. Gifted with a melodious voice, she was coached by Ustad Allah Buksh (father of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan). At the tender age of eight she joined the court of Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir. She remained there for nine years and performed at the coronation ceremony of the Maharaja. Over the next eight decades, she captivated audiences with her superb command of *thumri*, *ghazal*, *bhajan* and folk *pahari* geet.

Malika's talent was well recognised. In 1980 she was awarded the Presidential Pride of Performance Award, Pakistan, in recognition of her great service in the field of singing. In the mid-1980s she was also awarded with the Legend of Voice Award from All India Radio. Married to Syed Shabbir Hussain Shah, she had six children of whom two were girls. Tahira Syed, one of the daughters, emerged as a well-known singer in her own right.

Malika Pukhraj passed away in Lahore at the age of 92.



On Air

All programmes are in local time. The Daily Star will not be responsible for any change in the programme.

BTV

08:45 Esho Gaan Shikhi

11:15 Swadesh Desher Gaan

11:30 Shukhi Ponbaar

12:05 Prothom Ontora

12:30 Maa O Shishur Katha

01:00 Mati O Manush

01:30 Selected Programme

02:15 Sisimpur

02:40 Bangla Feature Film

05:25 Swadhinota Amar Swadhinota

06:25 Apon Aloye

06:50 Amader Mukhtijudho

07:25 Shei Diner Katha

08:35 Documentary Programme: Amar Bangladesh

09:00 Drama: Amader Hormuz Ali

10:30 Poribesh Proshongo

11:00 Talk Show: Date Line Dhaka

ATN BANGLA

08:15 Aiker Shanbadpotro

08:30 Dance Show: Nupurer Chhandey

09:15 Begom

10:30 Talk Show: Onyodasthi

11:05 Shathi Din

12:15 Special Programme

12:45 Footpath-er Meye

01:30 Documentary Programme: Prapok

02:30 Bangla Feature Film

05:00 Gram Gonjer Khorbor

05:30 Chardyalor Kabayo

06:20 Aahar Shamney

06:45 Projonmo Katha

08:00 Drama Serial: Alokogor

08:40 Drama Serial: Char Kuthuri

09:20 Drama Serial: Ek Jonomey

11:30 Daily Soap: Doll's House

12:00 Grammeenphone Lead News

CHANNEL 1

08:30 Shokasler Gaan

09:30 Shangbadpotrey

BTV

08:45 Public Reaction

09:50 Grammeenphone Tribiatriatra

11:05 Talk Show: Amader Aaina

12:05 Oporajita

12:30 Citycell Taroka Kathan

01:05 Ebong Cinemar Gaan

01:30 Musical Programme: Sa Re Ga Ma

02:35 Warid Anondo Alo Taroka Adda

03:30 Adharey Ekla

05:30 Mukhtijudho Amar Ohonkaar

06:00 Talk Show: Nan O purush

06:20 Oshamanyo

07:50 Ghar Kutum

08:20 Radhuni Kriti Shommanona 07

09:35 Hridoye Matio O Manush

10:00 Special Programme

11:30 Live Drama Serial: Astey Astey Astey

12:00 Grammeenphone Aiker Shangbadpotro

Rtv

08:15 Gaanchil Ei Din

09:00 Rtv Exclusive

09:05 Drama Serial: Ebong Rohosher Golpo

10:00 Hello Love

11:00 Taroka Alap

11:30 Children's Programme

12:15 Indian Idol Concert

01:00 Gaanchil Ei Din

01:30 Dhallywood Beats

02:30 Bangla Feature Film

06:30 Protidin

06:30 Musical Programme: Shur-e Shur-e Path Chola

08:00 Drama: Brishhi Raater Golpo

11:00 Drama Serial: Neel Nirjon-sy

11:30 News Watch

12:00 Rtv Exclusive

CHANNEL 1

08:40 Shuprobhaat Bangladesh

10:30 Shukhtara

11:00 Drama: Dhola Gaa-er Rokeya

12:05 Tele Film: Parul Konya

02:00 Shoptaho Sheshey

03:30 Narir Kichhu Katha

04:30 Ebong Nari

05:15 Selected Programme

06:45 Rokto Gham Potaka

07:00 Shomoyer Swad

08:15 Drama

09:30 Poradhinotar

Agol Bhengey

11:00 Bishwa Jurey

ETV

08:00 Ekush-er Shokal

12:00 Ekush-er Dupur

02:30 Bangla Feature Film

10:00 Selected Programme

BANGLAVISION

09:00 Children's Programme: Ichchhey Ghuri

09:30 Drama Serial: Byasto Doctor

10:00 Shath Din

06:05 Din-er Sheshey

06:20 Shadharon Meye

06:50 Shamol Bangla

08:25 Drama Serial: Pingol Akash

10:00 Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle

11:45 Invincible

01:30 One Night With The King

03:45 Layer Cake

05:20 Daddy Day Care

07:00 Tears Of The Sun

09:00 Manne, The

10:30 Dark, The

STAR PLUS

09:30 Karishma Ka Karishma

09:55 Bolly V

10:00 Shararat

10:25 Bolly V

10:30 Kaho Na Yaar Hai

11:25 Bolly V

11:30 Armour Of God (Hindi)

01:30 Dulhan Hum Le Jayenge

04:30 Main Hoon Na

05:00 Aek Chabhi Hai

Padoss Mein

08:30 Jai Maa Durga

09:30 Pritiviraj Chauhan

10:00 Baa Bahoo Aur Baby

10:30 Star Voi Chhote Ustaad

STAR WORLD

09:30 Who Wants To Be A Superhero

10:30 American Idol

11:30 Invasion

12:30 Cops

01:30 Prison Break

02:30 Prison Break

03:30 Criminal Minds

04:30 Bones

05:30 Criss Angel Mindbreak

06:30 Most Shocking

07:30 Hercules

08:30 Smallville

09:30 Bones

10:30 Tna Xplosion

11:30 The Unit

DISCOVERY CHANNEL

09:30 Futureweapons: Maximum Impact

10:30 Dirty Jobs - Season 1: Sewer Inspector

11:30 Futureweapons (Season 2): Top Guns

12:30 Dirty Jobs - Season 1: Pig Farmer

01:30 Journey Of Life (WI): Seas Of Life

02:30 Warrior Women 1: Joan Of Arc

03:30 Maggie: Episode 1

04:30 Maggie: Episode 2

05:30 Diana: Tribute To A Model

06:30 Grace Kelly: The American Princess

07:30 Crossings: P T Usha

08:30 Daughter Of The Earth - Vandana Shiva

09:00 Runway Moms: Model Family

09:30 Discovery Atlas: South Africa

11:30 Animal Camera - Surveillance On Survival: Episode 4

ESPN

09:30 Cricket: HITZ

10:00 Sport News: Sportscenter Week In Review (sport News)

10:30 Golf: Maybank Malaysian Open (golf)

02:30 Soccer/Football: Premier League Preview

03:00 Cricket: Commonwealth Bank Series 2007-08, Australia Vs India 2nd Final, Highlights

05:00 Soccer/Football: Premier League Preview

05:30 Soccer/Football: First Edition

06:00 Cricket

06:30 Soccer/Football: The Fa Cup - "Road To Wembley"

06:40 Soccer/Football: FA Cup 2007/08, Manchester United Vs Portsmouth Round 6

08:53 Soccer/Football: Barclays Liverpool Vs Newcastle United

11:30 Soccer/Football: Barclays Premier League 2007/08, UK Reading Vs Manchester City

THE HISTORY CHANNEL

09:30 China

10:30 Great Britain

11:30 A Woman Named Jackie

02:30 Grace Kelly

04:30 Baumeister Killings

05:30 Mera India

06:00 Mera India

06:30 Heffer

08:30 Jumbo Movie

10:30 Anne Frank

11:30 Diana: The True Story

12:30 Heffer

ZEE STUDIO

10:15 Alex And Emma

12:30 The Princess

Diaries 2: Royal Engagement

02:50 Filler

03:00 One Fine Day

05:45 Father Of The Bride II

08:10 The Hollywood Reporter

08:40 A Lot Like Love

11:00 Inspector Gadget

Smallville

On Star World at 8:30 pm

TV Series

Cast: Tom Welling, Michael Rosenbaum

Amar Ami

On Banglavisian at 9:05 pm

Talk Show

Guest: Aly Zaker, Sara Zaker