



“.... I was hit on the head by a rolled out piece of paper!”
--- Abida Sultana

Renowned singer Abida Sultana, also known as Shikha to her near and dear ones, recently took some time off from her busy schedule to have a brief chat with *The Daily Star*. The artiste can sing in multiple languages and has performed in the presence of several global personalities. Excerpts from the interview:

How important is singing to you?

Abida: Singing is my life. The way we cannot articulate how important breathing is to us, I cannot describe in words what singing means to me.

One thing that you would give your voice for...

Abida: Given the fact how important singing is to me, I cannot think of giving up my voice for anything. But yes, if it is required for me to give up my voice in order to save my family, I definitely would.

What do you usually like to do on rainy days?

Abida: I love the rain. People usually listen to music on rainy days but I like to listen to the sounds of rain. If it is possible, I stay home and try to enjoy the music of rain.

Any hilarious incident that you would like to share with our readers?

Abida: It happened during one of my recordings in Kolkata. The recording was interrupted several times. I had put on some makeup, like we often have to, which happened to attract flies. At one point, the director instructed one of his assistants, a small Nepalese boy by the name of Nepal to be precise, to stand guard and get rid of the fly in case it caused further trouble. Midway into the recording, I was abruptly hit on the head by a rolled out piece of paper! Instantly I landed on the ground and was quite baffled by this act. It then dawned on me that the lad was merely trying to save me from being bothered by the pest.



What is your favourite colour and season?

Abida: My favourite colours are maroon and green. And as you might have guessed by now, rainy season is my favourite time of the year. If I could have it my way, I would want it to rain throughout the year, 365 days.

What is your favourite food?

Abida: I like any kind of salad, fish and chips, ice cream and last but not the least, Haajir Biryani.

Your favourite singers?

Abida: There are quite a few supremely talented singers in our part of the world. Manna Dey, Mehedi Hassan, and Asha Bhosle happen to be some of my favourites.

Obsession...?

Abida: I am absolutely crazy about perfumes. My husband unfortunately does not like perfumes much and it often happens that I use his colognes.

The most memorable day...

Abida: Once in Kolkata this young boy came up to me and asked if I had ever been to Bangladesh. He informed me that there is this Bangladeshi singer Abida Sultana, who looks exactly like me. I wasn't wearing any makeup. I just pretended to be amazed and went away.

Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?

Abida: 10 years from now, I am not sure if I will still be in the condition to continue singing, but I would definitely want to retain the honour, respect and love I have earned from my fans throughout my singing career. I have a simple commitment to myself - I will stop singing the day I realise I am not able to sing anymore.

Any message for music lovers?

Do not support music piracy. In fact, "piracy" is a rather decent word for such an act. I would rather use the term "stealing". Piracy should be penalised severely. There are countries where pirated tapes and CDs are burned in masses. The government and the people should all come forward to stop this felony.

Cheated by Oscar politics

CNN, London

While the Oscars is without doubt the grandest of all the awards ceremonies, it doesn't have the world stage to itself.

In London, the Brits have their BAFTAs; Spain has the Goyas; and France celebrates the Césars, where *La Vie En Rose* won six out of its "magnifique" 11 nominations. And it was this foreign fare that gave rise to the biggest controversy at Hollywood's big event.

La Vie En Rose amassed an impressive eleven nominations at the French Cesar Awards. Marion Cotillard's astonishing transformation into Edith Piaf won her Best Actress gongs at the Golden Globes, BAFTAs and the Academy Awards. But *La Vie En Rose* was not among the contenders for Best Foreign Film.

Another French language film, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, was on many critics' top ten lists for the films of 2007. It won the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film and its American director Julian Schnabel was nominated for an Oscar. But like *La Vie En Rose*, this film was not among the contenders for Best Foreign Film.

A third French film, *Persepolis* won the special jury prize at Cannes and it received an Oscar nomination for Best Animated Feature, but yet again, this was not a nominee for Best Foreign Film.

France suffered through an abundance of riches this year, with three potential Oscar winners. But to enter the race for Best Foreign Film, France, like every other country, had to nominate just one.

So *La Vie En Rose* and *Diving Bell* were rejected by the French film authorities in favour of *Persepolis*. But *Persepolis* didn't sufficiently impress the Oscar judges: so France had no films among the final five nominees.

French frustration at the Oscar process was echoed in Taiwan, which chose Ang Lee's film, *Lust, Caution*, as its official entry. The film won both critical acclaim and

the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival. But Oscar judges ruled there was too little Taiwanese involvement -- none of the lead actors are from Taiwan. The double Oscar winning director watched in disbelief as his film was banned and Taiwan was told to pick another film instead: Oscar caution triumphing over Ang Lee's lust for a third Academy Award.

And the list goes on: the Israeli film, *The Band's Visit* was excluded for having too much English -- but it's the only way the Israeli and Egyptian protagonists can communicate in the film and is a key part of the plot. But Israel submitted *Beaufort* instead -- and made the final five.

The Kite Runner may have proved an international success at the box office, but it didn't fly with Oscar watchdogs. Set in Afghanistan with Farsi as its main language, it fell foul of the rulebook by having too little Afghan involvement and a Swiss-American director.

But for most critics, the most inexplicable omission from the shortlist of nominees was Romania's *4 Months, 3 Weeks & 2 Days*, winner of the Palme D'Or in Cannes and considered by many to be a sure-fire Oscar winner. Some feel its challenging subject of a back-street abortion in communist Romania was too testing for conservative members of the Academy's Foreign Film Committee, whose volunteers tend to include many retirees -- who else has time to attend screenings of 63 foreign language films?

Even Marc Johnson, the Chairman of the Academy's Foreign Language Film Committee, acknowledged that some of the criticism levelled against the Academy this year was "justifiable".

He told CNN: "We took quite a beating, and I think quite justifiably, not for the films that we selected but for the films that we DIDN'T select.

"And I felt very passionately about it and spoke out about it more than I should have done, but there was a part of me saying 'wait

for a minute I didn't sign on for this -- I didn't sign on to be the scapegoat and we received a lot of criticism and yet it's something I feel so passionately about I think foreign language film and particularly subtitled film in the U.S. are really an endangered species."

Defenders of the Academy also point out that they're only asking countries to nominate their favorite film; they then pick the best of that bunch.

Mr Johnson said it would be unfair to allow countries to submit more than one film as the selection process would become "unman-

ageable".

"There have been arguments that why can't a country submit more films? France for instance might argue we make 50 films a year, maybe five of them are Oscar worthy and Ecuador maybe only makes one why is it we have the same group as they?"

"Not that I ever like to mix sports with the arts but it's a little bit like the World Cup. Brazil could probably submit five teams but they're only allowed to submit one -- and it's what makes it a fair race," he explains.



Persepolis won the French nomination -- but failed to make the Academy's shortlist

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News (English) at 3:00 pm, 10:00 pm.

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News (Bangla) at 7:15 am, 9:00 am, 2:00 pm, 7:00 pm, 9:00 pm, 10:30 pm, 12:15 am.

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Adhiar on ATN Bangla

to be aired on March 22

Time: 2:40 pm

Bangla Feature Film

Cast: ATM Shamsuzzaman, Raisul Islam Asad, Pijush

Konilo

10:10 Bhalo Thakun

11:05 Nana Rong-er Dinguli

11:35 Jigysa O Jobab

Shoroshon

11:35 Bandyopadhyay

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