



# PAOLI DAM IN SWATTA

Popular Indian actress Paoli Dam, began her career in 2004 with the Bengali television serial *Jibon Niye Khela*. Since then, she worked in several television serials and made her debut in the Bengali film industry with *Teen Yaari Katha*. However, her first official release was *Agnipariksha* in 2006. She received international recognition for her part in *Chatrak*, a Bengali film which was screened at Cannes and other film festivals in Toronto and U.K. Paoli made her Bollywood debut when she starred in *Hate Story*. She also appeared in Vikram Bhatt's *Ankur Arora Murder Case*, and several other Bengali films. Now Paoli's been signed under Hasibur Reza Kallol's upcoming project *Swatta*, and will be acting alongside our "Hero Number One" - Shakib Khan. Recently Star Showbiz caught up with the busy bee to find out a few things.

**How did it happen? How did you come to be in this project?**

After *Moner Manush* in 2010, I got a lot of offers from Bangladesh. In fact, I came here a few times for certain events like fashion shows, show stoppers, grand openings, but for those things I was just here for a day or so. However, the film projects that I was offered, I either had to decline or they got cancelled.

In regards to *Swatta*, it was kind of like destiny, because Kollol and I have been talking about this for a year and half. But sadly the project wasn't materializing due to conflicting dates and the fact that I was involved in 5 to 6 projects, one of which is a biopic on theatre actress Keya Chakraborty. Recently, this Friday to be more specific, my film *Parapar* was released, in which I acted alongside Rubel Ahmed, who plays my father in *Swatta*. In regards to *Swatta*, I liked the storyline, and he was working on the script, making certain changes.

Shakib Khan is extremely popular here and I enjoyed working with him. We met a few months ago and that's when it happened. I was happy with the team, Ferdous Rana, the script writer, because initially the script wasn't written by him, as it is actually based on a short story by Sohani Hossain called "Ma". I also heard about Shoinik, the cinematographer from directors in Calcutta. Overall I found this project very lucrative and nicely placed and I thought since I'm working there, why not work for a project in Bangladesh.

**Since you've worked with Goutam Ghosh on *Moner Manush*, do you consider *Swatta* a mainstream film?**

Personally I don't differentiate between commercial and art house films, its either good or bad. However, *Swatta*, judging from how it was set up, you see creativity, intelligence along with the right people, therefore I think it contains a mixture of both art and commerce. A balance that is necessary in today's films to market and distribute them. So, all these things come together and make a beautiful fusion, giving audiences a nice experience.

**Do you think it would be beneficial if Bangladesh and Kolkata would work together in films?**

I think it would be incredibly beneficial if that were to happen. This would allow films made here to premiere over there and vice versa. One major hurdle to overcome is bureaucracy. A film made in India will have to go through a lot of bureaucratic guidelines in order for it to cross borders and vice versa. This scares off a lot of film makers interested in doing joint venture productions. I think that if this is relaxed, we can see a lot more joint venture projects in the near future.

PHOTO: NASIM BORNO



**You've done Hindi films, how did you feel about them and do you plan to do more?**

I have and plan to do more. Until now I've done Vikram Bhatt's *Ankur Arora Murder Case* and *Hate Story*. Right now I'm working on a love story *Yara Sili Sili* directed by Subhash Sehgal which will be released in March. I also have more projects pending that I haven't finalized yet. Those I'll take care of when I'm done with *Swatta*.

**In terms of work, what is the difference between working in Mumbai, Calcutta and Bangladesh?**

The main difference between the three is budget and infrastructure. I say this because a two and half hour film requires the same amount of effort anywhere in the world. I mean the amount of effort an actor, a director, an editor, a cinematographer, the unit puts in is the same. Along with budget and infrastructure, marketing and distribution are also different, because Hindi films are nationally released and some Bangla films are dubbed then released. Because there is one thing to keep in mind, unlike Hindi films, Bangla films have limited audiences which are gradually increasing. Also,

whenever I work in Bengali films, they tell me not to conceptualize them as Hindi films, because the Bengali films have a schedule of 25 to 30 days depending on their budget unless it's a special film like *Moner Manush* take 45 to 50 days. Hindi films are shot between 60-70 days mainly because they have a bigger budget and infrastructure, in turn more of comfort zone.

**From the point of an actor, do you think Hindi films are more competitive?**

It's difficult to get in, but very possible because at the end of the day it depends entirely on talent like everywhere else. However the motive shouldn't be to get in, personally speaking, for me it's about doing a good film, I mean if I enjoy acting in a good film, I believe audiences too will want to watch it. In regards to competition, it is extremely competitive; I say this because people from all over the world are attracted to its glamour and commerce. At the same time Bollywood is releasing films like *Lunchbox*, *Shahid* and *Kai Poche* which audiences love therefore I am certain that *Swatta* will be a film of the same caliber which I hope will be released in India too.

**How did you feel about working with people from the Bangladeshi film industry?**

I absolutely loved working here! The people and the artistes are so nice it's unbelievable. When I say artistes I mean, the bands, the singers like Anushe and Shahana for example, I am a huge fan of them both. I also love Tareq Masud's work, his passing was most unfortunate.

**Do you have any favorite filmmakers in Mumbai and Calcutta?**

I want to work with Vishal Bhardwaj, who is a good friend. Thing is romcoms haven't really taken off in Calcutta, that's another thing I want to do. Anurag Kashyap, Anurag Basu, Ayan Mukerji, Sujit Sarker these are some of the few, but if I go on, the list will be endless.

**Do you want to do any other international projects?**

Yes, I most definitely do, but I haven't really spoken to anyone about it. However, nothing I do is planned, even acting, I never thought or planned to be an actor. I mean I was the first from my family to get into the industry, so things just seemed to happen, and people are allowed to dream aren't they? So let's wait and see what happens.

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Interviewed by Rafi Hossain  
and Narrated by Waleed K. Rajamiya

