

# Konal's Quest for Musical Healing

Star Showbiz recently caught up with popular female singer Somnur Monir Konal, who came to the limelight in 2009 after winning the 'Channel i Shera Kontho' Competition. Her first album 'Konaler Jadu', which she dedicated to her teacher Sri Moti Keka Mukharjee, has been well received by the audience. She also shares a passion for acting, and appeared in a cameo in the film 'Lal tip'. The young artiste is well known in the contemporary Bangladeshi music circuit and has already completed a few songs for her next album, which is targeted for release in 2015.

COVER STORY

**How did you get to become a singer?**

I was born with a microphone in hand. My mother Saima Monir used to sing but she didn't do it professionally. I learnt from her when I was in Kuwait, there was a Rabindra Bharati academy where I trained in Hindustani Classical from Sri Moti Keka Mukherjee. At one point, I came to Bangladesh to visit, and the Channel i Shera Khonti 2009 competition caught my eye, and everyone told me to participate, so I did and after a tedious nine month battle, I emerged as the champion. The very next day I got an offer for playback and I took it, after this, all the work I did, I carefully picked out to match with my personality because I always felt that whatever I sing, it should reflect me. Since the advent of reality shows/contests we are seeing a lot of singers coming out, but in the long run very few of them, if any at all, are still in the music scene. Why do you

**think that is?**

Well, winning a contest is the first step, because personally I feel that the real competition starts after the reality shows. The singers that win have a lot of talent, but how they view themselves afterwards and how they plan to get to where they want to be and whether they have the drive needed at all is important. Other factors also have an impact. For example, fans do not buy CDs anymore since they can obtain music for free, thanks to piracy. Because of this, labels often tell the artists that musical albums on CDs aren't being released, or no one is buying CDs. All these things play a big part in inspiring and motivating a singer.

**Since the competition is so high, and the Bangladesh market is so small, how will artists survive?**

It's not the same case as it was two years ago, it's actually better because last Eid, we

received really good albums from Fahmida apa, Bappa da, Samina apa. There were really magnificent albums. If artistes are asked about how they survive, the answer will be only from concerts, because these days, it's impossible to be economically sustainable through just CDs. The patterns are changing; one change that is very apparent are artistes putting up their songs on iTunes and digital platforms. Apart from these two methods the others just aren't feasible enough.

**With all the different kinds of music out there, what are people listening to?**

People listen to what they like, but for us, identifying this is extremely difficult, because sometimes the audience loves songs, that I personally do not like at all or sometimes there may be a song that I really love, I put it in my album, but then find out that the audience didn't like it at all. So I think, the transition now in the tastes of listeners needs to be carefully identified by artists. Look at Habib bhai for example, he brought a change in the music scenario with his 'Krishno' album, everyone followed that change so much that it became saturated. Now I think another change is necessary. **So why didn't you want to study music?** This was one of the biggest mistakes of my life, I still regret it, but then again, I like challenges. Although I'm currently studying Journalism, my education won't stop here. In the future, I'd like to study Ethno Musicology, perhaps complete a graduate

degree in it. It's about people from different cultures and their music scenarios; I've already spoken to a University in Florida because ultimately I want to study music.

**What other plans do you have in regards to music?**

The long term plan I have could take anywhere between 2 to 20 years to fulfill, point is, it may take a lot of time and I don't really know exactly how much time it will take. What I want to do is create an Institute for Musical Healing and I've already spoken to a few people about this, including students from Dhaka University's Music department, who are also my friends and sing really well. I want to take them and others like them and start an institute to heal the sick and wounded with music. Artistes don't know much about science and medical healing but healing doesn't stop there. We do know about music science. We know how to heal people with the power of music, and this is even a subject that one can study.

**So who are your most favorite artistes?**

I have several, from Bangladesh there's Nilufer Yasmin, Runa Laila, Kumar Bishwadib. I like them because they have a very original, different and unique voices. Apart from them I also like Elita apu, Kona apu, Bappa da, and Shumi apu from Chirkutt. I must add that my mother has been a tremendous influence on me in uncountable ways; she's the diva in my life, she's the only person that I admire without limits, even though I don't tell her this and

we fight all the time, I know for a fact that I would not be able to see anything without her, without her my world would be blank. My parents are very important to me, because when I left them and came here, I realized that no one apart from them will sacrifice, dedicate themselves or love me the way they do. So if there is someone special in my life it's my mother, and then my father.

**Beyond music, what else are you involved in?**

I believe in loving people, regardless of where they're from or what they believe in. I mean, after all, I do what I do for the people. I want to help them heal and I also hope that one day I can work with UNICEF go to different places and help those in need. But apart from that I have a foundation of my own called the Smile Foundation. Its purpose, I won't say is to help people, but instead is to be *with* people. Right now it is comprised of a few friends and my younger brother, and we get organized amongst ourselves to help people in need whenever we can, for example, when there's a flood somewhere we go there and help people who are suffering.

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