

**Rafi:** Now-a-days singing has gone to another level due to technological advancements and even the Bangla music industry has adopted the new style. How did this affect the Indian music industry?

**Mitali:** It's the same in India. The harsh reality is that due to technological advancements now everyone is a singer. A young singer who is practicing 8-9 hours is not getting the exposure, whereas a person with money and capability to make a music video is reaching stardom. Kalyanji–Anandji once told me, “Songs are like newspapers, read it once and throw it away but only a few old prominent songs are like Bible and Bhagavad Gita which will remain eternally”. So we still have a few songs that have timeless value.

**Rafi:** Name a few singers from India, who according to you, are performing well.

**Mitali:** I think Shreya Ghoshal is doing very well. Sadly however, there are few other singers who are following her style and imitating her voice, so it kind of becomes repetitive. Neeti Mohan is also another uprising talent, she has a unique voice. Arijit Singh has a mesmerizing voice and he is a worthy talent.

**Rafi:** Are you also singing in movies?

**Mitali:** No. Actually I did only a few songs for movies. My father was very strict and reserved; he told me to focus more on my PhD and never stay outside late. I was always very scared of him and thus followed his advice.

**Rafi:** Does Ghazal have a different audience?

**Mitali:** Yes, it is mainly poetry with tune, so rather than writing many words in a letter you can express your thoughts through few lines of a Ghazal.

**Rafi:** Could you, in simple words, tell our readers the difference between Thumri and Ghazals?

**Mitali:** Thumri is characterized by its sensuality, and by a greater flexibility with the raga and rhythm. Thumri is also used as a generic name for some other, even lighter, forms such as Dadra, like, “*Jiya mora na lage beiri balam*”. The Ghazal is a form of amatory poem or ode. A Ghazal is composed of couplets, five or more. The couplets may have nothing to do with one another except for the formal unity derived from a strict rhyme and rhythm pattern. It is very hard to form Ghazals in Bangla because of limited *Radif* (the second line of all the couplets must end with the same words) and *Qaafiya* (a repeating pattern of words).

**Rafi:** Is it possible to compose Ghazals in Bangla if someone follows the rules?

**Mitali:** The poet must do a lot of research. Srijato Bandopadhyay, a young poet is writing Ghazals in Bangla, but I am not sure how much the *Radif* and *Qaafiya* is being maintained. He has sent me samples; I have to take a look at them before I can comment on his works.

**Rafi:** Did you think about writing in Bangla?

**Mitali:** I find it very difficult. I find limitations in maintaining the grammar; however those who actually write might succeed, if they do their research properly.

**Rafi:** Why do think nobody tried to compose Ghazals in Bangla before?

**Mitali:** Many did compose Ghazals in Bangla, but I am not aware if the *Radif* and *Qaafiya* were sustained. I have to listen to them. Another form is the *Nazm*, normally written in rhymed verse and

also in modern prose style poems, like one that I and Gulzar sir sang, *Kitni Girhein Kholi Hain Kitni Girhein Ab Baqi*. The entire poem was written on womanhood.

**Rafi:** The duo of Jagjit Singh and Chitra Singh has mesmerized the audiences over decades. You and Bhupinder Singh are a successful Ghazal couple as well. Do you think audiences prefer more couples or single artistes for Ghazals?

**Mitali:** This is an interesting perspective. I never thought of it this way. My first Ghazal was actually done solo.

**Rafi:** Did you plan on focusing on Ghazals right at the beginning of your career?

**Mitali:** No. It just happened with time and the preference of the audiences. When I used to sing Nazrul or Folk music, I found it hard to make my audience

be my husband. I was in Baroda when he first heard me. I sang a song of Lata Mangeshkar, where I pronounced the word 'bazaar' differently. He corrected me and also taught me Gujarati. So the cultural change was mainly the language for me and I adapted to it gradually with time.

**Rafi:** Tell us about your love story.

**Mitali:** It is a long story. I went to watch a movie. It was called *Parichay*; the movie had a few of my husband's songs. I was already his fan, but when I heard the voice in the movie, I felt the need to meet him. My warden was a very loving person and she took me to visit her house in Bombay, as I had never been there. She organized a get-together where I sang in front of actor Ashok Kumar, a few prominent Gujarati singers and a *Doordarshan* director. After hearing my

strong, he appreciated my singing and we both had admiration for each other's voices. And through music our love story began.

**Rafi:** When did you get married?

**Mitali:** We got married in 1983. He came to Baroda for a program and when I saw that he was serious about me, we decided to get married.

**Rafi:** What do have to say for the new talents recognized through musical contests in India and Bangladesh?

**Mitali:** When I came to *Channel-i Shera Kontho* after many years, I had seen growth in the younger generations. They were singing very well and they had knowledge about whatever they were singing. Now the only thing necessary is proper grooming. I am not against this but in Bangladesh I feel they should step out of the box and bring variation in their singing. When I was in *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa*, the participants sang a variety of songs. So I would say the scope and exposure in India is wider compared to Bangladesh. Thus we need an academy in Bangladesh to give the aspiring singers the appropriate exposure and grooming.

**Rafi:** Why do think music contest winners often vanish after a brief success?

**Mitali:** I believe the parents have a big role to play in this. They think that winning is everything, but even if you do not win you should continue singing. My family always kept me grounded and my music teacher told my parents not to allow me to do shows outside till my 10th grade. I was allowed to take part in competitions but no playbacks, so I was always dedicated to singing because of my family.

**Rafi:** Tell us about the music directors whose songs you have sung most?

**Mitali:** Alauddin Ali and Anup Bhattacharya have composed most of the songs I have sung. I have also sung a few songs composed by Sheikh Sadi Khan.

**Rafi:** What do you think is the biggest achievement in your career?

**Mitali:** The *National Film Award* in Bangladesh in 1982 for the song *Ei Dunia Ekhon to Ar* for the film *Dui Poishar Alta*.

**Rafi:** Which of your songs do you like most?

**Mitali:** It is very difficult to answer, but if I have to then I would say *Harano diner moton hariye gecho tumi*.

**Rafi:** What tips do you have for singers to improve their voice?

**Mitali:** Besides practicing, one must listen to a variety of songs and also they must do yoga. Yoga will help them to control the breathing system, to open up their voice and be stress-free. They must also eat healthy and sleep timely. The one thing that comes above all is gratefulness. We should always be thankful to the Almighty for whatever we have rather than taking things for granted.

**Rafi:** Any message for your audience?

**Mitali:** Our audience keeps us alive. We have so many artistes, channels and shows now-a-days, but reaching the soul of music is what is crucial. Please do write to me through Star Showbiz if you want me and Bhupinder Singh to perform in Dhaka. I hope to bring forward more new songs in the future. Just as we are making music; listening to them and keeping them alive is your responsibility.

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By Joana Nomrata Mazumder



connect to my songs, but when I started singing Ghazals there was an instant spark. Everyone appreciated me and slowly I matured as a Ghazal singer. And the couple tradition that you mentioned was not made to happen intentionally. My husband was always busy in movies and he is not only an excellent singer but also a superb guitarist. He played in many R. D. Burman productions. After our marriage we were offered to sing together and the audience accepted us.

**Rafi:** After your marriage how did you adapt to the cultural change?

**Mitali:** The cultural change did not happen after marriage. I had to adapt to the new culture when I went to study in Baroda. Before even meeting my husband Bhupinder Singh, I was his fan. My brother once bought one of his songs and told me to hear his voice; it truly mesmerized me. I never thought he would

voice the *Doordarshan* director offered to record a song the day after, and we agreed. My warden took me to the studio. I recorded three songs and came back to Baroda. One day, the guard comes up to me and tells me that someone from Bombay came to visit me. So I went to see who it was. I saw a nice gentleman in satin clothes. His name was Shashi Kumar. He told me that I sing very well and he was sent by Bhupinder Singh. I was excited to hear that; however I did not like the attitude of Shashi Kumar. Next time I went to Bombay, it was to sing in the *Filmfare Awards*; Ashok Kumar Ji suggested my name. I met my husband during the rehearsals. We also met in a studio where my warden took me and there he asked me, why I did not call him. My friends used to tease me because I had a certain liking for him. Gradually we met in different places, our attachment grew