

THROUGH THE EYES

# 'VENI, VIDI, VICI'

*Monira Mithu, the veteran who had made her debut with Humayun Ahmed's Eid Telefilm 'Openty Bioscope', has marked her 17 years in this industry. Her other works include, but not limited to 'House Full', 'Cheleti Abol Tabol Meyeti Pagol Pagol' for TV shows and 'Chandrokotha', 'Jonakir Alo' for films. This week, she shares some stories about her life with us.*

## RISING IN SPRING

It was 2001. I was a mere housewife, faraway from the ostentatious world of showbiz; I hardly even knew any faces of the actors or the people associated with the entertainment industry. Challenger bhai had acted only in a single drama of Humayun Ahmed sir till then. So, for an Eid TV drama, Humayun sir was looking for a fresh female face. It was a small, but a quite significant role which required someone with adequate acting potential. Challenger bhai informed sir that he has a younger sister who was an amateur. I went to the shooting spot and appeared before a camera for the first time in my life. They had put heavy make-up on me. Humayun sir saw me and sighed with relief, "She is tall and fair. The character would suit her pretty well". Back then, Shamima Nazneen was the personal assistant of Humayun Ahmed. She gave me a script and I was told to read out the dialogues. My elder brother Challenger bhai, was extremely fond of dramas and books of Humayun Ahmed. When I was in class 3, I watched *Nondito Narake*, sitting on his lap and even shed tears. I already had an idea about the essence of his dialogues, so right after skimming through my part, I laughed. My first ever shot was a successful one. Humayun sir was looking at the faces of other senior actors for approval; that was his signature look whenever he loved a shot. The name of that Eid drama was *Openty Bioscope* in which I shared the screen with veteran artists like Asaduzzaman Noor, Champa, Zahid Hasan.

## ECHOES OF CHILDHOOD STRUGGLE

We lost our mother at a very early age. We had a stepmother at home for whom, my four siblings and I lived a life of vagabonds. A part of my childhood was spent at my paternal house in Brahmanbaria. We were always striving to unite. When I was in class 2, my eldest brother Challenger, at his very young age, got employed and rented a house to bring us to Dhaka. It was a time, we had to sustain and survive, despite all the difficulties and struggles of life. Till date, I politely dismiss any offers of acting in roles of outrageous stepmothers. The echoes of my nightmarish days of childhood still resonate through the walls of my mind.

## A REPRESSED DANCER

I was raised without a motherly figure at home, so I had very little to do when alone. Though I watched a lot of television dramas and a sense of conveying emotions and delivering dialogues had thrived inside me, my disposition was towards dancing. I used to dance on my own, before the mirror. My intense fascination for dance could never effectively flourish because in my life, having hobbies would be a luxury.

## MY TRANQUIL EXISTENCE

Immediately after my debut as a television actor, Sharaf Ahmed Jibon contacted to cast me in one of his dramas. From the script to my character in that drama, everything was too burdensome for me. Moreover, late poet Abdul Mannan Syed was in it, so I was wavering if I wanted to be a part of it. But finally, I got along with it

and my acting was critically acclaimed. Mostofa Sarwar Farooki got a glimpse of my acting by then. He was looking for an actor who would play the role of a relatively young mother in his liberation war based telefilm, *Spartacus 71*. Mustafa Kamal Raju referred me for the character and thus, I became part of an incredibly brilliant telefilm. Later on, I acted in *Emon Deshti Kothao Khuje Pabe Nako Tumi* which was the sequel of *Spartacus 71*. Redoan Rony, who happens to be one of my most beloved directors in the television industry, directed this one. Throughout the shooting of *Emon Deshti Kothao Khuje Pabe Nako Tumi*, I was suffering from severe fever. My body had subsequently developed fever in those damp old houses of Old Dhaka. At last, my mammoth hard work paid off. It brought me the prestigious *Meril Prothom Alo* award as the best television actor. I would always take delight in being part of dramas like



*Gorbhodharini*, which was directed by Imraul Rafat, Mabrur Rashid Banna's *Amader Golpota Emono Hote Parto* and *17th December*.

## VENTURING INTO BIOSCOPE

In my 17 year long career, I have made my appearance in 19 movies and probably refused more than fifty. I choose my characters with fastidious care. I have an innate apathy towards negative roles. If I am bound to play the villain in a film, my character should be sketched with utmost importance and the script should do it justice. Given all these prerequisites, I acted in *Bhaijan*, though I was not really keen on my character in this film. In *Dohon*, my acting has been largely praised by the critics, although five of my favourite scenes were censored. I can still remember our shooting days for *Chandrakatha* with Humayun sir. Back then, my residence was somewhat out of Dhaka. It was already quite late and I was still waiting for my shot apprehensively, worrying how I would go home alone, at this hour of night. Sir somehow understood my frustration. He came to me, his magical words still reverberate in my mind; "Someday you will become one such star that the entire world will await your presence." In *Chandrakatha*, maximum dialogues were on my part and I am still clueless on how I carried them out, being an absolute dabbler and even accomplished the dubbing, all by myself. I came, I saw, I conquered. The rest of the world chaperoned me.

## SUPERFICIALITY OF FORTUNE

There is a bizarre culture in our industry. The directors and producers would worship you while you are still exerting yourself for them and once they have rigged up their work, you will be forgotten in a moment. At times, they would procrastinate even about remuneration. Fussing about payment at this phase of career is disdainful. There are in fact, a number of incidents that

dampened my spirit as an artist. I was acting in a famous series of a celebrated director in which my character earned utmost acceptance amongst the audience and even surpassed the lead roles. One fine morning, few hours before the shoot, the director came to me and expressed his extreme displeasure that I was taking excessive time for makeup and wasting time and money of his production, although I was already ready with makeup, waiting for another senior co-artist to wake up from their nap. I immediately gave up my role in the series and walked out with my head held high. What surprised me was, the senior actor relished all the drama but did not mention the true situation, as if it was some plotted conspiracy to remove me from the series. Another director, Joy Sarkar came up to me regarding a film called *Indubala*. Initially he offered me the character of a stepmother. I read the script and what caught my attention was the character of a Hindu widow, rather than the character I was asked to play. I mentioned this to him and he agreed to give me that role. One of my close associates in the industry, Anisur Rahman Milon convinced me to play this character with half remuneration as this was, on the whole, a low budget film. Interestingly, director Joy Sarkar did not contact me any further. Later on, another young actor was cast for it. We met on multiple occasions after that incident, in course of events; but he never showed the professional integrity or the courtesy of facing me. But within this same industry, there are directors like Jakir Hossain Raju, Rubaiyat, Khalid, Mahmood Mithu who redeem these depressing episodes.

## THE PAEAN OF YOUTH

Our new generation artists are delightfully gifted. They are professional, sincere and harbour an unadulterated love for their work which are the most important, and admirable characteristics of an artist. Mamo, who herself is a senior actor now, has always left me bedazzled by her creative works and unrivalled acting efficiency. More than that, she is a very soulful person. Even though we don't get to meet each other often, she always warms up my heart with her warm hugs whenever we see each other. Tisha is another amazing actor of her time. I have never met a more well-timed, well-behaved, calm and poised actor as her. Mehazabien and Tausif are excellent actors of this generation. Their commitment to their work will take them a long way, I believe.

## ESSENCE OF WOMANHOOD

A lot of artists may take names of meritorious actors of foreign industries. I believe in the unity between women. Octogenarian actors like Dilara Zaman and Sharmili Ahmed who have witnessed a number of generations come and go and are still cherishing their incessant contribution to this fraternity are my real life idols. Their strength and resolution to retain their dignity consolidates my compassion from within.

## BREATHING SPELL

I, being a single mother, raised my two sons, Uponnash and Golpo. They are my respite from reality. We hang out together on weekends. Other than that, I have some timeless companions whose presence warms my heart. These days, I hear good music on *Youtube*. Recently, an unplugged song *Jibon Anando Hoye Songsare Esho* by Musafir Ariyan has mesmerised me.

## A STRAIGHT SOLID SOUL

Not a lot of people can get to the bottom of my genuineness. I am undoubtedly a straightforward person. I love wearing my heart on my sleeve. My life has taught me the vague difference between pride and glory, strength and power. I never fall back to take pride in my achievements which I have earned over years through backbreaking efforts. I know and believe that people who genuinely love me will respect my integrity and keep me in their prayers.

By Sharbani Datta