

The marvel that is MITHILA

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Truly a 'jack of all trades', Rafiath Rashid Mithila is a generational talent. Very active now in Tollywood, Kolkata's film industry, she reached new heights with last year's *Myself Allen Swapan*. The actor, development worker, singer, writer and PhD student drops by The Daily Star for a candid shoot and a chat.

'Doctor' Mithila has quite a ring to it! How far are you with your PhD?

Don't ask; I am procrastinating so much! (Laughs) I'm doing my PhD in early childhood development, specifically early childhood education, in which I also did my master's. My work is also related to that as I'm the programme head of Brac International's early childhood development. Managing these aspects has been challenging, especially with frequent travel. However, this year, I'm determined to fully immerse myself in my PhD.

In 'Myself Allen Swapan', you explored femininity in a way that has not been done before in our industry.

Honestly, I didn't realise before I started shooting that it would become such a significant and layered character. I tried to understand the character Shaila before completely immersing myself in it. I sat, questioned, and asked for clarification from the director Shihab Shaheen, and he's such a brilliant director who has helped me throughout. It has been really satisfying and rewarding for me to play that character. And after people's reaction, it felt like I did justice to it. I played another negative character in the upcoming film *Kajol Rekha*, and I think people will like it. I put genuine effort in my work and I enjoy doing it. As long as I'm true to this, it doesn't matter how bold or unconventional the character is—the audience will like it.

You've been subject to a lot of negative remarks online, over the years. Do you think social media makes people ugly?

If you follow me or any other female celebrity online, you will see how a large number of people are commenting, but never in my life have I come across anyone who said those things to my face. Social media is the best place to spread negativity and toxicity. It doesn't make people ugly; it reveals their true nature and these reactions often reflect

personal insecurities hidden behind screens.

Do you believe in dialogue, or do you think these people are beyond change?

Some people are beyond change. Personally, I don't want to have a

dialogue with people who are not even worth the effort, who don't have the sense or mental capacity to have that dialogue.

As Kolkata has become your second home now, what's the biggest difference between Kolkata and Dhaka in terms of culture and how they treat their artistes?

Both cities have their own charms. As I've been living in Kolkata for the past three years, I've made a lot of invaluable friends, and the people there have great respect towards artistes. Kolkata is the literary and cultural hub of India. Even in Bangladesh, the cultural landscape is improving significantly, but we do have a way to go when it comes to respecting people in the entertainment industry. However, I'll always prefer the food in Dhaka over everything else!

Transcribed by Zarin Tasnim from the podcast 'A Peek Inside with Sadi'.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Shantori presents 'The World of Persepolis'
January 27 I 10:30am
Ekshoek, H-12, Rd-101, Gulshan



Comic Con 365
February 3 I 11am-11:30pm
Jamuna Future Park



Storytelling with Puppetry Workshop
February 4 I 4pm-7pm
EMK Centre

STYLE STATEMENT

ANDREW GARFIELD

Paris Fashion Week recently came to an end, and throughout the week, the French capital experienced near-freezing temperatures. This weather influenced a diverse array of stylish outfits showcased by the fashion-forward attendees. A standout was Andrew Garfield, who exuded charm in a tweed jacket effortlessly paired with a cozy woolen sweater. His irresistible smile and sophisticated winter ensemble smoothly brought a warm touch to the chilly atmosphere.



TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Griselda



Amazon Prime
Role play



Chorki
Sinpaat



Disney plus
Echo



HBO
True Detective:
Night Country



WHAT'S PLAYING

Hallelujah

In 1984, Cohen's record company, Columbia, initially dismissed the album containing *Hallelujah*, deeming it not good enough for release in the United States. Undeterred, Cohen independently launched the album *Various Positions*, which unfortunately received little attention from the audience.

For years, *Hallelujah* lingered in the shadows of underappreciation, despite other artistes recognising its brilliance and covering it. However, the song's fortunes took an unexpected turn when it found its way into the soundtrack of an animated movie about an ogre, a princess, and a donkey—none other than the popular film *Shrek*.

Their film shows how *Hallelujah*—blending gospel music with the charged speech of the synagogue—was worked on for years, then languished unnoticed before it was salvaged by John Cale, Jeff Buckley and the *Shrek*

soundtrack. Today it's a staple; it's outlived its creator. Even Cohen, like the king in the song, was baffled by *Hallelujah*. He didn't want to explain it and decided he probably couldn't if he tried. He said, "If I knew where songs came from, I would go there more often."



The song's lyrics explore themes of love, spirituality, and the complexities of the human experience. Cohen's gravelly voice adds a raw authenticity to the composition, enhancing its emotional impact.

The song's genius lies in its ambiguity, allowing listeners to interpret its meaning in various ways. The recurring refrain of 'Hallelujah' serves as both a cry of exaltation and a reflection on the tumultuous nature of life.

TV TALKIES

Killer Soup

Killer Soup is a crime series combining elements of mystery and dark comedy, drawing very loose inspiration from a news headline. The eight-episode long series is directed and co-written by Abhishek Chaubey, with producers Honey Trehan and Chetana Kowshik. It features a stellar cast including Manoj Bajpayee, Konkona Sensharma, Nasser, Sayaji Shinde, and Lal amongst others.

Set in the picturesque town of Minjur in Tamil Nadu, characterised by lush green hills, a beautiful river, and crooked alleys the show presents the plot of how Swathi (Konkona Sensharma) dodges the curveballs life throws at her. As a gaslighted housewife dreaming of owning her own soup shop, she does whatever it takes to achieve her goal.

This absurdist tale of Manoj Bajpayee and Konkona Sensharma's characters desperately hiding the truth as new threats emerge every ten minutes has proved to be a rather gripping watch.

