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BIDITA BAG

Please share your upcoming projects in detail with our readers.

An exciting project I'm working on right now is the movie "Teen Do Paanch", directed by Amitabh Verma. Shreyas Talpade is the lead actor in the film and I'm the lead actress. It is a very light-hearted family comedy, focusing on a marriage where husband and wife have 3 children. The movie highlights the issues and challenges the husband and wife face while taking care of the kids.

I'm really looking forward to this film.

Another film I'm working on is Daya Bai. It is a biopic. Kerala-born Daya Bai has been diligently working and fighting for better lives of tribals of Central India. Though I'm a Bengali, I've really worked hard on the accent and nitty-gritty of the character to play it best.

I've also done a video for 9XM, "Busy Busy", which is already a hit. It is a lively and high-spirited track with great lyrics and catchy music. In the music video, we have shown the life of a girl who complains about the busy schedule of her beloved.

Obviously there are a couple of more projects, but I can't mention them right now.

You are a role model as an actress for several struggling and aspiring actors and actresses, and the young generation. What advice would you give them?

We always look at the glamour, the money and success in the film industry. We are easily impressed by the actors, actresses, directors and producers, thinking of them as very powerful people, very popular people, as stars in the industry; however, everyone – especially the struggling and aspiring actors and actresses, and the young generation – misses the hard part, the struggle before any success. Everyone is also programmed that way that instead of talking about the hard days, they prefer to talk about the rosy picture only. I've also struggled a lot before being recognized, but no one had told me that the struggles are too much in this industry. I also saw only the

Bollywood Calling

Making it big in Bollywood owing to her sheer dedication and passion to prove her mettle, Bidita Bagh is scripting stories of success with her spellbinding acting prowess and has created a unique niche for herself in the realm of cinema. Here's a presentation of some excerpts of her interview with Richa Sang

glamour and stardom, but didn't know that the struggle period can be really long and challenging.

Another point that everyone must understand is that actors and actresses are not always genetically beautiful and attractive. We need to work really hard to stay fit and attractive. We regularly need to exercise and run in the gym; practice in the dancing classes; work on our accent, our language – Hindi and English; be careful about our body and diet. But, nobody shares these with those who aspire to be successful in the film industry. And, this is not easy. So much money goes into these as everything has a cost. So, struggling doesn't just mean enduring, which most can do. But, if you haven't started working, or have just started working, you wouldn't be able to handle your expenses, just preparing yourself for that big break. And everything has a cost. You have to spend for your gym classes, diction classes, dancing classes, pay your PR, wear good clothes, hire a stylist, and then manage your time also and go for auditions regularly. It's not easy!

It's similar to someone who runs and wins a Gold Medal at one of the Olympics. He may finish the race in 11 seconds, but he practiced for years. If people see only the 11-second run and the extraordinary success, and not the years of hardship, they wouldn't be able to understand things in the right perspective.

Finally, the most important part of the answer! Nobody tells you about the failure stories. Out of 100 aspiring actors & actresses, only 3 to 5 get the success which is great or worthwhile. You need unlimited patience and will power to face rejections every day multiple times, to avoid depression.

You have done some really powerful

roles on screen, especially in Babumoshai Bandoobbaaz. What kind of preparations do you do for your on-screen roles?

Sometimes you get time to prepare, sometimes not. One always needs to be prepared. I was offered the role of Fulwa in Babumoshai Bandoobbaaz at the last moment. Literally, there wasn't any time to prepare for the role.

So, whatever time you have, you must keep preparing yourself. Over a period of time, I have improved my Hindi, as I'm Bengali. Specifically for the film Babumoshai Bandoobbaaz, I tried to practice and grasp the UP dialect with the right accent, in which I had to speak my dialogues.

I also saw some intimate videos on YouTube, doing my own research, to look authentic during the scene. Contrary to public opinion, it's very different and very difficult to enact something like that on screen. You have to think of the right angles, right moves, right expressions, your timing, while continuously thinking if it would look good and authentic, and not vulgar to viewers. You have to judge and show it to the viewers how much you are into the act. After all, it's acting. But, the viewers must think it's real while they are watching the movie. They must not feel that the girl had gone out of her character. A girl from UP would do the things shown in the movie, and if Bidita Bag is playing the role of that girl, she must also do that. The viewers must feel when they come out of the theatre that Bidita Bag is different, real and a very good actress.

However, I must also mention here that viewers of my movies have been really supportive. I have had bad and nasty reviews from some pseudo-intellectual critics, who show off as if

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they know a lot about the technicalities of a movie or the world cinema, but don't realize that adverse comments may even sabotage an otherwise good film on which some people worked hard and which may be really dear to their hearts. On the other hand, there have been some really encouraging critics also, who give you strength and self-belief, because of whom you continue to work hard.

Everyone in the Indian Film Industry has a struggling period before they make it big. Please share your struggles with our readers.

Every day is a struggle. When I came to Mumbai, I used to do 5 to 10 auditions every day. To save money, I would cook for myself. In the morning, I would

"XXART FROM BEING A CLEAN WATER SPREE, THIS DIVING AREA MESMERIZES BY CORALS, THE WIDE SARGASSUM FOREST, THE ROCKSCAPE AND THE SHEER COLORFUL DIVERSITY CDFWDFGEGEFGERGEFG OF MARINE LIRTYETRYRTEYERTYRXYXX"



cook food and pack it, keep water and makeup kit in my bag, and would start off with the daily routine of auditions. Mostly the auditions would be held near Bandra or Mahalaxmi, so I would pack my bag and take a train to be there, and come back only in the evening. I needed to keep several change of clothes with me – formal clothes, casual clothes, clothes fit for a housewife or a college student or a corporate employee. I would also carry a large portfolio of 2 kg with me at that time, with A4 size prints of my photos. Facebook and Instagram are popular now.

And then, at several places, people auditioning would reject outrightly. I used to fight at such instances. On one such day, I was busy with several auditions, and I met a casting director.

He told me at the door only that “You don’t fit the bill”. I knocked on the door and asked him what he meant by “fit the bill”. What did I lack? Though it’s an old story now, and whenever that casting director meets me now, he jokes that this girl had fought with me. He later got me many projects.

Some casting directors I feel hold auditions only for pastime. There’s one more instance where a fat girl was required for the role. The dialogue for the audition was, “Jaanu, kya main moti to nahi lag rahi hun?” I knew that I was not fat, but I went for the audition as I had been called. When I was outrightly rejected, I fought with the casting director, as going for that audition meant that my entire day was spoiled as I could not manage any other audition

that day. I saw that advertisement on TV later, in which a very fat girl had finally acted. I was very thin at that time. So, no thin girl should have been called in the first place.

Also, when I came to Mumbai, I didn’t have too much money. My parents didn’t support me. I started living in Mumbai in a very small house, where if I opened the window, rats would come in. But I had to save money, so that’s the best I could afford. I used to cook myself, wash utensils and clothes myself, clean the house myself. There were cases where I wouldn’t be paid on time, and then people would pay in cheque, but the cheque would bounce. I still have those cheques with me.

Who is your role model inside and outside the Indian Film Industry? What have you learnt from them?

I don’t have a role model as such. What I try to do is extract the good of everyone. Don’t people say that a swan can separate milk from water and drink only milk! So, I ignore the bad things and absorb the good of everybody. Because I feel, nobody is perfect.

Talking of Bollywood, you can’t say that any actor has been consistently good or bad. Some people have several good films and then a few bad films too.

However, if I have to take names, I used to like Uttam Kumar and Soumitra Chatterjee very much, as I have grown up watching Bengali movies. Waheeda Rehman, Nargis and Nutan are also my favourites from old Hindi movies. I like Juhi Chawla from Hindi movies. Aishwarya Rai influenced me very much. I even copied some of her styles during my modeling days. I also like Sushmita Sen and Preity Zinta.

If you had to change one or more thing(s) politically in this country, what would it/they be? If you had to change one or more thing(s) in the Indian Film Industry, what would it/they be?

In politics, corruption must be eliminated completely. Politics is full of liars, and during voting people must be careful and vote for only genuine people. Crony capitalism must be avoided. Politicians should work only on those things which

directly benefit the public, especially the farmers and armed forces.

In movies, a new era has already started where filmmakers are not afraid of experiments. Long time back, movies used to be really good. In between, the general standard of movies went southward in terms of stories, dialogues and music. Now, the trend is changing. It is also because of the increased opportunities and platforms like web series.

People are making movies regardless of the fact if it would be commercially hit. They can choose subjects on which nobody worked so far. This is a good time for the Indian Film Industry and also the World Film Industry, as content is new and exciting.

We are also making period movies on some unsung heroes of the past. So, overall, the change is already happening. I don't want to change anything. This is a good change! It should turn into a revolution, a renaissance.

Which movie of yours do you like the most? Why?

Currently, my own movie I like the most is "Teen Do Paanch". I feel my role is very difficult. I generally do serious films, but while working for this movie, I have really enjoyed myself. The character is very much like me – funny and quirky. I'm not very serious in real life, and I like to crack jokes a lot. Rarely, you get movies like "Teen Do Paanch", where you completely enjoy the work. Otherwise, in my earlier movies, the environment was always different. You have to act and be serious all the time. The scenes demand that you cry, or get abused or beaten up. There's a lot of drama and melodrama. To enact those scenes, you lose a lot of energy. They drain your emotions and energy. There's no fun in these things. During the shooting of "Teen Do Paanch", it was all fun. I felt recharged, rejuvenated, refilled after this film. It affected me very positively. Spending time with kids makes you energetic. The kids I worked with were very energetic. Handling them was difficult.

I also liked the fact that I had to work with children for this film. Shreyas Talpade is very supportive and three children in the movie kept me

completely at ease and entertained. The Director, Amitabh Verma, is also great! We shot for 25 days, and it was great fun! Though we shot when the weather was hot, all of us enjoyed a lot.

How real are Indian Films in depicting the society? Are Indian Films a good example or a bad example on the Indian society?

There are different categories of films in the Indian film industry. Some are able to depict the Indian society and the reality in life accurately, and some are of course following the same clichéd formula and masala. They are based on love stories or action stories or jingoism. While making patriotic films, they cross the boundary of jingoism. Their films show loud "deshbhakti". They are predictable and show the same things which the industry has been showing for decades now.

So, realistic and unrealistic films are made side-by-side. So, obviously the entire film industry cannot be held as a good or bad example on the society. Some films are good examples, and some are bad. Every film is different. Some are really out-of-the-box films, which impact the society and people positively and exhort them to do better in life.

I don't count the formula films and remake films at all, because I don't think they affect the society at all, positively or negatively.

What do you think Indian Films need to do to create an impact on the international level? International players have increasingly started investing in Indian projects. Will such associations successfully take the Indian Films to the next level, where big-budget films, technologically more advanced films and sci-fi films would become a reality?

International collaborations have definitely improved our movies at the domestic and international levels. The content quality has also improved.

However, the impact has been both positive and negative. International tie-ups have also accepted that the ultimate motive is money-making. So, formula films are more in demand, than the



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realistic films. Limited experiments are being made. Initially, people from both sides were keen on exploring different content and styles, but the industry pushed them towards commercial targets.

Even Amazon Prime and Netflix were considered exciting for independent film makers, but it didn't happen finally. The tie-ups have also been limited, as international companies want to collaborate with already established large cinema houses. Independent film makers are increasingly finding it difficult to even recover their budget. However, the large producers collect a part of their budget before the film is even released. So, the international tie-ups have become more of a power game. And, without due support to independent film makers, a different content would never become successful.

Art cinema and commercial cinema always had a conflict. So, money can't be the deciding factor. So, international tie-ups will have to think of small and independent players, before we would see any worthwhile change.

Even for shooting, small players don't get subsidies for shooting in different countries, which big players manage easily.