

**The Beginning**

'Vivid' Bharti...

I started showing my inclination towards anything remotely connected with acting at a very early age. I remember we had an old

three-month period. I got to see life in the circus at close quarters. Here was an art form quite akin to mine and the performers showed the kind of dedication and hard work which one seldom sees in any other workplace. It involved an element of sports, which made me really identify with the whole set up. We would shoot at all odd

hours in between the show timings. We would start when the circus packed up at about ten at night. We would continue shooting throughout

ing couples would end up at the same time on the either side of the wall and whisper sweet nothings to each other. All these wonderful moments under the same roof where the same people enacted death defying stunts every day. Their main aim in life was to become trapeze artists, that's all. Many died or got maimed in this quest. It was a common sight to see armless janitors working around. They were one-time lion tamers who got their arms bitten off. Now they knew nothing else apart from performing so they stuck on, doing odd jobs here. Their training started early in life, and by time they grew up the only thing they knew were scary stunts. It is a lot like an actor,

directors in our film industry, Mr. Lekh Tandon.

It was a major learning experience for me. The serial was highly emotional and required a lot of crying and heartfelt emotional acting. It became quite an exercise for me to relate to absolutely basic Indian emotions coming from a rather westernized school of acting. Mr. Tandon, or Lekhji, as I call him, really helped me a lot to just get over the inhibitions and relate to a louder set of emotions and overall acting style which was required for the role.

I believe...

Some felt my looks were not adequate to make it as a romantic hero. One producer of mine still insists that my "hair is like a bear's". I never felt bad about what they



By Shanali Edirisinghe

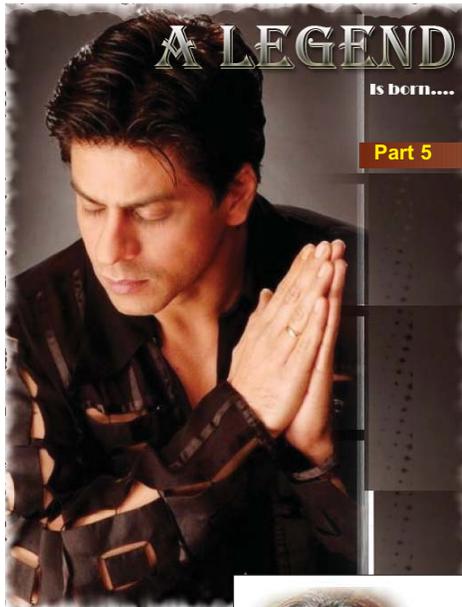
said. Because I believed. I believed that I would finally look my part in my films. I knew that I am no Greek God in the looks department, but I thought I would project an inner beauty on the screen which people would be able to see and understand. Even now I am not a vain person, because I firmly believe that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. My mother thought I was very good looking. I wish that producer could meet up with her and she'd show him who looked like a bear just before she hung him on the clothes line to dry.

I believe that when you are in love, your

Courtesy www.bollywoodboards.com

partner is the most beautiful person in the world. I believe I can have a love story with my audience. I can love them and love them a lot. Even then, I was sure that they would realize this love and love me back. And once they were in love they would find me nice, whether I was Adonis or not. I believed that when my audience would come to see me I was not going to present to them a well-sculpted, well-groomed piece of wax. I would not and I could not. Instead I would hold up a mirror to them and show them how they would look doing what I was doing. I wasn't here to show off my talents and whatever I had in the looks department and ask for admiration and appreciation. I was here to ask for love. I was here to woo them not impress them. I was here to make them realize that I am just one of them, like them, except that my job puts me in different situations and stories. And if I was able to hold up this mirror to everyone I was sure my audience would appreciate me because they would reciprocate their love to one of their own, hair not withstanding

The end



radio, I think it was called a radiogram in those days. It weighed kilos and I still wonder why the modest 'gram' is attached to its name. Television wasn't a way of life then. I am talking about the early seventies, when the refrigerator was not kept in the kitchen but instead held center stage in the living room. Our main source of entertainment used to be this boxy and knobby radio. My parents would put on Vividh Bharti and sit around it in the evenings to listen to songs and the news. Once the news was over I usually took over. I loved to dance to the music. My parents would turn up the volume and I would do some really frantic dances. My dance was a cross between the twist, the tango and an acute epileptic fit. Lately I have seen this kind of dance in discos and Ricky Martin videos. Sometimes, when I am alone I take pride in the fact that I was the inventor of this completely inexplicable set of movements. I used to dance best to any song that I was told was pictured on Mumtaz.

the night till nine in the morning, when the shows would start again. Life is a circus was gruelling. It was a common sight to see an eight-year-old kid holding his broken arm and being taken away from practice. Girls would stay separately and boys would be in a different corner of the dera, as the quarters were called. Girls were allowed to leave the premises only once a

once an actor always an actor. I think this is where it set in my heart that I would also pursue my career in the same vein. Not to think of an alternative, just work towards being an actor. I wanted to fly, free as a bird, not bound by any consideration, but the independence of expression - I wanted to be a trapeze artist also. I learnt the maxim of acting from my time spent in the circus: "Ho gaya to kartab, gir gaye, mar gaye toh haadsa" - If you can pull it off, it's

a performance, if not it was just an accident, try and do it again and again till one day you die.

It was with this training from greats, these lessons in acting and performing from some wonderful co-actors and friends and a lot of energy and hope that I armed myself with, that I decided to work in films.

**Dil Darya**

This serial was based in Punjab. It was a story of a Sikh and Hindu family who are neighbours and best of friends. The strife in relationships occur within this loving atmosphere because of the prevailing tensions in Punjab. The serial was directed by perhaps one of the best



week and three girls went at a time with a headmistress to buy vegetables. Love stories or love between the performers was a strict no-no but they still found very interesting ways of having affairs and romances. An item where a girl would balance a little boy and girl in a barrel, on her feet, was their love letters postal service. The little boy and girl would exchange love notes while inside the drum and carry it back to their quarters at the end of the show.

Also, the bathrooms had a common wall. So a method was devised vis-a-vis the match-

**Circus**

Circus was a great experience. I had never travelled so much in my life. We went all over Maharashtra and areas in Goa over a

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