

On Set with Maria Wasti

by Irim Ahmed

Tell us something about your present shoot in Dubai?

I am here for a serial. It's a Faheem Burney serial. The cast includes both Pakistanis and Indians. The serial is called "Dharkan" and it's a mixture of emotions. I have the main role in it. The cast includes Aejaz Aslam, Imran Abbas and Sara Gillani, Tina, Rohit and Kawaljeet Singh, who are from India. It's a co-production and family oriented serial including a love story.

How was it like working in 'Riyasat'?

It was a Humayun Saeed production. It was a very different role for me as I had not done a role like that before. It has a Sindhi background to it and so the flavour of that language had to be kept there. Secondly, I loved the theme. I immediately agreed for the role when I found about it. Kamran Qureishi is a very good and hardworking director. He has been working with Humayun Saeed for quite a long time. The cast was bold and it had an excellent story line. Another interesting fact is that this serial was based on certain true events and characters.

What role do you think is television playing in creating awareness in our people & society?

Television is a very important media, whether we accept it or not. Consciously or unconsciously, it affects everyone. Every home has a television and it has an obvious influence. There is a media war prevailing nowadays. The days when we used to conquer with swords and guns are over. Whatever you show in the television creates an overall impression of our society and culture in the viewers mind. Television is a very important medium through which we reach the people. If used effectively, it can change life. It can shape up the



present generation. So we have a big responsibility on our shoulders relating to what we portray. Media is shaping up today's generation. If you used effectively it can change lives. So that is very important on how project your countries image.

Do you think too many private channels has decreased the quality of drama serials made these days?

Well the quality had to decrease because our supply of actors, actresses, writers, directors, producers and other facilities are not enough. That is why it is so hard to keep up with the quality output of the numerous channels that we now have. Obviously creating so many new channels was a challenge, people have taken it well and are working really hard. Things have definitely changed today. People today are considering it as a serious profession. We have many new people are entering this field.

Before, it was just considered as a hobby and never taken seriously. So, this is a period of growth and expansion. It will take some time to improve and then maintain the quality.

You project a very powerful persona in drama serials. Are you really that strong in person?

(Smiling) Well it depends on the role. I am a strong person when it comes to certain things in life. One goes through different relationships and interactions in daily life. If I am a strong person on television it doesn't necessarily mean that I am the same in reality. One has to behave accordingly to different people and situations.

Can acting be taught or is it purely talent?

I believe it is a God gifted talent that can be chiseled. If you have a flair for a particular vocation, you then have to

refine it. If it was purely based on talent, then every other person would be in this profession. It's something that you have inside you which you have to recognize and groom it. I believe If you have a bit of talent and the right connections and proper working environment, then you can become a successful actor or actress. But yes the seed of talent has to be inside of you to start with.

Which characters that you've played do you identify with the most?

I identify with almost about 95 % of the characters that I have played. Relating with them means that the characters are reality based which you see around you in your daily life. It is very important for me to see, feel and understand the character. If there is nothing real about the character then it also becomes difficult for an actor to perform them convincingly. Portraying emotions is all about how they get triggered and then what are there consequent effects.

Have you got your dream role yet or still waiting?

Not exactly. I am waiting for something interesting. My idea of a dream role would be one in which everything is perfect, like a great script with an excellent director and talented cast members. All these aspects coming together would constitute a dream role. Usually, there is always something missing. If you have a good script, then the cast isn't good, or the director isn't good, or there might not be a good theme or storyline.

Name a favourite actor or actress.

I really don't have any favourites. I like different actors in different roles they perform. It isn't necessary that you act like Robert De Niro in every role he plays. An amazing actor with a bad script would create a flop. There are moments or roles that one likes of a character in a particular movie. I do like Michelle Pfeifer in many of the roles she has done.

Why are you seen in serious roles most of the time and not in comedy?

I have done comedy before but basically my forte has been this side of work. I started out with serious roles and then just got more offers for this aspect of acting. In fact, I have started preferring it. I like doing comedy once in a while but not all the time; in fact I'm working on one these days.

Are you comfortable taking up negative roles?

Oh, yes I am. Actually in life there is no such thing as negative or positive characters. All individuals make right and wrong decisions and have committed good and bad deeds. Everybody have some flaws, like everybody do get jealous. You never know that I might be in general doing something good but it may end up being bad for you, so it's all about perspectives and how one sees it. I always try to keep a human touch in my negative characters. I believe that in a given moment of time, certain bad side of a person surfaces but he can't be labeled as bad all the time.

What do you think of the joint ventures between India & Pakistan?

I think they are good. It's a healthy change of culture and work, but it should to be in moderated. The Indian side is better known here and so they have a stronger influence. Our dramas and channels are not shown in India, even though most of our older serials are quite famous and well-known. Their actors are stars here, but it is not the same case across the border. So, definitely a balance and control must be maintained.

Soaps shown on Pakistani channels these days seem to be inspired by Indian channels. What do you have to say about that?

I actually never could enjoy watching such soaps. I could never really relate to it. However, they started a new trend. Since we aren't able to come up with our own original works, we have started copying them badly. The copying had

started with films and now even dramas and other kinds of television shows. We should know that a hit over there won't necessarily become a hit over here. We don't really have an impressive film history, so we have always shown our talent and might through our dramas. We should have maintained our own individuality because we all know that imitation never pays off. Today Ideas sell and if we don't come up with our own we will end up forever following them.

Do you see yourself as a future director?

No, besides acting, I am only into production only. To me direction is a very specialized and difficult job. I don't think I can do it right now. Though I have been producing for the past 3 years but directing along with acting is not possible for me.

Any upcoming serials and dramas to look forward to ...?

There are quite a lot of things coming up. There are two sitcoms and a series that I am producing. Besides that, I am working on a soap opera which is written by Bushra Ansaari. Javed Sheikh, Bushra Aapa and Kawaljeet Singh and I have the main roles in it. It's a very interesting love story. There are also a lot of other serials in the pipeline.

Would you like to give out any message to young actors and actresses out there?

I feel that Acting has to be taken very seriously. Don't treat it like a part time job. You have to give your fullest to be successful here. Whatever you may endeavor, may it be acting, producing, editing, camerawork, please study it. Only if you are serious about it then pursue it. I believe all professions should be taken seriously and sincerely.