



Kerala in Mumbai

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NADIA MOIDU
STARDOM UNSOUGHT

ACKNOWLEDGED ACTRESS NADIA MOIDU IS ROLE MODEL

- P K Ravindranath

A chance viewing of a video recording of a mapilla wedding song and dance, an impromptu gesture at a roadside eve-teasing incident - these factors made Nadia Moidu, a Mumbai Commercial Arts' student enter the film industry and become one of the most sought after and busiest actress in South India in the '80s. Today she is making a re-entry after a gap of 26 years.



Nadia Moidu took life as it came, never compromised, and soon found herself catapulted to the top. A Mumbai girl to the core, Nadia is unorthodox, liberal in her outlook and views. She found a real-life role in her very first film, and became the heart-throb of millions of fans overnight.

The role of Girlie, in "Nokketha Doorathu Kannum Nattu" ("Riveting Eyes Beyond Sight") in 1985 made Nadia the heart-throb of every teenager. It also made her a role model for thousands of conservative Muslim girls in Kerala to yearn for a life as envisaged by director Fazil and played to the hilt by Nadia.

Girlie was a tomboy, carefree, nonconformist, unorthodox and rebellious. The role came her way by pure chance.

She was studying commercial Arts in J J School in Mumbai when Fazil offered her the role. Fazil's brother, Nasir, like many other friends from Kerala would make the Moidu household a transit camp on their way to the Gulf, since there were no flights from Kerala to the Gulf. He happened to see a video recording of Nadia's uncle's wedding at Tellicherry, from where her father hails.

Along with the other girls in the family Nadia also enacted the traditional Mappila wedding songs. Nasir reported to Fazil that he should have a look at Nadia before he finalized casting for the role of Girlie.

Fazil came to Mumbai and suggested that Nadia and her younger sister, Haseena, go for a stroll. On the road, a youth on a bike made passes at the two girls. Nadia flared up and gave him a



Nadia with her husband Shirish and children Sanam and Jana

mouthful. That impromptu gesture made the day for Fazil. Nadia had passed the "audition" and landed the role- unasked and unexpected.

Since she could not abandon her course at J J School, she took time off during her Diwali and Xmas holidays to shoot for "Nokketha Doorathu Kannum Natti" in Alleppey. The film became a super hit, followed by a Tamil version, which too became a runaway hit.

Between 1985 and 1988 Nadia did 24 roles in Malayalam and Tamil, and emerged as the busiest actress in the South.

She and her father would screen the roles that were offered to her and accept only those that she liked. Since both Moidu and his wife, Lalitha, were comfortably employed with Tata's in Mumbai, Nadia did not have to bother about a regular career in films. She

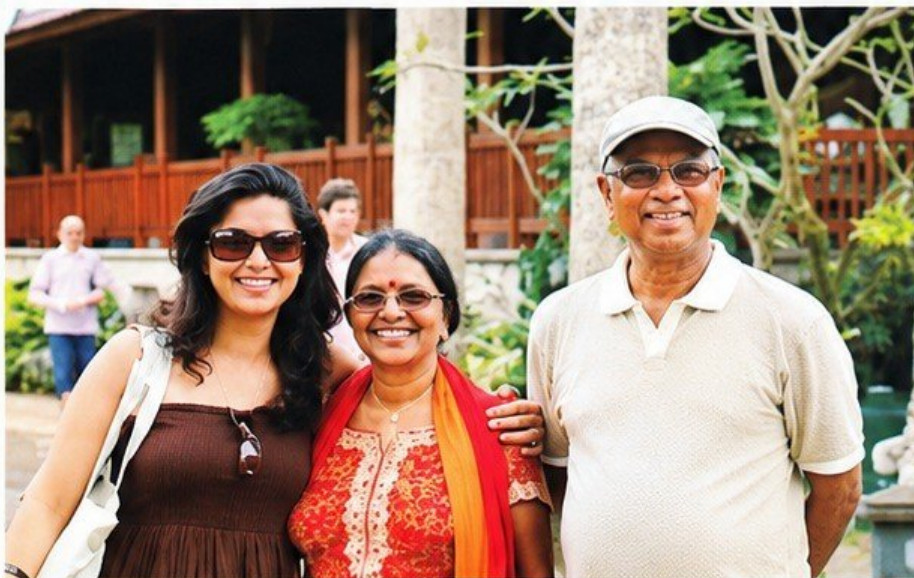
could afford to be choosy, sidestepping the roles that were frivolous, merely entertaining or just romantic escapades. Even then Moidu had to seek voluntary retirement, to accompany his daughter for regular shootings in Kerala and in Chennai.

Nadia had done her schooling at the J B Vacha School in Parsi Colony, Dadar. Most of her classmates were Parsi girls with a sprinkling of Gujaratis. The staff was good and Nadia ranked high throughout her days at J B Vacha.

"I continue to keep in touch with my teachers and every night before I go to sleep, I recite my Parsi prayers," Nadia says.

At J J School of Arts, she came in contact with a bright young Maharashtrian boy, Shirish Godbole. They shared a lot of things in common views, outlook, habits and an uncommon catholicity. Then, Shirish decided to go to the US for studies. They kept in touch, long distance, without telephones and internet. Nadia would send him her shooting schedules with complete addresses where he could write to her. He would come down for his annual vacations. He returned in 1987 with an MBA in finance and investment and with a job with Stanley Morgan. They got married in 1988. Nadia was just 22 then and a top ranking actress.

As in most escapist Hindi films the Nadia-Shirish wedding was not without an element of surprise and twist. Nadia had just then received an offer to star in "Maine Pyar Kiya." She was in two minds. She asked Shirish. He left the matter entirely to her decision. Nadia decided to go ahead with the wedding.



Nadia with her parents

One month after the wedding the newly weds were off to the States.

As Shirish went to work, Nadia took up studies in Communication Arts at Boston. It did her a world of good and helped Nadia utilise her time profitably.

Nadia had no problems with religion, caste or language getting married into the Brahmin Godbole family. Her father-in law B K Godbole, had spent long years in Europe as a distinguished civil servant. "Besides, I suppose my fluency in Marathi helped," adds Nadia.

The Godboles have two daughters- Sanam, 14 and Jana, 10. Both attend international schools in Bandra. The girls studied in American and British schools, before they came down to Mumbai three years ago.

In 2005 Nadia worked in a Tamil superhit, "M Kumaran, Son of Mahalakshmi" for which she came down from London during the children's school holidays. She took up the role because it was "way out different." It was the story of the bonding between a mother and son. Legend has it that several estranged young men patched up with their mothers after seeing the film.

Nadia has completed her work as a Police Commissioner in "Sevens" by Director Joshi, with whom she was working after a gap of 26 years. "It was rewarding," she says.

Nadia is more relaxed now. Her mother, who retired from the Tata's, moves into her flat at Pali Hill, from her house in Chembur, to take charge of her household, when Nadia goes shooting.

Luckily for Nadia, trends in film making in the South are fast changing. There is greater insistence on women-oriented films, more stress on strong characterisation of women of all ages.

"Twenty-six years is too long a period by current standards for an actress. But the outlook is good because of the changing trends." Nadia muses.



Nadia in her forthcoming film "Sevens"

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