

I'd known Parveen before working with her. The first time I met her when Mahesh (Bhatt) had made his first film 'Manzilen Aur Bhi Hain'. Mahesh had invited my theatre guru, Satyadev Dubey to a private party at her residence because Dubey had written its screenplay. Dubey asked me to join the party, and thus technically I gate crashed the party. In spite of that, it was very nice of Parveen to welcome me very warmly. Dubey introduced Parveen to me as a young, talented girl trying to establish herself. Apart from Mahesh, Amitabh and Jaya, Kabir Bedi and Romesh Sharma were also present. Amitabh was yet to become a superstar; I remember Amitabh, Jaya and Romesh sticking to each other in one corner.

This first meeting left a distinct impression of Parveen in my mind – I found her very dignified, elegant, yet vulnerable!

Our second meeting left yet another unforgettable impression on me. Badal Sircar, another legendary theatre personality from Bengal, was visiting me in Mumbai. On a Sunday, Badal da said he wished to see a film shoot. So, I drove him down to the Film City, and on the very first outdoor set Amitabh was shooting. I introduced Badal da to him and later to Mithun Chakraborty as well. Before I could even introduce her, Parveen a rising star by then, came rushing to speak to us! She touched Badal da's feet and said, "Oh my God. It's such an honour to meet you, Sir." She then went on to say how that one play "Evam Indrajit" of Badal Sircar, had completely changed her life which according to her was an Indian classic! She shyly mentioned that she had begun her career by playing Manasi, the central character in 'Evam Indrajit'. We were on the set for almost 2 hours and kept on talking about literature and theatre. Far away from her Bollywood image of a sexy seductress, this was a completely different and fascinating Parveen!! I feel sad that this learned face of Parveen did not get exposed to her fans.

Hrishida paired her with me for 'Rang Birangi'. Hrishida had cautioned me about a rough phase that she was going through! "We must all try and help her" he'd said. But she was all fine and composed. She managed to deglamorize herself for that role with great ease. We used to discuss scenes, and as a disciplined actor, she listened to the director with complete attention. During shoots, particularly outdoors, I could see she would suddenly not be her usual self and she'd clam up. She'd sit in a corner all by herself, and it looked like she didn't want to be disturbed. So, I also let her have her space but I could see that she was struggling with herself and trying to snap out of it. After a while, she'd come back and be that lovely, warm, chatty person again. I did not intrude upon her space and let her be in it. As a co-star, I have very fond memories of working with her.

Since I wasn't much of a "Bollywood" person, partying around at late nights, so I never socialized with her other than the above instances. I met her in a few functions, but very briefly and formally. Whenever I heard her news, mostly about her deteriorating state, I felt somewhere guilty of being a member of the film industry which could not pull her out of depression. Going beyond the rumors, it was clear that she was in turmoil and we ought to have helped her. Much later, in the hindsight, I realized Hrishida's honorable gesture of accommodating her with all her then prevailing issues. When I saw AARTH, once again I felt the same pinch to see Smita perform the 'other woman's character' which was apparently based on Parveen's life. Once again I retreated into my shell away and distant from the patriarchal film industry. Now whenever I think of Parveen, I see a gorgeous, tall woman!