




Spruha's Corner

By Spruha Srivastava

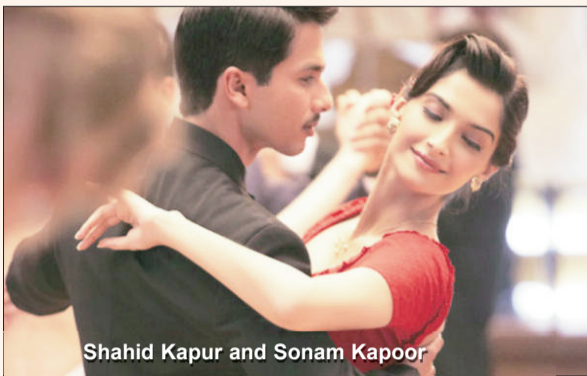
Masuum – not so awesome!

When a love story is mixed with political hostilities and religious conflict, the result is not always a hit, unless we are talking about Veer Zara or Gadar among others. Masuum, the latest flick starring Shahid Kapur and Sonam Kapoor has been facing rough weather in its first few weeks of opening.

Pankaj Kapur's directorial debut has in fact also run into trouble with the Indian Air Force over an action sequence in the second half of the film.



Shahid Kapur and Sonam Kapoor



and now-widowed aunt have moved to Scotland. The romance between Harry and Aayat is rekindled.

Unfortunately Kargil war separates them again where Harry is summoned in the line of duty. Unable to trace each other post the war, the two sulk for each other for years.

Then, one day, out of the blue, Harry spots Aayat in Switzerland but takes her cousin to be her husband, and mistakes his child to be their child. Fate throws them together once again in Ahmedabad in India when communal riots break out there. Aayat is being chased by miscreants during the riots. Harry, whose left hand has since been paralysed, is trying to save Aayat. And fate brings them together again.

Seven years pass by. Harry is now an IAF pilot. His job takes him to Scotland where he meets Aayat again. Both are shocked to see each other. Aayat, her father (Kamal Nain Chopra)

Political events in the interim form the picture's backdrop: from Babri Masjid, terrorism in Kashmir, through Kargil, to 9/11, and Gujarat riots. Each, in

their own ways, affects the characters. But throughout the span of 10-12 years of political unrest and conflicts, one can see that the characters remain young and fresh. They haven't moved on in their lives, as if waiting for the next conflict to happen when they can meet again. The movie goes about an unrealistic roller coaster ride.

Shahid Kapur remains the main saviour of the film. He acts with an effortless ease and fits well into the character. While he looks charming and suave as an IAF pilot, he dances gracefully around the trees too. Sonam Kapoor looks a little too immature for the role.

Overall, Pankaj Kapur's direction is good even though a number of twists and turns in the story look extremely unrealistic. However, the projection of life in Punjab has been done beautifully. Hence, the film is a mix of positives and negatives. Watch it if you are a Shahid Kapur fan.

Navratri celebration begins

It's the time of the year to celebrate festivals, eat good food and play Dandiya. For those of you who don't know, Raas or Dandiya Raas is the traditional folk dance form of Vrindavan, India, where it is performed depicting scenes of Holi, and lila of Krishna and Radha. Along with Garba, it is the featured dance of Navratri evenings in Western India.

In Dandiya Raas men and women dance in two circles, with sticks in their hands. In the old times Raas did not involve much singing; just the beat of Dhol was enough. "Dandiya" or sticks are about 18" long. Each dancer holds two, although some times when they are short on Dandiya they will use just one in right hand. Generally, in a four beat rhythm, opposite sides hit the sticks at the same time, creating a nice sound. One circle goes clockwise and another counter clockwise. In the west, people don't form full circles,



but instead often form rows.

In UK, Navratri celebrations have already begun. Dandiya Raas is taking place from 28th September to 8th October at the Brentford Fountain Leisure Center in Chiswick. With music by Kiran & Anuradha of Strings, this event like last year is ready to rock and roll Londoners with the joy of Garba and Dandiya. Tickets can be purchased from the R.C.T Centre, Headstone Lane, Harrow. More details available on <http://www.strings-band.com/navratri-dandia.htm>.

Let us know what you think.

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Women on TOP

Best of the two worlds

Ayesha Vardag is a familiar face in the field of law. A renowned divorce lawyer, has very strong convictions and she holds on to family values- a bit of both eastern and western.

Ayesha grew up in Oxford with her English mother and Scottish grandmother. Her father, a politician, lived in Pakistan and occasionally visited Britain. He told Ayesha stories about the sophisticated world of richness, politics and colours in Pakistan, but it was only when 19, Ayesha visited Pakistan for the first time and learnt much about the culture and the language.

Ayesha spoke to Asian Voice regarding her family's political background, growing up and her profession as a lawyer.

a. As a half Asian, have you faced any difficulty to reach this far in your profession?

I have never, so far as I know, experienced racism holding me back in my career. I encountered it a little as a child and adolescent which scarred me quite deeply, but professionally I do feel that I have had a straight run based on the fruits of my own endeavours. Perhaps if I had looked more obviously Asian I would have been more prey to prejudice, but in my own experience in the law as a profession I genuinely believe there is the opportunity to stand on your own merits. Excellence as a lawyer depends too much on intellect to allow any quality employer to risk losing the best candidates through issues of race.

b. How was it growing up in a family of mixed races?

My English mother made efforts to bring my father's culture to bear in my life. Although she was Christian she had a great respect for Islam, and, out of consideration for my father, when I was born she whispered the Kalema into both my ears and I went to bed each night as a child saying both the Kalema and the Lord's Prayer. I was, in that respect, truly eclectic. I think both Eastern and Western cultures have so much to give, and there is so much common ground, especially between the



Ayesha Vardag

people of the book, that it would be better to find a way to give the children the richness of both.

c. Would you consider joining politics at any point?

My father wanted me to go into politics to become his political heir as his old associate and rival Zulikar Ali Bhutto had his daughter Benazir. He had a clear plan for how he would achieve that with me. I was so seduced and inspired by my life in Pakistan that I was partly persuaded. I planned to finish my degree at Cambridge then go back to Pakistan and engage in a political career.

However time and life, the impact of my stepmother, a return to my more familiar English culture, all combined to draw me away from that back to my future in England. As to politics here, I think right now that the combination of my firm and my family consume all my attention, but who knows in the future?

d. How important do you think is community, for a person to succeed in her/his field?

I think if you have the support of your community it's a huge help. Business and professional success have always been built on networks. It's also hugely valuable to have that emotional support. However you can make your own networks and forge your own communities if you have to, as I did.

e. Economist reported a month back that Asians are delaying marriage because social pressure of sticking to the marriage commitment amongst them is too high. What is your opinion about it?

It makes sense to delay marriage until one knows one is ready. I do personally believe that if after trying hard people still feel unhappy together and cannot make their relationship the source of comfort and joy which everyone needs through the difficulties of life then divorce should be considered. In that event, the key is to part kindly and with a strong sense of keeping co-parenting and familial links alive for the children. I feel strongly that divorce doesn't have to ruin anyone's life.

f. What percentage of Asians have you ever represented in a divorce case?

Some of our biggest cases have involved Asian and Middle Eastern families. We are sensitive to the fact that if you are Asian, divorce can involve culture and family to a high degree. We have tackled issues of polygamous marriage, polygamous divorce, validity of marriage, child contact and residence and, overwhelmingly, financial awards on divorce, within Asian and mixed families. I think our eclecticism, both in the staffing of our own firm and in the sorts of cases we do, is one of our great strengths.

g. To you, what are the right ingredients of being as successful as you are?

I have always set myself the target of being the best. I'm hugely demanding of myself and of those who work with me that we pursue excellence and don't contemplate mediocrity or failure. However, more than that, I think the eclecticism of my background has made me both slightly unconventional and able to "think outside the box" and somewhat fearless in the face of old norms and expectations. I think the strongest thing of all is to care passionately about what you do- it suffuses everything and makes you go the extra mile, and people pick up on that and want you fighting for them.