

THE TIMELESS, AGELESS ENCHANTRESS OF INDIAN CINEMA

Moushumi Chatterjee's contribution to Indian cinema has indeed been immense not only in terms of her sheer screen presence – her capability to carry any film all by herself, but also the mind blowing versatility of her range – the way she has evolved, made and remade herself so many a times as an actor over the years. She is one such doyen of Indian cinema, whose catching innocence, enigmatic grace and captivating charm has made her all the more adorable and beautiful with every new day of her life. Even at 70, she remains as vibrant and colourful, ever smiling and ageless as ever and yet she is grace and charm personified. Like she says, "I am a flirt by nature. I can flirt with a six-year-old and a 60-year-old. I am a warm person. I love to talk."

Hailing from a Kolkata family of Judges and army-men – who had not had even a distant connection with the world of films except the family staying in very close proximity to Kolkata's studio-para – Moushumi Chatterjee lit up the silver screen by making her debut in a Bengali masterpiece of Tarun Majumder – *Balika Badhu* – The Young Wife – in 1967. The film not only broke all records – becoming silver jubilee, golden jubilee, diamond jubilee and platinum jubilee in the box office – it gave Moushumi the most glorious platform to express her talent. But it was never going to be easy for a girl, who was all of 10-11 years and who belonged to such a family to come to terms with a prospective career in cinema. She also got the first of-

fer for Hrishikesh Mukherjee's 1971 classic *Guddi*, but could not accept it because of her father's strong reluctance. But the very first day Tarun Majumder saw her from his balcony while she was coming back from school, he made up his mind that if ever he was to make *Balika Badhu*, it was only this little girl who would do justice to the title character.

While still very young Moushumi got married to Joyanto Mukherjee, son of the legendary musician, music composer, lyricist, singer, songwriter, director and producer Hemant Kumar Mukhopadhyay and shifted to Bombay. Moushumi and her limelit fate strode on undeterred to emerge as that rare anomaly in mainstream Indian cinema, a leading star whose

career in the silver screen blossomed after her marriage.

In Bombay, her career skyrocketed with her portrayal of a blind girl in Sakti Samanta's *Anuraag* in 1972 and *Kachhe Dhaage* later in the year. Hemant Kumar too was committed in his support for his teenage daughter-in-law and given the times, Moushumi was indeed fortunate (as she often recounts that God has not been kind but rather partial towards her!) to have him as her source of unending inspiration and most endearing support. And the rest – as they say – is history. Many other timeless blockbusters followed one after another with the likes of some of the biggest hits of that time like *Angoor*, *Roti Kapda Aur Makaan*, *Dil Aur Deewaar* and *Jyoti Bane Jwala* made Moushumi one of the most popular bollywood idold of that era.

The rich range of leading roles

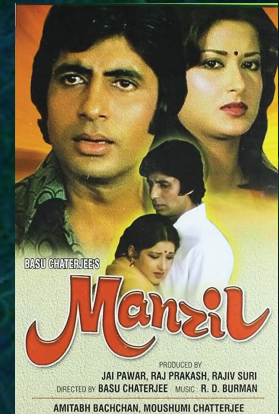
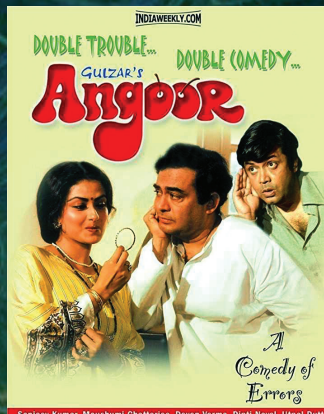
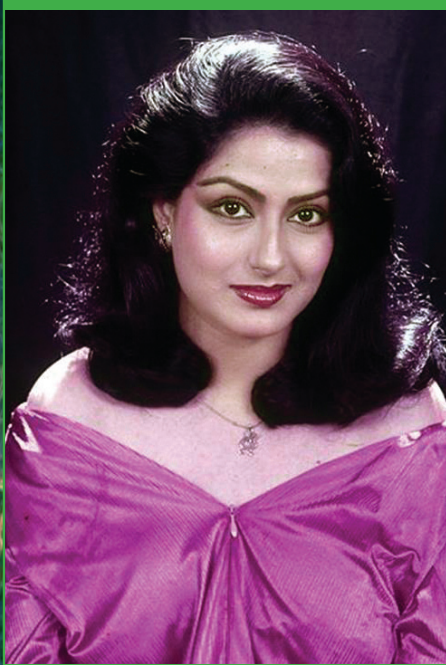


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that Moushumi enacted are fondly remembered till date even when the film industry has been evolving in leaps and bounds, a transition from the fairy tale closet dramas with an excess of fantasy and romance to movies that are more close to real life and its shades of good and bad nuances. All these years of her youthful exuberance - the beautiful, ever smiling, child-like innocent face has been captivating hearts of millions of all age groups. We have seen her as a woman in many roles - sister, daughter, wife, mother, actor and the ways in which our society perceives women in different walks of life.

She has been working with some of the greatest directors of India in her career spanned around 6 decades. From being the coy Balika Badhu to the scornful maashi in Aparna Sen's "The Japanese Wife"; to the widowed possessive mother in Deepa Mehta's Bollywood Hollywood and of course the no-nonsense ghost of the widowed pishima in another Aparna Sen masterpiece "Goynar Baksho" - the Jewellery Box - the journey has seen her growing in multifarious dimensions - loving wife, most caring mother, perceptive daughter-in-law - still successfully preserving the actor within and "herself" amidst all these responsibilities.

