

What was the biggest challenge of acting in the movie?

To be truthful to the emotions without overplaying them. It's an easy trap to fall into when you've done a role on stage where the style of acting is bigger and you have a live audience laughing in all the right places. On film, you have to take everything right down and let the audience and the laughs come to you.

How does comedy compare to a more serious performance?

I think comedy is a serious business. Both in comedy and serious roles, it's about finding the truth of the character, whether it's someone as out there as Granny Kumar or someone more reflective and watchful like Lopa.

Are you as funny in real life?

(Laughs) No, I'm a miserable git. Actually most comedians I have met are very serious people, maybe because they save all the manic energy and jokes for when they are on stage. But I like to think I can see the funny side in this messy business we call life.

Do think it's unfair to compare this movie to Ayub Khan Din's *East Is East*?

I suppose comparisons are inevitable when you have had such a big hit, but it's always a mistake to lump a writer's work together under one label. Writers develop and grow like any other artist and while

I think *East Is East* was a brilliantly funny and truthful film, *All In Good Time* has a depth and maturity you would expect from someone like Ayub, who is growing with each script he writes.

What else are you working on?

I've just finished filming a spy thriller for HBO and the BBC called *Hidden*, which was great fun, playing a politician who is under threat of assassination. And this summer I will be playing Beatrice in what I think is one of Shakespeare's greatest comedies, *Much Ado About Nothing*, which will be set in modern India. I'm working with director Iqbal Khan again, who was the assistant director on *Rafta Rafta* and really looking forward to bringing a blast of Punjab to the Bard.

'I don't want a life of regrets'**Are you going to be writing any more books?**

I'm actually halfway through my third novel, finally. I know there has been a big gap between my books but so many other things have come up in between. Also I had to wait until I found a story that really made me want to write again. Now I have, and hopefully the new novel will be out next year.

In terms of writing, where do you get your inspiration from?

People, always people. We have so many amazing untold stories. Scratch the surface of any apparently ordinary life and you will find a world of material.

Have you ever had a chance to look back on your incredible achievements?

I tend to only look forward so not really. I'm thankful to still be gainfully employed most of the time!

Which achievement are you most proud of?

My beautiful children and a warm, loving family life. Everything else is lovely icing on the cake.

What motivates you?

I don't want to live a life full of regrets. I grew up with a lot of women like that – funny, strong, creative women who never got the chance to follow their ambitions or dreams for various reasons. I feel lucky that my parents encouraged me to explore my creativity and I genuinely still feel lucky to get paid to do what many people long to do for a living.

Do you have any unfulfilled ambitions?

Loads. I would love to do a musical, work with some of the great people coming out of the independent film sector in India, do another play at the National Theatre, take my kids round south India – it's a list that seems to be getting longer as I get older, so I had better hurry up!

What advice would you give someone who wants to become the next Meera Syal?

(Smiles) I would say, aim a bit higher than that! It's much better to want to find your own voice and place in the world. For anyone who wants to act or write, I would say the key is to create your own work as no one hands you anything on a plate. Also, it will give you some degree of control and dignity over your career.

Finally, what is your idea of happiness?

A healthy happy family, full stomach, inspiring job and loyal friends.

All In Good Time is out in May.

Priya Mulji

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The journey to 30

I TURN 30 at the end of the month, and to say I am dreading it is an understatement.

So I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you a little about the desi Carrie Bradshaw and reflect on my 20s before I get a decade older. I started university in Northampton at the age of 19 and studied marketing. After that I did various jobs in call centres, a range of admin roles and most recently, I was an automotive retailer.

In April, I'll start a new marketing job in a completely different industry. It took me a few years to get this job, but I think with hard work and dedication I will be taking a step in the right direction to becoming a marketing guru.

Last year, I met my favourite author Roopa Farooki, who wrote me a wonderful message in one of my favourite books *The Way Things Look To Me*. That was a very special day as Lila, a character in the book, suffered from eczema as do I, and it was one of the

many image issues that I share with her. As someone who wears glasses, and has bad skin and wonky teeth, I could really identify with Lila.

When Roopa recognised me from my blog about her that I had posted on her Facebook page, my heart was beating like crazy!

Leading on from that, my biggest achievement has been my writing. After reading a book where the main character starts a blog and goes through 50 ways to find a lover, I started my own blog. A few months later, I had my heart broken and used my blog to vent and share my emotions. To my surprise, people read it and *Eastern Eye* entertainment editor Asjad Nazir came across it too. He asked me to start writing columns for *EE* – I wrote with complete honesty and as they say, the rest is history.

One area I have been unlucky in is love. With me it is a case of always the bridesmaid, never the bride. I've tried online dating, meeting people through family or friends and even in bars. But sadly, I am still single. People ask me why or whether there is something wrong with me, but it isn't something I can answer. I guess I just haven't met the person I'm destined to grow old with. I have family and my best friend's wedding on the horizon and it can be a little sad at times, yet I do keep an open mind when meeting people and smiling at weddings.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all for reading my columns, my blog, for making my 20s so wonderful and helping me to realise we are not alone in what we go through. There are many people who have their hearts broken, whose best friends get married but they remain single or who are stuck in a job they hate. Remember, we're all in this together and by holding each other's hands, remaining hopeful and saying 'all is well', everything will turn out fine.

I look forward to a new decade of my life and believe that my 30th year will bring me lots of love, luck and happiness. I have learned to accept myself for who I am and will leave you with this quote: "When you know yourself, you are empowered. When you accept yourself, you are invincible."

