

"I'm an actor, not a role model"

EastEnders actress Bindya Solanki hopes the BBC soap has given her a springboard to a bright future.

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It had not been a good week for Bindya Solanki. She's played Nita, the corner shop worker in Eastenders, for the past two years. Two days before our interview it was announced that Nita was being written out of the long running soap, along with her partner Robbie.

She was obviously still in shock from the news. It must have been difficult answering some of our questions. When we asked "what would she like to do next?" she replied "Get out of this room." She was joking – we hope!

Bindya continued: "I'd like to do more TV work and maybe film. You have to be realistic that you may not get into films straight away. I did theatre before Eastenders and would like to do some more."

She is doing her best to be positive about leaving the long running BBC series: "What Eastenders has given me is publicity and a profile. Now people know my name and my face. So I see it as being a springboard to future work."

Bindya Solanki was born in Southend on Sea in Essex twenty seven years ago. Both her parents came from Gujarat in India and made their home in Britain in the 1960s. She describes her background as absolutely nothing like growing up in Albert Square:

"Mine was much happier. There weren't as many awful things! I had lots of days on the beach. It was a very nice upbringing. There were no traumas, just an older brother who used to beat me up. But I sorted that out by farting in his face."

But even with her happy childhood, Bindya still came across prejudice: "I have been discriminated against in lots of ways - at school, with the usual bullying that goes on in the playground, at university and sometimes in the real world. The way to overcome it is to ignore it. Don't stoop down to their level. Discrimination comes from ignorance. And ignorant people are idiots. You can overcome discrimination by being strong and knowing that the bullies are the ones who are weird, not you."

So how does Bindya feel about being one of the only Asian actors on Eastenders?

"That just about says it all being the only Asian here! I feel very proud. And I'm happy that I am in Eastenders. But I don't see myself just as an Asian person. I'm an actor and I don't see myself as a role model. It's too much to put on my shoulders. I'm just happy to be here."

What about Bindya's own role model? "It's Meera Syal. I think she is a wonderful person and she's done a lot for our community. She's a really good role model."

Bindya's advice for young Asians wanting to take up a career in acting is extremely positive:

"I would say go for it! Some people hold back because their parents aren't sure. Every parent wants their child to be happy and secure, and this business is not secure. But if you really are committed then don't let anyone tell you you can't do it. Because you can."

About the team

This story was produced by Nazia Driver, 12, Zarah Driver, 11, and Nadia Driver, 9. It was published in the Ilford Recorder.

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