

# All gone but Balika Vadhu stays

After a mass murder and a shift from the gaon, the new-look, new-generation Balika Vadhu goes on air from tomorrow. Though no longer dealing with the issue of child marriage, the show will tackle other societal evils but remain titled the same for keeping the brand value after eight long years. SANGEETA YADAV tells you more

Think of *Balika Vadhu*, and one name that strikes immediately is Anandi. Over the years, she has broken stereotypes, fought against the evils of child marriage and empowered village women. But now, after eight long years, the most watched show will take a 15-year *maha* leap tomorrow.

Gone will be Anandi and every other person around her. Gone is the issue of child marriage. After the mass murder of Anandi (Toril Rasputra), Dadisa (Surekha Sikri), Jagya (Shakti Anand) and Akhiraj (Sunil Singh), the new track will be with new artists, none of them either *balika* or *vadhu*, for that matter.

It's not just the actors who have exited. The show's writers Purnendu Shekhar and Gajra Kottary have also parted ways with the channel over creative differences. Even director Sidharth Sengupta has left the show.

The story is taken forward by a grown-up Nimboli (Dr Nandini), played by Mahhi Vij, and revolves around a love triangle with Krish (Ruslaan Mumtaaz) and Dr Amit Goel (Avinash Sachdev).

"Honestly, the show required a fresh outlook and storyline. The ones who left, worked long and hard in making this show a hit. Now, the new scriptwriters are doing a fantastic job. The show is going to be a youthful love story and yet will continue to be issue-based, with a message in the end. It's going to be something new. The older team would have stuck to what they were doing. Maybe that's why the channel thought of a fresh approach," Mumtaaz says.

Mumtaaz, who plays a snooty NRI who gradually comes to appreciate India, feels that it's the western outlook and values that made him connect to the



Cast of Balika Vadhu - Lamhe Pyaar Ke

character. "Like my character of Krish, I don't enjoy travelling within India because wherever I have gone, people trouble the tourists and I found plastic bags and garbage littered at exotic places which really put me off. We as Indians disrespect our country and don't look after it. When I go abroad, people let you be. They treat their country well and keep it clean. I might be Indian but my sensibilities and values are western so I fit perfectly in this role," Mumtaaz says.

Mahhi Vij, who is associated with shows like Colors since its inception with shows like *Laagi Tujhse Lagan* and *Khatron Ke Khiladi*, is excited about playing the grown-up Nimboli who, she says, is very much like her in real life. "Nimboli grows up to be Dr Nandini. She is headstrong like her mother and wants to change the society and the way people think. Yet she is happy-go-lucky. She lives life with a fresh approach leaving negativities and grudges behind," Vij says, adding that the best thing about the leap is that she will be seen romancing on screen.

There is no fun in his life. He shares a formal relationship with his father. The only thing on his mind is the hospital. He is my paradox. I love my life and live it up. I love travelling and I can go anywhere. I drove my car to Ladakh and Bangalore from Mumbai. But as Dr Amit, I've to be calm," Sachdev says.

The biggest challenge for him was playing a doctor. "I can never imagine myself as a doctor. We were shooting a scene in the operation theatre and I was supposed to operate for endocrinology. I had heard about it for the first time and there was nobody who could tell me what it was about and which part of the body it is associated with. I had to Google it and study it," he says.

For Mumtaaz, going to Naigaon for the shoot of *Balika Vadhu* was challenging. "Travelling to Naigaon daily was something that I never wanted to do because it would leave me with very less time for my fitness routine which is an important part of my life. I've said no to so many shows that were shot there in the past. But now, I've to find ways of working out on the sets and in between my shoot," Mumtaaz says. With a new starcast and writers, it'll be interesting to see how they match up. "It's a challenge to do better than the previous *Balika Vadhu* not just for the production house and channel but for us too. We hope to get the TRPs so that we can continue the show for another eight years on a high," says Vij.

## QUOTE UNQUOTE

I'VE GIVEN THREE YEARS TO BALIKA VADHU AND ANANDI'S CHARACTER WILL REMAIN WITH ME FOREVER. THIS WAS MY THIRD SHOW AND IT MADE ME A HOUSEHOLD NAME. THOUGH ANANDI'S ABSENCE MIGHT AFFECT THE SHOW, THE MAKERS MUST HAVE PLANNED TO FILL THE GAP. EVEN IF I WAS OFFERED TO CONTINUE PLAYING ANANDI AFTER A 15-YEAR LEAP, I WOULD NOT HAVE AS I DON'T WANT TO AGE ON SCREEN  
— ACTRESS TORIL RASPUTRA AKA ANANDI



TIME HAD COME TO MOVE AHEAD OF ANANDI & FOCUS ON NIMBOLI'S JOURNEY IN THIS NEW AGE. HOW HER PAST COMES IN HER WAY AND HOW SHE FIGHTS IT. ALONGSIDE HER JOURNEY, THERE WILL BE ISSUES WHICH A DOCTOR DEALS WITH. THE LEAP IS NOT JUST IN YEARS BUT IN THE THOUGHT PROCESS TOO. WE'VE MOVED FROM A VILLAGE SET-UP TO JAIPUR. WE DIDN'T CHANGE THE TITLE BECAUSE THE CONTEXT REMAINS THE SAME  
— SUNJOY WADDHWA, CMD, SPHEREORIGIONS

