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Meet the real Iram Parveen Bilal

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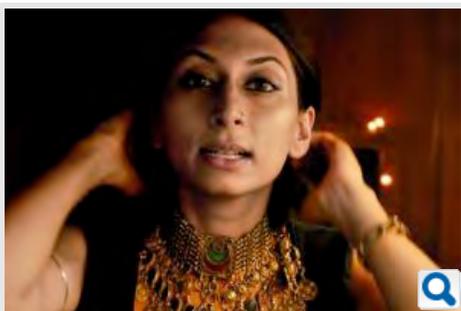
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Iram Parveen Bilal

Here's the woman whose name inspired Sriram Raghavan enough to use it for Kareena Kapoor's character in Agent Vinod

Iram Parveen Bilal may have come across as a rather unique Pakistani name. It's no wonder then that director Sriram Raghavan chose to name his lead character in Agent Vinod, Kareena Kapoor, just that. However, the name is hardly a figment of one's imagination, for there really is an Iram Parveen Bilal.

While she is a Pakistani national alright, the real Iram is a filmmaker who is currently working on the post production of her Pakistani film -Josh. "I met Sriram at the Indian Film Festival Los Angeles, in 2008. My short film, Poshak, set in Karachi, was screened at that festival. There were a lot of Bollywood directors at the fest, including Anurag Kashyap. I guess Sriram just liked the sound of my name. He did tell me that he was going to use it in his film, as there was a Pakistani character in there, but I didn't know it was going to be the full name. I am still unsure about how I feel about that," says Iram, on a telephonic interview from Los Angeles where she has been living since the last 10 years.

A short filmmaker by profession, Iram's current project, Josh, is her first commercial venture. The film stars Aamina Sheikh (a popular actress in Pakistan), Mohib Mirza, Khalid Malik, Adnan Shah Tipu and Khalid Ahmed (Imtiaz Ali's uncle) amongst others.

About Josh, Iram says it's inspired by the true stories of the village-ordered rape of Mukhtar Mai in tribal Pakistan and of activist Parveen Saeed who vowed to decrease crime in Pakistan by creating self-sustaining food kitchens in the slums.

Saeed's motto: erase hunger to erase crime. "It is a story about a group of friends, a murder mystery actually. It would fit into the genre that Bollywood's Rang De Basanti would be classified in. It is about friendship and hope, and we are looking at a fall release," explains the director.

A woman filmmaker from Pakistan is bound to raise enough eyebrows, and Iram admits, "Not many films get made in Pakistan. It can be tough or easy, depending on where you come from. For an independent filmmaker like me, it could be an uphill task. But since this is a sweet story, I am hoping it won't be too difficult to break through." As for Agent Vinod, Iram adds, "I have not watched the film yet. But there will be a screening of the film at the next festival here and I will be there."

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