

Twinkle Khanna: The shining star

By Fareeda Kanga | Posted 14-Sep-2014

Despite an enviable film lineage, Twinkle Khanna hastily exited Bollywood after an eight-year-long career. She chose interior designing instead and now fashions spaces which speak volumes of her aesthetic sense. Fareeda Kanga speaks to her about unconventional life choices, ambition and learning new things about life from her children

It is a chosen few who are dealt a hand of cards like Twinkle Khanna was. Daughter of the late superstar Rajesh Khanna and Dimple Kapadia, who lived life on her own terms, her career choice was obvious — to be the quintessential star kid and enter Bollywood.



In 1995, Twinkle debuted opposite another star son, Bobby Deol in Barsaat, but was just not enamoured by the glamour and glitz of Bollywood. “I just didn’t have the patience to sit on the sets all day, waiting for a shot with only my hairdresser for company,” she admits, and adds, “making movies never really excited me.”

In 2001, after eight years in the business and roles opposite all three superstar Khans, Twinkle ditched the film industry for a career where it was routine to be covered in cement dust and grime instead of grease paint and gowns. A summer job with a South Mumbai interior designer helped Twinkle find her true calling.

“I loved the challenge of designing and creating spaces — visualising pictures in your head and executing them so they became reality,” she remembers of the time she fell in love with her vocation.

The transition between the two careers, reveals Twinkle, was fortunately smooth. “Having Akshay (Kumar) around helped. He really believes in my capabilities as a person and that gave me a lot of confidence to switch jobs. Even today, if I do something new, he ensures he is a part of it. For instance, I have been writing a weekly column in a newspaper since a year now, but he still reads all my pieces before I submit them,” she says.

Today, 15 years after the switch, Twinkle has proved herself as a serious interior designer whose sense of aesthetics and style has won her a slew of awards and clients by the dozen. She says she draws inspiration from design gurus such as Paola Navone and the great Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi, and that her personal style seamlessly blends contemporary chic with Indian sensibilities.

It was during some of her first few projects that Twinkle felt rather dissatisfied when it came to finding the right furniture or light-fittings. “I found myself customising almost everything for my clients with the help of my team of carpenters and craftsmen. So, the obvious next step was to open a store where people could have access to my personal style. That is how my store, The White Window was born,” says Twinkle of her Bandra store. “It has products that are available at a fair price as I want to keep the appeal wide. We have something for everyone,” she adds.

There are always things one loves and hates about their work, adds Twinkle. “I, for instance, love the fact that I can work at my own pace, that I can go over ideas, mull over them before committing to a concept and that I get to work towards an aesthetic ideal. On the other hand, I hate the fact that I perpetually have cement dust in my hair and in my throat!”

A delicate balance

Twinkle is clearly passionate about her work but at this point in life, work isn’t her primary driving force.

“There was a time when I had 10 projects a year — all I did was work. But, as one matures, the drive to prove oneself only in professional terms diminishes. I’m more comfortable in my skin now. So, I prefer to be slightly selective and spend the time I save with my family,” she admits.



One can see what she means by being more comfortable with herself over time — chatting with Twinkle at her Bandra store is like chatting with an old friend. She easily compares notes about children, their hectic lives and her own crazy days. It doesn’t take one very long to find out how down-to-earth Twinkle is. Or how refreshing her sense of humour is. The only reason I fell for Akshay is because he has a black belt in karate.

He was always quiet and soft-hearted, but the idea of a man who could slice through a heap of bricks had me smitten!” she laughs.

Perhaps, it is this light-hearted approach to life that allows Twinkle to wear many hats with aplomb. The designer wakes up at 6.30 am to see her 11-year-old son, Aarav, off to school and play with her daughter, Nitara (who is almost two). Then, Twinkle reluctantly drags herself to exercise before heading toward her interior sites clad in what she calls her ‘work uniform’ of jeans and a white kurta.

Like any modern family, Twinkle and Akshay, her husband of 13 years, face the same challenges most young parents do. To manage their responsibilities, Twinkle says she draws from her own childhood experiences.

“I learnt to accept responsibility and know the importance of hard work through my mother, who instilled these values in Rinkie (her sister) and I,” she says. Growing up in a female-dominated household instilled in her the importance of women getting out in the workplace so they could have a sense of self-worth and satisfaction over and above their kids and husband.

Imagining the future

Professionally, the enterprising designer is keen to see her line of candles, The Faraway Tree, become a household brand. “The Faraway Tree came out of a hobby of mine. I founded the brand almost 15 years ago under my mother’s guidance,” she says.

On the personal front, Twinkle confesses that, like any young mother, she prays for her children to have a well-rounded life. “I also want to learn how to serve and volley on the tennis court — now, that’s been on my bucket list for years.”



Inside Track

Born: December 29, 1973

Education: New Era Boarding School, Panchgani

Best advice received: From the movie Nemo — ‘Just keep swimming.’

Mantra in life: Learn from your children; learn all over again, how to tumble, how to wonder, how to live

My Favourites

Book: All titles by Isaac Asimov, I love science fiction

Magazine: MAD

Film: Oculus, a supernatural horror film. It frightens me every time I see it!

Holiday destination: Goa

Sport: Tennis (when I learn it!)