

# ALL FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Zinia Sen checks out how Bangla bands have joined hands in 'aid' for AIDS. The musicians are in tune with the problems of the patients



**D**ecember 1 is earmarked as the World AIDS Day. But can ceaseless campaigns and awareness programmes, all of which appear dull and uninteresting to most, make a long lasting impact on the ears of the listeners? Even a layman can point out how a little melody can add soul to the dry substance. So can music be explored as a tool for spreading awareness or can bands really live up to the *jibonmukhi* tag? Our bands have a say on this. Though for most, it's an idea which is yet to be realised, they assert that such plans are on the cards.

Pota, a member of 4WD thinks *jibonmukhi* is not a word they relate to but a song on AIDS can might just

happen. "We have done umpteen number of shows organised to help the cause of AIDS patients, with minimal money but we've never ever thought of composing a song on the disease. We don't bring out songs as an AIDS Day special, we'll only give shape to the lines that come straight from the heart. But music as a medium has great potential. Any message can be easily conveyed through it without making the output look grave. Maybe next year we'll compose a song and make the royalty go towards helping the cause of the affected patients," he says.

Gabu of Lakkhichhara thinks a lot of positive things are happening in

society and a song might help out the cause. "We have never seriously thought of composing a song on AIDS, though we have participated in a number of AIDS awareness programmes. But next year we might just bring out a song," he quips. But how *jibonmukhi* is the band? "I have serious reservations with the term *jibonmukhi*. Only Nachiketa, Anjan Dutta and Suman Chattopadhyay, belong to this genre. I feel we are not here to cry for improvement for the society. We sing anything

that comes naturally to us, something that we observe as spectators. But I feel a soulful song on AIDS awareness can go down well with a huge mass," Gabu asserts.

Surajit, vocalist of Bhoomi thinks music is a great medium to help out any social cause. "We don't

have a song on AIDS but we have a number on cancer titled *Maa*. It's melancholy number but it's immensely popular. We have also espoused the cause of Thalassaemia and participated in many AIDS awareness programmes. A song can come handy when one wants to spread a message," he says. Chandrabindoo also never lags behind when it comes to standing up

for a cause, but a song on AIDS has never occurred to the band members. "A while back, we did a programme for the children of prostitutes. Personally, it's one of those that has given me a lot of satisfaction. With our limited resources, if we can do anything for the society then why not. One of our songs titled *Ude Jachhe*, from the album, *Toker Jatna Nin*, has the line *Chhuye dile AIDS*. It doesn't really deal with the disease but gives a realistic suggestion about the fear that exists in society," says Anindya, a band member.

Cactus, however, stands out differently. A very popular number titled *Saridon* is composed on the disease which has the lines, *Tumio bojho, amio bujhi, bujheo bujhina/tumio bolo amio boli tobe shoja shujina*. "The lines have the meaning how even after knowing well the nuances of the disease, people pay a deaf ear to the preventive measures and how a condom is a must. The song is one of our most popular numbers," says Sudipto, a band member. But is *jibonmukhi*, the right word to define the music of Cactus? "Ours is music with intellect. There's no particular genre that we belong to," Sudipto says candidly.

Sukriti Foundation (Kolkata), the NGO that works with AIDS patients has also nonetheless attached a lot of importance to music, considering it an important medium of spreading awareness.

The organisation had approached Fossils for a programme, and a song that was composed is a runaway hit and has elicited tremendous response. "Rupam had composed a song titled *Eka nou amra achhi shathe*, which Fossils and Usha Uthup sung together for a programme dedicated to the HIV positive patients. It's a huge hit," says Sampurna Chakroborty, on behalf of Sukriti Foundation.

And how important is a song in helping out a cause? "A song is always popular with the young crowd, which is our target audience. It's more helpful than a lecture that goes on for hours or a campaign that goes unheeded," she signs off.