"Make your own decisions"

--Samia Zaman

Growing up in the Dhaka University campus (her father was a university professor), Samia Zaman was well exposed to her surroundings filled with culture, politics and a spur of activities going on every now and then. "I was also inspired by a lot of people there who were vocal and expressive in their own ways," she says.

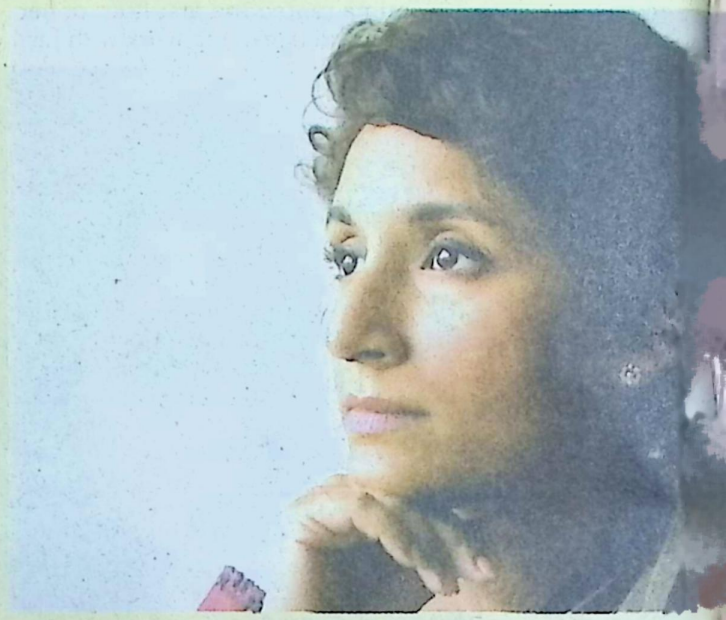
A household name, Samia Zaman is known as the smart, classy reporter and newscaster of ETV, the very first private television channel in Bangladesh, which was eventually shut down for political reasons. She started out her career as a producer at the BBC International World Service in London in 1989. In 1987 Samia had worked in the film, 'Suchona' with Morshedul Islam as an assistant. "I was always willing to learn, work and experiment in various projects," she exclaimed. "So I grabbed this opportunity and took every advantage of it."

As a person, Samia hardly ever faced any kind of obstacle regarding her work, since she had learnt to carve her own path in her own way, "I had learnt very early that you have to be your own boss," she explains. "Otherwise, you will have just about every Tom, Dick or Harry taking advantage of you."

Working in a 'man's world', she had seen several female colleagues of hers unable to stand up to various kinds of verbal abuse. "Female journalists seem to experience some common problems in their profession," she explains. "Their ability is always questioned merely because of their gender. Very little is expected from them especially when a late night report is to be done. The sad part is that the women are still told to do everything even in their work areas. They are hardly ever consulted with before taking a decision."

While working as a journalist in London with the BBC, she talks about the meticulous training she and her colleagues received. "Everyone had to go through several stages to confront all kinds of issues in one's career," she says. It's different for a female reporter here. One has to think twice before handing over an assignment to a woman. Will she be able to communicate properly, will she be able to handle the technical aspects of the assignment, will she be able to defend herself when the need arises to and so on. "However, we simply have to stop thinking so much and just move on with what we want to do at that particular moment."

As she moved on to film production from journalism, her experiences shifted to a different mode. "There was a young girl who wanted to work with me in my film," she relates. "She was very enthusiastic about it and very eager to work immediately. My crew and I were going for outdoor shooting for about 10 days and asked the girl to prepare for it. As I figured a long time ago, she dropped out a day before the trip because her parents would simply not hear of it. What saddened me was that about 20 years ago, I had gone on a similar outdoor shoot with Morshedul Islam to work on the set with him. It's a wonder how two decades later, women still have to depend on others to decide their fate and what they should or should not do."



A mother of three daughters herself, she believes that a proper balance between work and home is in fact very encouraging for children. "I fixed my schedule in such a way that I could easily balance between my work and home," she says. "In fact, my children are helping out in my current film production after school and they are very excited about it!"

A woman does not have to be the best in anything she does, says Samia. "Since women are taking up unconventional career choices as opposed to the family's decisions, she is always expected to be a superwoman," she says. "In that case, I would probably be a super-reporter, a super-newscaster, a super-film producer and a super mom which is impossible!"

"Make your own decisions and suffer the consequences of the mistakes that you make," is the motto that Samia Zaman lives by.