

Tawsif Mahbub and Sabila Nur

BRING BASIC ALI TO LIFE!

Tawsif Mahbub and Sabila Nur are known as two promising names in the current generation of young actors. Being cast in a number of serials together in the past, these two best friends now find themselves on a brand new project; bringing one of the most popular comic strips of Bangladesh to life. The recent rendition of Basic Ali has gathered substantial hype, marking the first time a Bangladeshi comic strip has been adapted on-screen. In this exclusive interview, Tawsif Mahbub and Sabila Nur share their experience of acting as Basic Ali and Ria through friendly banters and honest confessions.

COVER STORY

Were you two friends before?

Tawsif: We have been working in media for about four years, but we have been friends for eight years.

How did you get into Basic Ali?

Sabila: Tawsif was the one who called me up for the opportunity. I had watched the web series rendition of Basic Ali before and found it quite humorous. I also didn't want to miss out on an opportunity to act alongside my best friend Tawsif.

We sometimes hear that actors working in the same media hardly get along or become friends. Is it the case for you two?

Sabila: I am much younger than the other actors of the current generation, so I tend to address everyone as "bhaiya" or "apu". Thus, they see me as a little kid and the matter of being seen as a friend doesn't really come up too often.

Tawsif: As for me, I can't really form close ties with my male colleagues. Most of them see me as a big brother and we just can't hit up a casual conversation too often. I mostly tend to chat with Safa (Safa Kabir) and Sabila.

Why is that the case with male colleagues? Is it because of competition?

Tawsif: The competition is always there. Siam (Siam Ahmed), Zoban (Farhan Ahmed Zoban) and I made a pact that we would always uphold healthy competition against each other, with no backbiting or ill intention involved. Even when the three of us are selected for the same work, we try to earn that spot through honesty and dedication, following a sort of "may the best man win" philosophy.

What were the fan reactions to you being cast as Basic Ali?

Tawsif: I have heard many people say how much I look like Basic Ali's cartoon self. Shahriar bhai (Shahriar Khan) must have imagined the character more than 11 years ago, so I would say Basic Ali and I have some sort of divine connection.

Do you find your characters similar to you



in any way?

Tawsif: I actually find Basic Ali to be exactly like me!

Sabila: (Laughs) I can vouch for that! He really is like Basic Ali in every way.

Tawsif: When I was receiving directions on how to act like Basic Ali, I was thinking to myself, "That's what I would do too!" Basic Ali

is a character who thinks in the most basic way, which is something I relate to very much.

Sabila: On the contrary, I am nothing like Ria. I do tend to boss people around like her, but that's where all the similarities end.

Tawsif: I will agree with that. Sabila is indeed nothing like Ria. But she did portray the character of Ria quite beautifully, there is no

doubt that Sabila is a good actor.

Do you want to act in films in the future?

Sabila: To me, the world of film is larger than life. I need to prepare myself for it better.

Tawsif: This is where I have to contradict.

Preparation for a film can only be made once you have landed the role and asked to portray a certain character. What sort of preparation would you need beforehand?

Sabila: You would always need mental preparation. Films take a long time to shoot and you have to be emotionally invested in them. I personally feel that right now, I can't make the serious commitment that is required to work in films.

What are your thoughts on the current entertainment industry of Bangladesh?

Sabila: The number of TV viewers has definitely decreased, but I don't think the number of Bangla drama viewers has necessarily decreased. The platform has shifted from TV to the internet, so people do watch the serials online. In my opinion, the only lacking we have at the moment is the restriction we face when bringing characters to life. Oftentimes directors tell us to repeat a character we have acted as before, thus we are unable to truly explore a character we are given.

Tawsif: This could be improved if the directors and producers put a little more faith in us. We weren't groomed anywhere, we are self-learned. So, we are definitely willing to learn acting further.

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