

# UP THE STAIRS HIGH

*She mounted her career as a model, yet did not confine herself within, for she could barely hide her innate charm that was just enough to bedazzle a greater audience pool. With ease and grace, she stepped into the silver screen, and triumphed over the fans and critiques as if she was destined aforetime. She is Sabnam Faria, full of life and laughter in her one on one with Star Showbiz today.*

## || COVER STORY ||

**Rafi Hossain:** *We are glad to have you today with us, Sabnam Faria! I think you are one of the most talented actors of the upcoming generation. It has not been that long since your debut, has it?*

**Sabnam Faria:** Thank you so much, Rafi bhai. It has been about three years.

**Rafi:** *So tell us, did you aspire to be an actor by profession?*

**Faria:** Acting was not in my focus, but I wanted to be a model. There is an interesting story behind this. On my second birthday, my father asked me what presents I wanted. And the little Faria replied – 'I want to be inside the TV!' (laughter) So I guess I had an utmost desire to appear on the TV screen from a very early age. Though when I reached my teenage years, I had started to feel otherwise. It was because for some time, it occurred to me that I was not glamorous enough to be on the digital screen.

**Rafi:** *Why did you feel like that?*

**Faria:** I am not sure, perhaps it was because my mother hardly mentioned my name when she talked about how sweet and beautiful her daughters were. It was always about my two elder sisters, they are sixteen and thirteen years older than I am. I am not blaming my mother, because in her eyes, I was not mature enough to be mentioned along with my sisters when talking about beauty and smartness. To her, I was still a baby. But since I was only a teen with a whimsical mind, an insecurity somehow got stuck inside me that I was not charming enough. Once my mother caught me applying lemon extracts on my face. I defended myself saying – 'It is good for the skin, I read it on the magazine!', but my mother kept on saying I was too young for that kind of self-pampering. Later my focus diverted to building a career in journalism. A number of private channels were introduced when I was in class seven or eight. I was impressed to see the spontaneous and energetic bunch of young journalists. After my HSC, my father advised me to study English Literature, so that I could develop my career in an English newspaper after graduation. I followed his advice. During that

course, we would stage a drama every year as a part of literature studies. An instructor of *Prachyo Nattyo* named Emon came to help us with the drama. Emon Da praised my acting skills and asked me to take a shot at acting seriously. Though I belonged to a very conservative family, I did not entirely reject his proposal. Meanwhile, Hridi apu offered me to do a fashion photo-shoot for a magazine. I thought this was my chance, because my family members hardly read fashion magazines. It was the beginning of my career in the glamour industry. I went on to doing similar photo-shoots afterwards, and eventually moved to TVCs as well. By that time my family members were aware of what I was doing. As I expected, they did not take it easily. My first TV drama was @ 18. I actually had to call on a hunger strike to persuade my parents to let me go to Sylhet where the shooting would take place (laughter). The drama was a hit, and I suddenly realized people everywhere were turning their heads to see me! My friends and even teachers appreciated my acting. However, my mother was still discorded. I took a little break after my graduation and acted in a couple of TV dramas for Eid-ul-Adha. To my fortune, my father saw both the dramas, and was impressed thoroughly. He later stated that although he never wanted his daughter to be in the media industry, after watching my acting, he realized he should not let my acting skills go wasted.

**Rafi:** *That is definitely a great compliment. I am sure you could rediscover your father at that moment!*

**Faria:** Yes, I was totally surprised at his feedback. We were very close. I even showed him the first love-letter I received. So even with such intimacy, when he denied my career choice at first, I was shocked and upset. My father passed away shortly after we started filming for *Debi*.

**Rafi:** *That is very unfortunate. He could not see the great success his daughter bagged!*

**Faria:** Unfortunately, yes. But my father was extremely proud that I got to play a role in one of Humayun Ahmed's novel based films. He was overwhelmed when someone greeted him saying 'the father of Sabnam Faria'; he would tell me every time when it happened.

**Rafi:** *You have had a dramatic progress so far! Any parent would be proud of one such daughter.*

**Faria:** My father was not able to witness the success of *Debi*, but I do feel that he is watching everything from somewhere up there.

**Rafi:** *Let us know about your thoughts on the advancement of the contemporary media industry. Where do you think we are headed?*

**Faria:** Every senior artist that I had the opportunity to talk to told me that I came to the industry at its worst phase so far. Tawfif Mahbub, Safa Kabir and I – we came as a batch. The idea of making dramas on the vibrant lives of young-adults became trendy with our introduction, and the industry welcomed us quite warmly. We reaped instant success. Our seniors embraced us very positively, and guided us a lot. I learned how to adapt to different lightings. A senior artist advised me on using my smile to create a signature aura. So in terms of cooperation, our contemporary

industry is very positive. However, we have some issues to fix. For example, we mostly have to work under a narrow window of schedules. It is very strenuous to shoot a drama in two days. Artists are not given enough breathing space. Yet, I would like to thank those directors who still care about our needs. I have seen some positive changes in the past one year.

**Rafi:** *What kind of feedback do you get from your followers? Are they encouraged about acting?*

**Faria:** At times, I had to encounter one question, that is – How fair and transparent is our media industry? There are certain negative rumors that get about regardless of justification. To which I respond that when your focus is set on developing your career as an actor and delivering with as many signature works as possible, all the other things become secondary. Being a woman, I too had to face many unfavorable circumstances. But my philosophy of life is, when I am not letting the

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negativity consume me, I have to make sure of doing it without any compromise. I still have the stairs leading me upwards to a better level. One has to step in the industry being truly zealous about the art of acting. That would work like a charm to keep the negative energy away from him or her. And now that we have so many TV channels, the work opportunities are also abundant. The industry gave our batch of young actors a heartfelt reception, and we wish to carry the same legacy.

**Rafi:** *Now that you are aware of the ins and outs of the industry, do you wish to have someone special in your life who is also from the same work sphere?*

**Faria:** I do not wish that. Perhaps it is just fine to be friends with the people who belong to the common work sphere, but I would not want any romantic relationship whatsoever. My reason for that is, if we both have hectic schedules, how will we find time for each other? And personally, I am a 'friend material'! My co-artists become my friend very easily. So it is either 'buddy' or 'bhaia', that works for me (laughter). I want my love life to have

its own gravity. We will both have our whole-hearted participation. Now that my mother lives alone, I wish my own family to encompass my roots too so she does not feel distant. So my two lives will be entirely separated and exclusive.

**Rafi:** *What are the five things that you look for in your ideal partner?*

**Faria:** Firstly, good sense of humor. I think having an intelligent personality is very enticing. I prefer those who have a good, clean heart. Then I would say, I like men who have a proper accent. Good speakers have an appeal to me. Another thing I notice is what kind of shoes and belt the person is wearing (laughter). If the colours of these two match, he would have a better shot! I prefer tall guys because I myself have a taller build than most women. And I like people who are knowledgeable, who can carry a conversation without making it seem jittery. My father used to be drenched under a sea of books, and I would notice him talk about almost everything with a sincere tenacity. So I would seek for this quality in my partner too!

**Rafi:** *That is a very well narrated wish-list, I am sure the candidates are taking notes (laughter)! Now tell us about your favorite actors and directors.*

**Faria:** I am a fan of Suborna Mustafa, Jaya Ahsan, Nusrat Imrose Tisha and Zakia Bari Mamo. From male actors, I would name Shatabdi Wadud, Chanchal Chowdhury and Mosharraf Karim. I admire the works of many directors. If I had to name one, I would say Adnan Al Rajeev, with whom I did both my debut TVC and drama. I also dote on Tauquir Ahmed, Animesh Aich and Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's direction. I earnestly wish to work with such seasoned directors in the years to come.

**Rafi:** *What about Anam Biswas? You just finished working with him. How did you enjoy it?*

**Faria:** Anam Da is a very dear person to me. He holds a lot of integrity and technical knowledge. We somehow developed a very good chemistry, so when we worked together it seemed as if we knew each other for a long time! Previously I knew Anam Da as the lyricist of the World Cup theme song *Char Chhokka Hoi Hoi*, and he had also done a tremendous job with the script of *Aynabaji*. I like Anam Da more as a person than as a director.

**Rafi:** *Would you like to work with Adnan Al Rajeev if he ever makes a movie?*

**Faria:** Of Course! He is a very talented director who goes one step at a time while planning his projects. He pioneered the wave of TV dramas made with teenagers and young-adults with @ 18. After he made *Bikel Belar Pakhi*, countless others also started making similar dramas on middle-class life. So Adnan Bhai knows how to break the mainstream flow and create a new style of his own. So I would definitely like to work with him.

**Rafi:** *It was great talking to you, Faria! Do you have any special message for our readers?*

**Faria:** It has been a pleasure for me too, Rafi bhai! I would request the readers and the audience to help patronizing quality films. Please come to the cinema halls and see how we are doing our best to present you with newer contents. Encourage the upcoming directors so that our industry reaches newer milestones ahead. Thank you!