



# The Golden Star of CINEMA



COVER STORY

*Farida Akhter Bobita is one of the most prominent actors of the Bangladeshi film industry. This year marks the 50th anniversary of her film career. In an interview with Ra fiHossain, she reminisces about working with prominent directors, like Zahir Raihan and Satyajit Ray, and also talks about how she became who she is today.*

**Ra fiHossain:** Welcome to *Uncensored* with Ra fiHossain. Today, we are here with the legendary actor, Bobita. When I was young, we used to make scrap-books filled with pictures of our favourite celebrities that we got from newspaper clippings. I was a huge fan of Bobita Apa back then, and my scrapbook was filled with pictures of her. I wish I still had that scrapbook, so that I could present it to her today. Bobita Apa, thank you very much for taking the time out to sit with us.

**Bobita:** You are most welcome.

**Rafi:** In the past, when we said female lead actors, there was a certain power to it. I feel that we have lost the power. What's your take on this?

**Bobita:** No. Why would it be lost? The girls acting currently are doing really well. Nowadays, they have a variety of wardrobe choices while acting. Back then, we didn't have that. But, we used to be a lot more natural that way.

**Rafi:** I also feel that back then, everyone had their own personality. Nowadays, do we lack that?

**Bobita:** Yes, we really lack that nowadays.

**Rafi:** This year marks the 50th anniversary of your film career, right?

**Bobita:** I never thought of that, but now that you have mentioned it, I started my career back in 1969, and now it's 2019. I acted in my first film when I was just thirteen years old.

**Rafi:** Was acting your first choice, or was there something else that you wanted to do?

**Bobita:** Back then, I did not want to be an actor. I wanted to be a doctor, like my mother. My mother used to give medicines to my neighbours, and I used to help her. I also memorised all the names of the medicines, so that when my mother was not around, I could give them to people. But, I was incredibly naughty; every time my mother was not around, and someone came for medicine, I used to tell them that a small medical fee was required. Using that money, I used to go with my friends to watch movies.

**Rafi:** Who was your favourite actor in the past?

**Bobita:** There was a show on television, called *Dr. Kildare*. I was a huge fan of that show. One day, news came that the star of that show had passed away. I was in school at

that time, and I cried a lot upon hearing it. Later, I found out that it was just a rumour. I was also a huge fan of Biswajit Chatterjee. Later, I became a huge fan of Suchitra Sen and Uttam Kumar.

**Rafi:** When did your love for acting begin?

**Bobita:** At first, I had no attraction towards acting. Back then, Suhcanda Apa was already one of the top actors in the country. Zahir bhai used to tell me that he wanted to cast me in a film, called *Shongshar*. I was not very eager to do it because I



once saw Suchanda Apa's shooting in Cox's Bazaar, and realised just how hard it was.

**Rafi:** But, wasn't it fascinating to see how people gathered around every time to see Suchanda Apa?

**Bobita:** I was too young to understand that, if I'm being honest. All I could understand was that it was hard. At that time, Zahir bhai was saying that he needed a young girl for the film, and he wanted me to do it. I was not interested at all, but my family encouraged me, since it would look bad if I

had rejected Suchanda Apa's husband's offer. That film did not do very well. A while after that, Zahir bhai said that he wanted to put me in another film for a lead role. In the meantime, cinematographer, Afzal Chowdhury was making a film, called *Jaltes Suraj Ke Nichey*, which was also being directed by Zahir bhai. Shabnam Madam was supposed to play the main female lead. But, she was too busy to schedule it with her. The film had a star-studded cast. Afzal Chowdhury then told Zahir bhai that he had seen one of my television dramas, and he thought that I was very photogenic. When I got the offer, I was not interested to do it. But, my family persuaded me once again by saying that it would seem bad if I declined Zahir bhai's offer. After agreeing to do it, I did the screen and voice test for the film. Back then, I was called Subarna. Afzal Chowdhury's wife then suggested that instead of it, I should be called Bobita. A few questions were raised as there was an actor with the same name in India, but we decided to use it as there was no one with that name here. After that, we shot the film, but it never got completed. Zahir bhai felt bad because he had promised to make a movie with me as the lead, so he decided to make another one. Razzak bhai was playing the lead alongside me. It was strange for me as I had worked alongside Razzak bhai once before, where he had played the role of my father. Now, he was playing the role of my love interest. Zahir bhai made me understand that this wasn't real; this was all acting. After the movie got released, it was a massive hit, and it kickstarted my career.

**Rafi:** Did you ever think that you would get to work with Satyajit Ray?

**Bobita:** No. When I got the offer to work with him in *Oshoni Shongket*, I had only done two films. I initially thought someone was playing a prank on me. When I first got the letter for the offer, I was laughing like anything. I couldn't fathom why Satyajit Ray would pick me when he could've picked so many big stars. I got a call from the Indian High Commission, and someone told me that Nando Bhattacharya, who was producing the film, wanted to talk to me. Then, I was told to go to Kolkata to meet Satyajit Ray. Before going to Satyajit Ray's house, I used all the makeup I owned, and wanted to look as glamorous as possible, before meeting him. When we went to his house, he opened the door himself, and sat down with us