



INTERVIEW

Up close and personal with Nabela

In a world of such intense colourism, it is important for women to find the beauty in their pigmentation

— **Nabela Noor**

It was some random night, while swiping through Instagram stories, and I saw Nabela Noor light up my screen and announce she was flying to Dhaka for a meet and greet on 14 September at the Lakeshore Hotel.

With over 700,000 subscribers and 1.2 million followers just on her YouTube and Instagram pages respectively, Nabela Noor's arrival had the city buzzing.

Honestly, this writer here was never a Bella Babe. Of course, I knew who she was, but nothing had me prepared for the interview that took place in her hotel room, post event. The vibe was chilled out, as her family rested from the event in the next room and Seth quietly watched over her from the corner of the room.

You have said many times, that you were inspired by beauty vloggers. Is there anyone in particular who did and still does inspire you?

Nabela: Beauty vloggers who loved being in their own skin, and created content that truly expressed how unique and special they are, inspired me. To name two would be "AndreasChoice" and "AlbaMayo." Their videos were not just amazing, but one of the reasons I started making videos. I love them so much. I don't think I would be in this line of work if it wasn't for them.

As I started making videos, I reached out

to them and surprisingly, they responded! Luck clearly was not the only thing at work, from being just friends, they were both bridesmaids at my wedding! Life really does work out in mysterious ways, especially when I realised that the people that I had once looked up to as my heroes were now also some of my closest friends.

What are some of the makeup trends you regret having tried on?

Nabela: Over tweezing my eye-brows (*gasp*), I regret it so much now. I used to have these really thick gorgeous eye-brows, and now they are alright, but I definitely regret going along with the thin eyebrow trend. I learnt from my mistakes and do not even let my own sisters tweeze theirs now.

You are a strong advocate for body positivity, how difficult is it to face negative and hurtful comments on a regular basis and still spread the message of self-love?

Nabela: As a plus size woman on the Internet, every single day is a battle. Every day, there are horrible comments and messages waiting for me— from death threats, to people wishing me ill to telling me to kill myself.

For the longest time, I told myself that this came with the territory and suffered in silence. I kept telling myself that I just had to deal with it. So, there was a lot of emotional and mental pain I endured, and many countless nights of crying myself to sleep.

I tried to be brave, not just for my followers, but also for what I believed in.

Somewhere down the line, I was robbed of my mental peace and that's why I started sharing and posting the hateful messages and comments I would receive. People needed to know what I was dealing with on a daily basis, and the lengths that I have to go through to advocate for what I believed is my truth.

My advocacy is dangerous, not just to my mental and emotional wellbeing, but my safety too. I receive a lot of aggressive messages, and often, those who send them forget that I too, am human.

Support is integral, and I have received so much of it and it has helped in so many ways. I am grateful to have opened up to my followers about it.

What were some of the mistakes you made while learning how to do makeup?

Nabela: I made a lot of mistakes. My blush, highlighter and contour would often times look like Neapolitan ice cream. My husband, Seth would joke, "There's that Neapolitan stripe." As mortified as I would be, it only meant that I hadn't blended properly. Now I'm obsessed with blending. I would also not blend my contour properly, leaving harsh unblended stripes on my nose. Blending was a big thing I had to learn over time.

Can you talk about one makeup trend you are tired of seeing, and one you are looking forward to?

Nabela: I don't think I can ever get tired of seeing any make up trends because I just love makeup too much. While you may catch someone dying to share a makeup

trend they hate, I think I'm all about do what you love and if someone thinks it is hideous, who cares?

I really love the show "Euphoria" on Hulu that has inspired the use of a lot of gems in makeup routines. It is really cool to see the incorporation of gems and the use of brighter hues in eye looks. There's more art in a woman's everyday make up now, and that is really exciting to see a woman passing by, on a regular Tuesday, wearing a purple eye.

As a brown plus size woman, how important is it to talk about the lack of representation in diversity of shape?

Nabela: This is a global problem; one I cannot stress enough on the importance of, and that doesn't just go for Bangladesh.

It is sad that we live in a world where the culture in media is to portray plus size women and their weight as comic relief. I would watch so many movies where the jokes would always be related to how fat a woman is and it would make me upset. All I would see is beautiful women, so how is that funny? Why do people who look like me always have to be the butt of the joke?

Growing up, I found inspiration in this. I never wanted the way I looked to be the reason for everyone to get a good laugh out of. Having my own channel and showing people that I would not make fun of myself to be accepted, led to the creation of new opportunities. So, the message is to empower and love yourself and your size, especially in places where there is a lack of representation.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19