

#INTERVIEW

Navigating parenthood: The story of three inspiring single mothers



Single motherhood — a phrase that carries many stories of strength, perseverance, and resilience. It takes a village to raise a child yet single mothers are out there doing it all by themselves — juggling a million other responsibilities, and dealing with social stigma. Despite all these barriers and challenges, these mothers are shattering stereotypes and exceeding expectations.

This Mother's Day, we dive into the lives of these inspiring mothers who are rewriting the narrative of single motherhood, to learn about their triumphs, struggles, and everything in between.

Introducing our single mothers

The first of our trio, Razia Rahman is the CEO and founder of the NGO Protigga Foundation and Razia Rahman Consulting. With her work spanning over 40 upazilas, she is a mother of three and has dedicated her life to empowering women and youth.

Next up is Nudrat Nawar who is the deputy chief of Business Development

and Corporate Strategies at Index Group. She is also a prosthetic makeup artist and mother to a 3-year-old son.

Last but not least, Sheikh Suraiya Rehnuma is a fashion and portrait photographer with her own studio called LenzKraft Production. She is the mother to an 8-year-old daughter.

The challenges of single motherhood

When speaking about challenges, all three mothers detail somewhat varying accounts, which prove that motherhood is a unique journey for everyone. According to Razia Rahman, the biggest challenge or rather annoyance has to be dealing with unnecessary, personal, and intrusive questions from people.

She mentions, "When I joined the workforce, I would always face questions such as 'What does bhai (husband) do?'" In addition, she notes how the attitudes of people change, especially that of men, who cast nasty glances as soon as they come to learn of her single status.

For Suraiya, the biggest challenge was having to face constant criticism about her style of parenting. The constant disapproval made her second-guess her choices as they created doubts and dilemmas in her mind. In those anxious moments, she felt lonely as she had trouble finding someone to share these concerns with.

Nudrat details the struggle to manage work and motherhood, chasing deadlines, and taking care of her toddler's every need as the sole parent. Handling her own emotions while also managing her child's emotions does take its toll on her.

She has experienced "working mum guilt" for not getting to spend as much time as she would like with her son. In addition, it has proven to be a challenge to take out time for herself and manage time across all responsibilities efficiently. The frowning faces doubting her abilities to fulfil her motherly responsibilities along with career aspirations have certainly not helped.

The societal stigma, perception, and discrimination

Razia tells us that she had to experience character assassination and rumour-mongering in society. While she was in the early stages of her career, many in society discredited her achievements and deemed it unnecessary to invite her to social gatherings. Her children had to endure being labelled "children of a broken family" and deal with the barrage of questions that come with it, especially in school from the parents of their peers.

