



A PROMISE FOR SAFER BIRTH From one mother to another



**DR ARIFA SHARMIN
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After heart failure and days in the CCU, I learned the preciousness of every moment. That second chance motivates me to help other mothers get theirs too.

In the sterile, high-pressure corridors of Dhaka Medical College, Dr Arifa Sharmin Maya is a name of hope for mothers in crisis. Even with late-night emergencies and the guilt of being a busy mom, she keeps moving forward to save the mothers in high risk.

The Daily Star (TDS): What initially drew you to the field of OBGYN, and how has your professional mission evolved since experiencing motherhood yourself?

Dr Arifa Sharmin Maya (ASM): It wasn't family pressure that made me a doctor; it was my own desire to serve the country. From a young age, I was involved in cultural and medical clubs, and my teachers always wanted to see me as a doctor. My mission evolved significantly after I became a mother and personally survived a life-threatening heart failure following my daughter's birth. Now, my goal is to save other mothers from

complications like pre-eclampsia.

TDS: How has being a mother changed the way you communicate with your patients,?

ASM: Being a mother allows me to connect with my patients on a deeper level. I often tell them, 'I am a mother too, and you are a mother.' I don't see them just as cases; I feel their struggles as if they were my own. I stay in constant touch with my high-risk patients.

TDS: As a woman leader in women's health, how are you working to improve maternal healthcare standards or innovate within your department?

ASM: I am constantly advocating for better logistics and manpower. In our department, we receive the most complicated cases in the country, yet we often lack enough Operation Theatres and specialised feto-maternal ICU beds. My goal is to help our nation reach the SDG target of reducing maternal mortality to 70 per 100,000 by 2030."

TDS: How do you handle the "mom guilt" when a 2:00 AM medical emergency takes you away from your family, and what have you taught your children about the importance of your work?

ASM: I have dealt with a lot of 'mom guilt.' Once, when my son was older, he



told me I didn't understand his struggles because I wasn't there during his school years, which hurt deeply. However, I've taught my children that my work is a duty to other mothers. I am grateful that they have been supportive and haven't become aggressive about my absence.

Interview conducted by Adrin Sarwar

LEARNING TRUE MEANING OF LIFE in medicine and motherhood



**DR KHANDAKER
SHEHNEELA TASMIN**

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Balancing these roles is never easy. Moving between intense work and family life, I remind myself that it's not only about the amount of time I spend with my children, but the values I instill: responsibility, leadership, and humanity.

Specialising in high-risk pregnancies, Dr Khandaker Shehneela Tasmin balances the rigorous demands of fetomaternal medicine with the dedication of motherhood. She supports women to navigate the most unpredictable turns of pregnancy and life.

The Daily Star (TDS): What initially drew you to the field of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility (REI), and how has your professional mission evolved since experiencing motherhood yourself?

Dr Khandaker Shehneela Tasmin(KST): During medical school and my internship, I became deeply aware of the unique challenges surrounding pregnancy. Motherhood is often beautiful, but it can

also take sudden, unpredictable turns; where immense joy and grave uncertainty coexist. In those vulnerable moments, mothers need strong support. That understanding inspired me to choose this field. I wanted to stand beside women during their most critical moments through anxiety, complications, and ultimately, the safe arrival of their child. As a mother of a daughter and a son, my professional and personal lives are deeply interconnected.

TDS: How has being a mother changed the way you communicate with your patients?

KST: Being a mother has completely transformed how I see and communicate with my patients. I never view them as mere cases. They are resilient women, often navigating fear, uncertainty, and hope all at once. Motherhood has given me a deeper emotional understanding. I can relate to their anxieties, their strength, and their sacrifices.

TDS: How do you handle the "mom guilt" when a 2:00 AM medical emergency takes you away from your family?

KST: One particularly difficult period came when my daughter was preparing for her intermediate examinations and university admissions. I was suddenly transferred to Mymensingh. Every day, I had to commute from Dhaka to Mymensingh, attend to patients, return home, support my family, and maintain my private practice. My day would begin at 5 am and often end



at midnight. Perhaps it was my lifelong commitment to medicine that helped me endure.

Interview conducted by Marzia Bhuiya Tabenda

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