



## SEEMA BISWAS

### Celebrating Creativity in the Celluloid World

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A five feet few inches bunch of dynamite, a creative bundle whose talent knows no bounds, whose flashing eyes convey a hundred messages each time she describes something, she is none other than actress and theatre artiste, Seema Biswas, a daughter of Assam.

Born in Guwahati on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan in 1965, her childhood was spent in the rich cultural atmosphere at Nalbari, where she spent her early years. Her parents were Jagdish Biswas and Meera Biswas. The household itself was culturally inclined with Seema’s mother, being a regular artiste at Natya Mandir, besides being a teacher in Dhamdhama High School. In fact, it was while watching her mother perform one day that Seema felt the need to connect herself with the performing arts. She was a loner and prone to daydream of being a dancer on stage. Her three sisters were into music and dance too. In fact her sister Purnima Barkakoty was a leading actress at the time while Seema was preoccupied with her text books.

She never saw a film till her matriculation. Her narrative skills impressed her friends, among whom she

cherished Anita Das, Dipika Sarma and their families. Her bhindew (brother-in-law) was also an artiste and it was he who brought her a form for NSD for a three-month workshop, for which she was selected. She learnt about mind and movement, theory and craft of acting during this workshop.

Chetona Das cast her in a double role in a drama entitled *Gaonburha* which went on to become a hit. Seema insisted that whenever she took up any work, even now, she always worked quietly and began all preparations from scratch. She is a classic example of how one should not just show promise but translate the immense potential into performance. In this whole setup, it was her friends and family who constantly boosted her self confidence. When she was selected for the workshop in Delhi, her mother went with her. However, on the home front, she was missing her classes as she was a Political Science (major) student at that time in Nalbari College. Seema disclosed that throughout this period, especially the dark days of the Assam movement, she was greatly moved by everything she saw.

Her unbridled zeal to keep improving her acting skills never slackened. In the meanwhile, her application for studying in the National School of Drama was accepted, and yet the family decision was to let Sapan (her brother) pursue engineering and Seema to stay back due to financial constraints. It was at Dharani Chowdhury's (then Director of Cultural Affairs) insistence that Seema decided to go to NSD, come what may. Nalbari Art School pitched in to help her financially. This was her turning point. It was a period of struggle as well as creative fulfilment. She earned the attention of Girish Karnad, the veteran actor-dramatist who could see the spark in her and asked her to join the National Repertory Company. She acted in many plays, hugely successful among which was *Khubsurat Bahu*, a comedy. But it was Shekhar Kapoor's *Bandit queen* which catapulted her to instant fame. The rest, as they say is history. She got national recognition in the form of awards, such as Filmfare award (1996), Silver Lotus award (1996), Sangeet Natak Akademi award (2001), Genie award (2006) for her role in *Water* and many others.

When quizzed about her future plans, she replied enigmatically that she never plans but tries to 'do her best'. And that sums her up. □□