

# I have never grudged Siddhartha getting more attention

— SAVIA RAJAGOPAL

## Growing up...

"I schooled at Tiffins Grammar School at Richmond, in Surrey, followed by Bachelors in English Literature at Miranda House, Delhi, which was really the turning point of my life. I was totally involved in theatre when Mira Nair who was in college with me, led me to St. Stephen's College for an audition. The director happened to be Siddhartha who fell for my charm and the rest is ancient history! I did post graduation in mass communication from the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, and thereafter joined 'India Today'."

## Building a company...

"I quit my job to have my first child, Aditya, and around the same time, Siddhartha was offered the job of an anchor for Quiz Time, in 1985. A year later, we decided to produce the series under an interim company called Intermedia Services. Synergy Communications followed in 1988, as the main company producing television programmes. I had my daughter, Medha, around this time. I tried my hand at styling for TV, choreographing fashion shows, doing research for a TV company etc. However, motherhood was a commitment. I would be at the office for a couple of hours with my babies on a backpack! But by the time we started producing 'Mastermind India' and 'Kaun Banega Crorepati', I was full time at work and actually started handling the finance (totally self taught!), production, HR and PR!"

## Behind the camera...

"I have been involved with every project that Synergy has done till date. I earned the title of 'Producer' after years of sustained hard work and learning on the job. Siddhartha, being a known face because of his TV shows gets more attention. I have never grudged him that. We work as a team and competing against each other would be counter-productive. Creative differences were a major issue in our lives earlier. But, things have eased out now. There are some decisions that I just leave to him and I trust those implicitly, and vice versa. We are supportive of each other's strengths and weaknesses."

## Asserting her identity...

"I guess if one person is in the limelight, the other becomes or feels like an appendage! It used to bother me a lot earlier, but I guess that is part and parcel of being under the spotlight. Eventually you have to prove that you have genuine talent, have enough to contribute and are high on self-esteem. There are countless eminent people's wives who have done incredible work in various fields. Their husbands' celebrityhood does not take away anything from what they have achieved."

## An even playing field...

"There has not been an overt bias. Ironically, I have a very strong bias towards women at the work place and Siddhartha jokingly accuses me of unfairly loading the dice against men. I have come to understand that men are wired very differently to women and each might feel

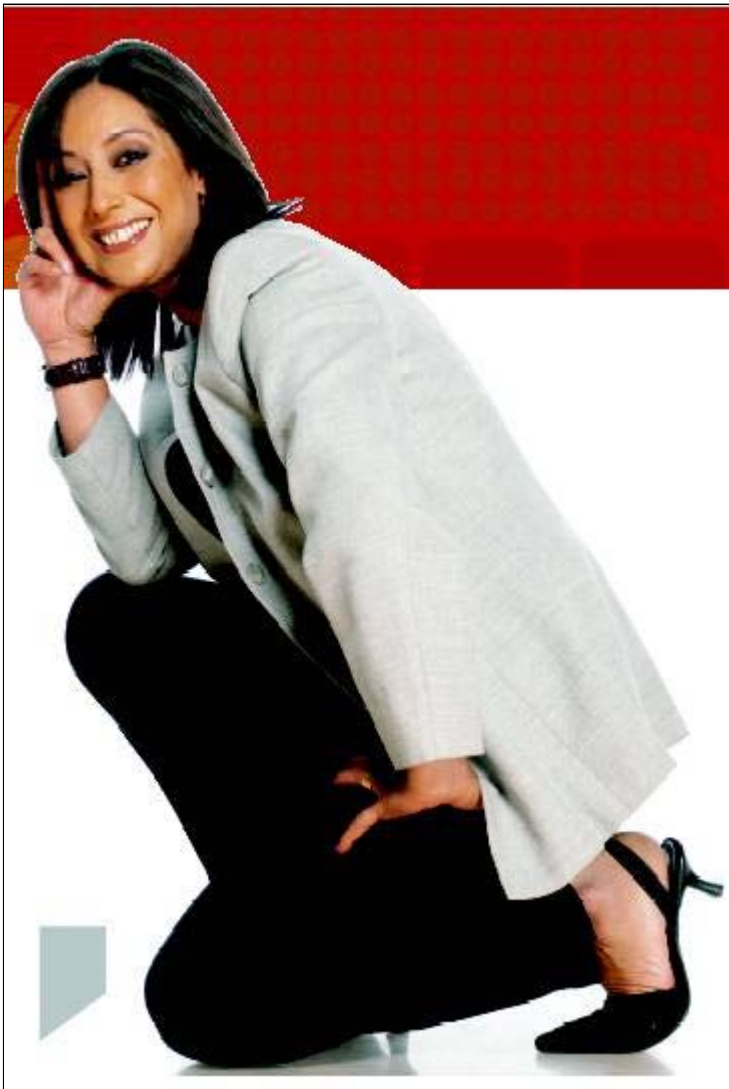
threatened by the other and that's when game playing begins. But at the end of the day, it's more to do with how efficient you are in a team set-up."

### **Biggest challenge...**

"Every project poses its challenges. I think KBC, when it first started was a huge challenge logistically. Everything in it was mega — from Amitabh Bachchan, to the format, to setting up the technical and back-end of the series. Right now, I am producing a daily show called 'Mum Tum Aur Hum', on Star Plus. It's proving to be an amazing gradient in terms of creativity and logistics."

### **Times you regret...**

"In rewind, I would have been a ballet dancer with a repertory company. I began with ballet and left midway at a time that rock and roll was the rage and ballet infra-dig. I regret not pursuing that line many times! Other than that, whatever fate had lined for me, I have accepted and made adversity my friend and supporter!"



**Anita Kaul Basu**, DIRECTOR, SYNERGY COMMUNICATIONS