

Saif messages me at three in the morning: Sharmila

Sharmila Tagore is a doting mother, but she has a grouse against son Saif Ali Khan. She says he does not keep in regular touch with her.

'At least when I SMS my daughters Saba (Ali Khan) and Soha (Ali Khan) they reply immediately. But Saif is impossible. He gets in touch at three in the morning when he's in trouble. But when I want him he's nowhere to be found,' Sharmila told IANS.

'On his birthday he complained to Soha that he hadn't heard from either of his parents. In fact, both the parents had sent him a birthday SMS, father (Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi) from Delhi and mother from Toronto, to both his New York and Indian numbers. But you can't hold grudges against Saif. He'll charm you within moments.'

With Saif blossoming into one of the finest actors in the country and Soha coming into her own with films like 'Rang De Basanti', Sharmila is one proud mother.

'I think everyone got an anxious SMS from Saif when he had to shave his head for 'Omkaara'. I advised him against shaving his hair. But he went ahead and did it. And it really worked!'

Well, we all know who her favourite actor is as she just can't stop talking about 'Omkaara' and Saif.

'I was blown away! After I saw 'Omkaara' I really became his fan for life. I asked Vishal (Bharadwaj) where he got all that violence from Saif. As one actor responding to another, I felt he had risen to the occasion.'

'From 'Hum Tum' to 'Kal Ho Naa Ho' to 'Parineeta' and 'Omkaara'...the diversity is admirable. I really pray for him because he has to get better and better,' said Sharmila.

Soha, her mother says, initially showed no inclination to be in movies. 'After she worked in a bank, she wanted to act. And my husband and I didn't discourage her.'

But being an offspring of illustrious parents can be double-edged.

'She's dealt quite well with the strange and professional atmosphere and the hurtful criticism like, 'You look like your mother and you've the acting talent of your father!'

But Sharmila adds: 'Come to think of it, Saif had to go through the worst barbs when he came in. To a large extent he has prepared the way for Soha.'

Sharmila knows that her kids have to find their own way of life.

'As a mother I'm happy they're working, making a living and trying to make sense of their lives. But every generation has to learn from its own mistakes. What worked for me may not work for them. I can't run Saif and Soha's life by remote control. Parents often believe they know best but that's not how it is always.'

Sharmila and Soha will be seen in Aparna Sen's film 'Jewel Box'.

'That project will happen if the finances are in place. I love my character. If it's made I'll have a ball doing it.'

'It's very culture-specific drama, about three different generations of Bengali women and what jewellery means to them. For my character it means better bargaining power in the household. For the second generation jewellery is an investment. For the third generation it funds a vision. Like 'Omkaara', Aparna's film is culture-specific. It'll work only in Bengali.'

She speaks highly of her co-stars - Govinda and Konkana Sen Sharma - in the project.

'Like Shammi Kapoor, Govinda is very under-utilised. And Konkana...I'm really looking forward to working with her.'

But apart from this project, Sharmila does not have any films. Her charity work, gardening and reading keep her busy.

'At the moment I don't have any other films on hand. I keep myself busy with my work for Unicef and with gardening and reading which are my passions. And of course meeting my children, which I don't get to do that often.'

Subhash K. Jha (© IANS / India eNews)