



"I have always consciously kept my daughter away from the limelight that I am in"

# a sensitive bond

Motherhood is a special occasion in a woman's life. Up close with television journalist Richa Aniruddha, we find out how the experience has made her life complete.

words NITIKA BAJPAYEE JHA photos GIRISH MASON make-up SHIVA SHARMA hair styling GANESH PRASAD

**L**ife has many priorities, some personal some professional. Though it is accepted that a man is the breadwinner of the family, the strong pillar of the household is always the woman. It is her strength that gives her family a strong foundation. They say, a woman is incomplete till she embraces motherhood. And when she juggles between home and work, she is no less than a super woman.

We all know that journalism is a high-pressure job, especially television journalism. Behind the camera, TV journalists sweat out to bring to you the best possible coverage of whatever is going on in the society. For Richa Aniruddha, a television journalist and anchor of the award-winning show *Zindagi Live*, motherhood has brought about positive changes in her life.

After a busy day at work, she looks forward to spending time with her 12-year-old daughter Ishita and that makes her day. In this exclusive interview with Parents India, the anchor, who looks no less than a diva, shares her journey as a mother and the bond she shares with her lovely daughter.

A woman starts preparing the arrival of her baby the moment she gets to know about her pregnancy. So, when the little bundle of joy arrives, what does the mother actually feel? "I think, becoming a mother and holding your newborn in your arms is an emotion which is hard to explain. When my daughter was born, I was only 25. I was too happy that it was a baby girl," shares an elated Richa.



A mere mention of her daughter's name brings a smile to Richa's face. "I feel, embracing motherhood suddenly makes you feel very responsible. I was 'extra' happy because when Ishita was born, my prayers were answered. I had prayed for nine months for a baby girl," Richa answers. So, has motherhood brought about positive changes in her life? "There is certain amount of change in every woman's life whenever she embraces motherhood. A mother is always on her toes for her child. This happened with me as well. I was quite immature and careless till Ishita came into my life. Now, my life revolves around her," says Richa.

When a child is born, a mother is born too. And a mother grows along with her kid. Even Richa feels she

has grown with Ishita. "In the last 12 years, as she has grown, I have grown with her in too many ways. Before Ishita, I was not at all fond of kids, but after her birth, I love every child I meet. I think, motherhood has helped me become more careful, aware,

sensitive and loving," she quips.

People know Richa as the face of *Zindagi Live*, a show that touches upon sensitive topics and creates a positive environment for

changes to come in the society. We wonder with a busy professional life, how does she manage to sneak out quality family time, especially for Ishita? Throwing light on how she manages home and work, she says, "During my initial years of struggle in media, my mother took care of Ishita. I was totally against putting her in

**Ishita is about to enter her teens, I make sure I spend more time with her at home**



a daycare centre. I wanted her to be brought up exactly the way I had been. I believe in maintaining a balance between work and a child's needs."

A child's relationship with his mother is nine months older than others. According to Richa, a father's role in raising a child is equally imperative. "In our family, I am more involved with Ishita's day-to-day activities compared to my husband. But he, Aniruddha Thatte, is very particular about spending time with Ishita. Together they laugh, learn, enjoy and do fun activities, which I can't do often," points Richa.

Spending time together can bridge the gap between a working mother and the child. On my personal experience, I can vouch for the fact. Through the shoot, the ever-smiling mother-daughter duo cracked jokes, played nose games (their favourite) and burst into an impromptu laughter every now and then. So what all do they do in their spare time and strengthen their bond? Richa gushes, "We watch a lot of movies and our movie-viewing is based on what she can watch and what she cannot. We watch a lot of animated and children's films together. My husband and me also play different games with her. And we make sure to have a hearty discussion every now and then, which I think is very important."

**Quickies...**

**Q. Five must-haves for a vacation with Ishita?**

**A.** Music, camera, her diary which she writes every day, clothes which we both share and laptop.

**Q. Your favourite travel destinations?**

**A.** Last year, we travelled to Europe (London, Switzerland, Paris and Prague) and then to Gulmarg in India. I enjoy mountains more than the beaches, but my daughter likes both. She loves to swim.

**Q. What is your favourite street food?**

**A.** Aloo tikki and gol gappe

**Q. What kind of music does Ishita enjoy?**

**A.** My daughter is a classical vocalist. She is learning since she was four. But she enjoys all kinds of music.

**Q. Does she still watch cartoon shows?**

**A.** She is 12, but she still loves to watch *Tom & Jerry* and *Mr Bean*.

**Q. Five books for every mother to read out to her children?**

**A.** My all-time favourite since I was a child has been the entire *Amar Chitra Katha* collection. My daughter has also read most of it. Recently, I got Sudha Murthy's books for her and she is enjoying reading them.

It is interesting to know that Ishita is a fabulous pianist. She can play numerous tunes and songs on her piano, that too without any formal training. As the mother-daughter duo was posing for the camera, Ishita lovingly played a tune from a recently released movie.

When asked about the most challenging aspect of being a working parent, Richa feels that "deciding one's priorities is of utmost importance. One should be strong enough to choose between an attractive assignment and your child's annual function. It is how you prioritise your time and life." Well, our readers will definitely take a cue from you Richa.

As parents, people always compare their parenting style with that of their parents. Richa, however, feels it is really difficult and slightly unfair to compare. "The circumstances were very different when we were growing up. My mother being a homemaker was more caring and strict. A 'no' from my mum meant a 'no' for me. There were no questions asked or arguments done. But today's kids want to reason out everything with you till they are satisfied. They will not take a simple 'no' if you cannot convince them. The challenges of parenting faced by my mother were very different from what I am facing today. The tricks to handle children have also evolved," points out Richa.

A child is his mother's favourite. And Richa wants her daughter to grow up as a sensitive individual.

**Straight from the heart**

**Differences you see in the parenting techniques today and 20 years back?**

Parents are more friendly with their children today. Those who don't have enough time for their kids, 'bribe' them with expensive gifts. Our parents had more time for us.

**How can we tackle the issue of female foeticide in India?**

That's one issue very close to my heart. I personally always wanted to have only daughters. But I see others from educated families praying for a son. This won't change till we, women, decide to change it.

**Your views on the over-exposure of social networking sites on children?**

I still think like a small-town middle class parent and keep Ishita away from social networking sites as much as practically possible. It's taking away the innocence from children, eating on their outdoor activities, putting them to risk of making friends with complete strangers. Both me and my husband keep a tab on Ishita's activities on social networking sites.

**Today, a lot of kids do things under peer pressure. How do you make sure Ishita doesn't get affected by the same?**

Regular counselling and chatting with her is my mantra. I constantly make her aware of the fact that her parents really work hard so that she gets the best of everything. But, there is a limit to everything. Thankfully, Ishita is a sensible child. She has a mind of her own and doesn't get affected easily by others' opinions.

**How should a parent make sure that his kids stay alert from child abuse?**

Communication is the key. Ask your kids about their day at school, enquire about their friends, seniors and staff. I remember explaining Ishita about child abuse, I told her how to differentiate between a good touch and a bad touch. Parents need to realise that nothing is important than your child's safety.



Richa's kurti by Biba

