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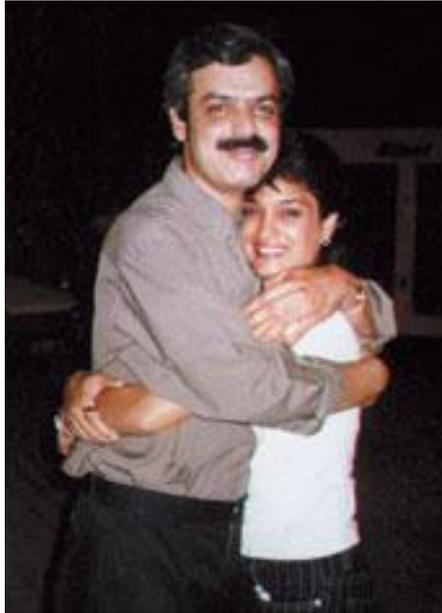
alumni Justice Siddharth Mridul and sister Sandhya

DU fosters sibling togetherness

Remembering their dad, too, The late Justice Pushp Raj Mridul

A shoulder to lean on

Elder brother Siddharth has been like a father to actress Sandhya Mridul



Siddharth Mridul

BA His Hons Hindu 1983

LLB CLC 1986

Judge High Court of Delhi

alpix 0767



Sandhya Mridul

BA Maths Hons LSR

Bollywood Actress

BFJA Award Best Actress in a

Supporting Role in *Page 3* 2006

Nominated for Filmfare Award for

Best Supporting Actress in *Page 3* 2006

alpix 0767A

Actress Sandhya Mridul was born in Mumbai and moved to Delhi when she was 10 years old. But she returned to Mumbai to become, first, a marketing executive and then to find her true calling as an actress. She quickly became wildly popular on the small screen with her performances in serials like *Swabhimaan*, *Banegi Apni Baat*, *Koshish* and *Hu Ba Hu*. She also appeared in *Extra Innings*, the programme during the cricket World Cup 2003.

Sandhya's first big project in tinseltown was the film *Saathiya*, which was followed by a spate of unusual roles in *Waisa Bhi Hota Hai* and *Kuchh Meetha Ho Jaye*. More recently, she received rave reviews for her role in Madhur Bhandarkar's film *Page 3* in which she played a smart airhostess.

Siddharth Mridul (42 in 2005), Sandhya's eldest brother prefers to call it 'a not particularly creative profession', but one that he has always enjoyed.

He hasn't always had an easy time during his 19 years at the Bar. **His father The late Justice Pushp Raj Mridul** Additional Judge Bombay High Court died 27.09.1984 just as he was about to qualify for the Bar and he was saddled with the task of keeping the family together and looking after his younger brother and sister. He became a father figure for his younger sister.

Sandhya:

Right from the time I was a small child, my eldest brother was my protector. There would be times when my other brother Pankaj would lock me up in a bathroom or slap me, but Siddhu *bhaiyya* would always be there to bail me out. There was an age gap of six years between us and a gap of only one year between my two brothers. So they were very close to each other and would indulge in guy games. At those times, Pankaj would throw me out. Siddhu *bhaiyya* on the other hand would very judiciously let me in and allow me to be with them, brushing aside protests from Pankaj.

... I was a complete tomboy, having grown up with two brothers. At one point of time, **I had a hair cut like Vinod Khanna**, so the boys in the neighbourhood of our Marine Drive home would call me 'Khanni'. I was notorious for being a brat and getting into fights. Once somebody came and complained to Siddhu *bhaiyya*: 'That Khanni has yet again got into a fight with some boys out there'. *Bhaiyya* got me out of the fight but never snitched about it to my mother. Otherwise I would surely have been grounded.

My dad died when I was a teenager, about 14 years old. **Siddhu *bhaiyya* took over from there and I started looking upto him as a father figure.** My basic memories of him date back to those times when I used to be upset, but I had his shoulders to cry on. I might have been at fault, but he didn't worry about that. He pampered me without any reservations.

He believed in what my father did ' that girls are to be cherished, that no one should raise a hand on them. In fact, I don't remember ever being hurt by him .'

... One habit that I imbibed from him is reading. He was an avid reader and I caught hold of whatever he read. So I ended up growing up on a dose of Western literature like the Louis L'Amour series.

Our relationship has changed very little over time. Even now when he comes to Mumbai for a short two-day trip, and I am busy with shooting schedules, he is so understanding. He says, 'Don't worry, there's always a next time.' And I end up feeling very guilty.

... Once somebody walked upto him and asked him, 'Aren't you Sandhya Mridul's brother' (this happened after the release of *Saathiya*) He called me up and said he had never felt so proud of me.

Siddharth:

We have memories together that go back as long as I can remember. Sandhya was always very bossy. She was father's blue-eyed girl, as a result of which everything that she wanted or wished for was fulfilled by him.

My sister was the first in our family to go to a boarding school. She had to stay away from home at the Maharani Gayatri Devi hostel when she was about 10. As a student, I have memories of her being an all-rounder. But when she returned from hostel, she seemed to have gained in confidence. From a young age she loved excelling in every thing she took up. She was an excellent dancer and always made it to the cultural shows while we two brothers were left behind.

Sandhya was very bright, vivacious and talkative. Once she started off, we had trouble making her stop. But that has changed in the past 10 years. Now she likes to speak her mind and is not afraid of anybody.

... My father was liberal. I took off from there. Even when there were late night parties, my mother and I took a conscious decision never to suffocate Sandhya with our worries and anxieties. As long as she is happy with what she is doing, we are content with that.

My father's death has been the most traumatic experience in our lives. We have lived together through such difficult moments and our relationship has strengthened with time.

AS TOLD TO ARUNDHATI BASU