

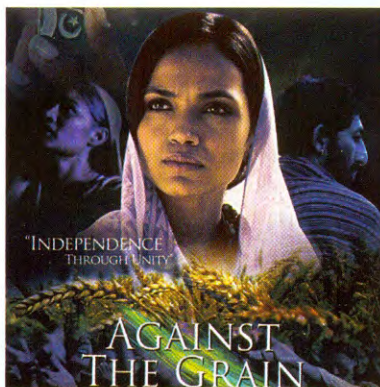
TIDES OF CHANGE

Pakistani actor Aamina Sheikh hopes to bring about a change in her country, one film at a time. For her latest film *Josh*, which tackles issues like feudalism and women's rights, she teams up with filmmaker Iram Parveen Bilal. **Jayeeta Mazumder** gets her views on being a woman in showbusiness in courageous Malala's country

It didn't take much time for the film *Josh* (English title *Against The Grain*) to come under the spotlight—it was the only feature film from Pakistan to be screened at the Mumbai Film Festival 2012. The film revolves around the struggles that Fatima, an educated young Pakistani woman, faces when she decides to investigate the sudden disappearance of her nanny. The film is a passionate take on themes like class divide, feudalism, poverty and women's rights in Pakistan, told articulately by its lead actor Aamina Sheikh and the film's maker Iram Parveen Bilal.

Aamina is the face of many advertising campaigns and popular Pakistani television serials. She makes for a well-balanced team with her director Iram. While Aamina is earnest, Iram is feisty and no-holds-barred. Like Aamina, Iram finds her stories in free-spirited women etching out an identity in the most volatile situations. You understand why Fatima, the protagonist in *Josh*, would be their mascot.

In this conversation with *Femina*, Aamina speaks about her journey into the Pakistani film industry and her hope of making a difference.



(Top) Aamina and director Iram have teamed up for the first time for *Josh*, a film which puts the spotlight on serious social issues; (above) Aamina on a poster of the film

Tell us a little about your growing up years.

I grew up in different countries—the US, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Fortunately, I was raised in an environment that was progressive and independent of many of the cultural and religious stereotypes that this region is associated with. Today, there are more and more women in Pakistan making contributions in the work force, in politics, in various industries. It is heartening to see women being accepted on an equal footing with men in a society where old traditions are still in practise. ►