An adda with Yaatri

Sajeda Tamanna Hussain

Ekta Gopon Kotha Chilo Bolbar Bondhu Shomoy Hobe Ki Tomar - I was humming the tunes to my favorite song and doing the dishes. As my concentration lay stranded between the catchy tune and the sparkling crockery, I had not realized that I had actually started singing the song out aloud. Before long, my cousin came rushing into the kitchen and shook me out of the trance I was drowned in. The next thing I knew was, she was rapidly talking, her words tripping over one another, asking me where I had heard the song, who was the singer, whether the song was available in music shops and so many other inquiries! Well, I wasn't really surprised by my cousin's reaction. I had already grown used to witnessing young boys and girls frantically jumping around by their first introduction to 'Ekta Gopon Kotha'. However, a general trend is, once they understand the intensity of the simple and awakening lyrics, they prefer to just indulge themselves in the depth of the soulful and melodious tune accompanied by words that speak the language of all hearts. Such is the charisma of 'Ekta Gopon Kotha'; such is the magic of 'Yaatri'!



03:00pm, 24th March 2007- the sun was out but the heat was abated by a cool breeze, most of the shops were open, and Road No 13, Banani, was bustling with life as students from all the universities occupying the street, were pouring in and out of their respective buildings. It was just another ordinary Saturday evening, except that, my best friend Ridwan and I, were sitting in conversation with Topu and Emran bhaiya from 'Yaatri'.

The conversation began with an introduction from our side (needless to say, they did not require any sort of introduction). What started off as an informal meeting, slowly winded its way to a much anticipated interview, where we jogged their memories right from where and how their musical careers began!

Sajeda: What is the significance behind the name 'Yaatri'?

Topu Bhaiya: It refers to a Bengali word 'Jaatri', which means traveler. We want to write songs about all those things a person observes during his journey through life.

Sajeda: How was 'Yaatri' born? How did your duo come to life?

Topu Bhaiya: I joined the Shanskritik Shongothon of North South University in 2003, while a student there, under the influences of my friends Misho and Pranjol Bhai. In early 2004, Emran joined NSUSS and we were participating together at an unplugged concert in NSU. That is when Tony Bhai from the band Black, approached us with an offer to contribute a track to his the then upcoming album 'Shopnochura-I'. He asked us to form a band and we did so along with two other band members, Mitul and Bipu. In that particular concert, Tony Bhai had played the drums with us. Soon after that, we recorded a track for the album and it resulted as 'Ek Paye Nupur'.

Sajeda: Yes, and we are all familiar with how it turned out to be a great hit! Now, how did 'Ekta Gopon Kotha' come to life?

Emran Bhaiya: After the release of 'Ek Paye Nupur', the activities of our band were inactive for about a year. Mitul and Bipu were not being able to dig out time for the band due to personal reasons. In 2005, Tony Bhai asked for another track from us for his album 'Shopnochura- II'. That is when we realized, why not just the two of us? Eventually, Topu familiarized me with another one of his compositions 'Ekta Gopon Kotha'. I immediately fell in love with it so badly that we decided we would go for it. Then one day, Tony Bhai suddenly contacted us, mentioning that we had to go for recording the next day. Since I had worked on only half of the song till then, I stayed awake all night and finished it for recording the next day.

It was a six hour shift during recording, and given that it was the month of Ramadan, I was fasting! After the recording, Tony Bhai wouldn't let us hear our own song let alone take the track with us, given we leak the song before its release (Topu Bhai in a hysteric fit of laughter)!

Sajeda: Topu Bhaiya, what inspires you towards writing such simple yet beautiful lyrics?

Topu Bhaiya: I want to write lyrics everybody can interact with and relate to. Frankly speaking, Humayun Ahmed has been a great inspiration to me in terms of writing. His works are simple, coherent and he writes about things that you and I can understand. I learnt to portray my thoughts in ordinary words but retaining their depth, by being acquainted to the style of his writings. In terms of the rhythm, I love writing poetry ever since I was a child. As a child, I didn't know how to compose music but I was very gifted with the art of rhyming words.

Sajeda: Do you sing for any particular age group of the society?

Topu bhaiya: No, we definitely do not sing focusing on any age group but sometimes the songs tend to get categorized because of trends or hypes set by the society.

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