Debuda-The Fairy Tale Prince

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WHEN the police finished playing the last post and gave the guard of honour to pay respect to our Debuda-Artist Devdas Chakraborty, many rushed to have a last glimpse of the body of the deceased artist lying in state in the Central Shaheed Minar in the afternoon of the fading winter on Thursday, February 7, 2008. Debuda had breathed his last on Monday at the age of 75. The aura was somber and I could see many friends and colleagues of Debuda weeping in silence.

It was in the summer of 1973 when I first met Debuda in the teacher's bus of Chittagong University. The eminent artist of the country Murtaja Baseer, whom I knew as Baseer *bhai* introduced me to Debuda sitting in the back seat of the bus. Debuda was one person whom you would like from the very first moment. He had a very fair reddish complexion. To me he seemed more of a fairy tale prince from 'Thakur Maar Jhuli', someone not from this part of the world. Later once I had humorously asked Debuda if he was a fairy tale prince? He smiled at me and said maybe. After the brief introduction phase was over, Debuda invited me to have lunch with him at Burma Raju Hotel. I had heard of Burma Raju Hotel so much but never had the chance of going there. I instantly agreed. Rashid Chowdhury, Murtaja Baseer, Devdas Chakraborty and Ronald Patra were also going to Burma Raju Hotel, an exclusive *deshi* restaurant in Firenghee Bazaar where you could have a good lunch at a reasonable price and could eat different varieties of *shutki* of Chittagong. It was Debuda's regular joint. Debuda believed life could be a burden if you did not know what to do with it.



Debdas Chakraborty: 1933-2008

Devdas Chakraborty, Zia Hyder, Mizanur Rahim all followed Rashid Chowdhury to Chittagong University in 1969 when Rashid Chowdhury took up the task of building up the new department of Fine Arts. Murtaja Baseer joined the Department of Fine Arts and I in the Management Department in 1973. Rashid Chowdhury, Murtaja Baseer and Devdas Chakrabarty formed an inseparable trio. The department of Fine Arts of Chittagong University had a superb team of teachers who could inspire young graduates from Dhaka's Art College (now Institute of Fine Arts, Dhaka University) to come to Chittagong for a Master's degree in Fine Arts. In the seventies came a bunch of artists like Syed Abdullah Khaled, Monsurul Karim, Chandra Shekar, Abul Monsur, Alok Roy, Faizul Azim and others, all graduates of Arts College for their Master's Degree from Chittagong University. Debuda lived in Nasirabad with Saleha *bhabi* and their two sons, Gautom and Rousseau. There would be occasional addas in his house where Gautom and Rousseau would continuously run around. Saleha *bhabi* would tirelessly shout at her two sons and make sure Debuda's colleagues and friends got their cup of tea. It was obvious that Debuda loved Saleha *bhabi* very much and while sipping his cup of tea would ask 'what would life be without you Rani?' Saleha *bhabi* was Rani to Debuda. Towards the late seventies Saleha *bhabi* was suffering from cancer and was admitted to PG hospital. Debuda, who then was on a scholarship in Poland came to attend to Saleha *bhabi*. One evening when I came to visit *bhabi* in the hospital she wondered what would happen to Debuda when she would no longer be there to take care of him