

Second death anniversary of Humayun Ahmed

HUMAYUN AHMED'S musical creations under spotlight

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Noted litterateur, filmmaker, TV playwright-director and painter, Professor Humayun Ahmed had a musical soul. He reintroduced the legacy of folk music of the north-eastern part of Bangladesh (popularly known as songs of Bhattanchol) and Sylhet, applying those in his films and TV plays. He wrote many songs too, that have special appeals to his fans. Those who closely worked with Ahmed shared their savoir faire on Humayun Ahmed's musical creations with The Daily Star.

Barī Siddīqī: Noted singer-composer Barī Siddīqī said "The way Humayun Ahmed adored music and honoured artistes as a whole was unparalleled. He made proper use of music in his films. I recorded the song 'Pubali Batashey' composed by Ukil Munshi, with full artistic freedom. He could choose the right person to represent any piece of art. He was uncompromising in regard to arts."

Subir Nandi: Renowned singer Subir Nandi has played many popular songs including 'Ekta Chhilo Shonar Konya' and 'O Amar Ural Ponkhi Rey', written by Ahmed. Nandi termed Humayun as a luminous aficionado of music. "As a listener, Ahmed was great. With regard to popularising folk music to urban culture and his commitment to the country's history, heritage and an attachment to Moromi songs, Ahmed is outstanding. I have recorded many songs for his TV plays as well," he mentioned.

Meher Afroze Shaon: Singer, actress and Humayun Ahmed's wife Shaon said, "I rendered several songs in Humayun's films and TV plays. Humayun Ahmed wrote several songs only for me like 'Jodi Mon Ka(n)dey', 'Ke Poralo Amar Chokhe Kolonko Kajo', 'Cholona Brishtitey Bhiy'. When he was busy shooting for the film 'Noy Nombor Bipod Shongket', I was recording the song 'Jodi Mon Ka(n)dey'. I cannot express that feeling in words. He popularised songs of Baul Shah Abdul Karim, Hason Raja, Jalal Uddin, Gias Uddin Ahmed and Ukil Munshi. He used to wrap up each episode of TV serial 'Aj Robibar' with a Hason Raja song," she recalled.

Jewel Rana: Ahmed's chief assistant director Jewel Rana shared unknown stories of Ahmed's lyric-writing. "Sir (Humayun Ahmed) never wanted to become a lyricist; rather, he wrote songs for his



films and TV plays only to avert the pains of making lyricists realise his scripts. He had a great fascination for folk music. When sir along with Gultekin Khan visited his village, Islam Uddin Boyati instantly composed a lyric 'Koi Gelirey Hena Ar Mina, Taratari Dekh Aiya, Kutubpur-er Bhaishab Aichhe Bhabire Loiya'. Humayun sir composed around 40 songs for his films and TV plays. He wrote 'Channi Poshor Raite Jeno Amar Moron Hoy' instantly while sipping tea. He wished and wanted us to play the song after his death."

Selim Chowdhury: Singer Selim Chowdhury said, "Not being a poet, Humayun Ahmed wrote several outstanding lyrics that contain mystic poetic metaphors. Humayun Ahmed's musical taste was very refined. He used Tagore songs like 'Dure Kohao', (recorded by Rezwana Chowdhury Bonny) or Mita Huq's rendition. He even amusingly used Hindi tracks including 'Hawa Main Urtta Jaye' in one of his TV plays and people received it very well. He could apply music accurately."

Maksud Jamil Mintoo: Noted music composer-director Maksud Jamil Mintoo composed several film songs written by Humayun Ahmed. Mintoo also composed many songs including "Hablonger Bajarey Giya" (by Subir Nandi) for Ahmed's TV

plays. Besides, the composer did several songs like 'Konya Nachilo Rey', written by Ahmed for Shaon's solo album. He said, "Humayun Ahmed would be present during recordings and would hear songs and praise candidly. Humayun Ahmed honoured Baul Shah Abdul Karim, brought him to Dhaka, and made other singers render the bard's songs. Sir also recorded five folk songs by eminent artiste Firoza Begum. I arranged music for both the ventures. Humayun Ahmed said that quality and popularity are not the same. Any good work may not be popular; but what is good is good forever. Again, many popular pieces might carry no message."

SI Tutul: Popular singer-composer SI Tutul recollected Ahmed as a man of music. "He gave me many outstanding lyrics that inspired me to compose them. He was an avid fan of Rabindra and Nazrul Sangnet and songs of three poets. Sir would hum the song 'Ami Krittī Adhorm' every now and then. Inspired by Ahmed, I, with my wife Tania, have established an interactive school named 'All Saints' in Dhaka, where students receive general education along with lessons on art, music, culture and counselling."

Humayun Ahmed is no more with us. But his diverse creative works remain in the memory of his fans.

The stories he told ...

FAHIM FERDOUS

In the early part of the nineties, television entertainment had a different meaning. Most of the shows we would enjoy on BTV were not 'our' productions: be it the foreign shows like "The Girl From Tomorrow" or "McCyver" or the cartoons that aired in the afternoon. So, the time for us kids in front of TV was also rather specified, as the elders in the house would not enjoy these as much. What they took more interest in were at the pre-dinner time, when Bengali drama serials would air. My first encounter of that sort was with "Kothao Keu Nei", a TV spot I recognised as "the show with Baker bhiai". While the exact stories are unclear in my memory, I remember the whole family gathering around every week for the show, and enjoying it the same, from my elderly aunt to the 4-year old me. "Hawa Mein Urtta Jaye" — Baker bhiai's (Asaduzzaman Noor) favourite song that played at the roadside tea stall where he hung around — became a household tune; my teenage cousin sisters would argue over who pulls off Muna's (Subarna Mustafa) hairstyle better. And when, near the end, Baker bhiai was convicted of a murder, I remember the discussions at the dinner table, including my father, who was not the most serious of TV-watchers.

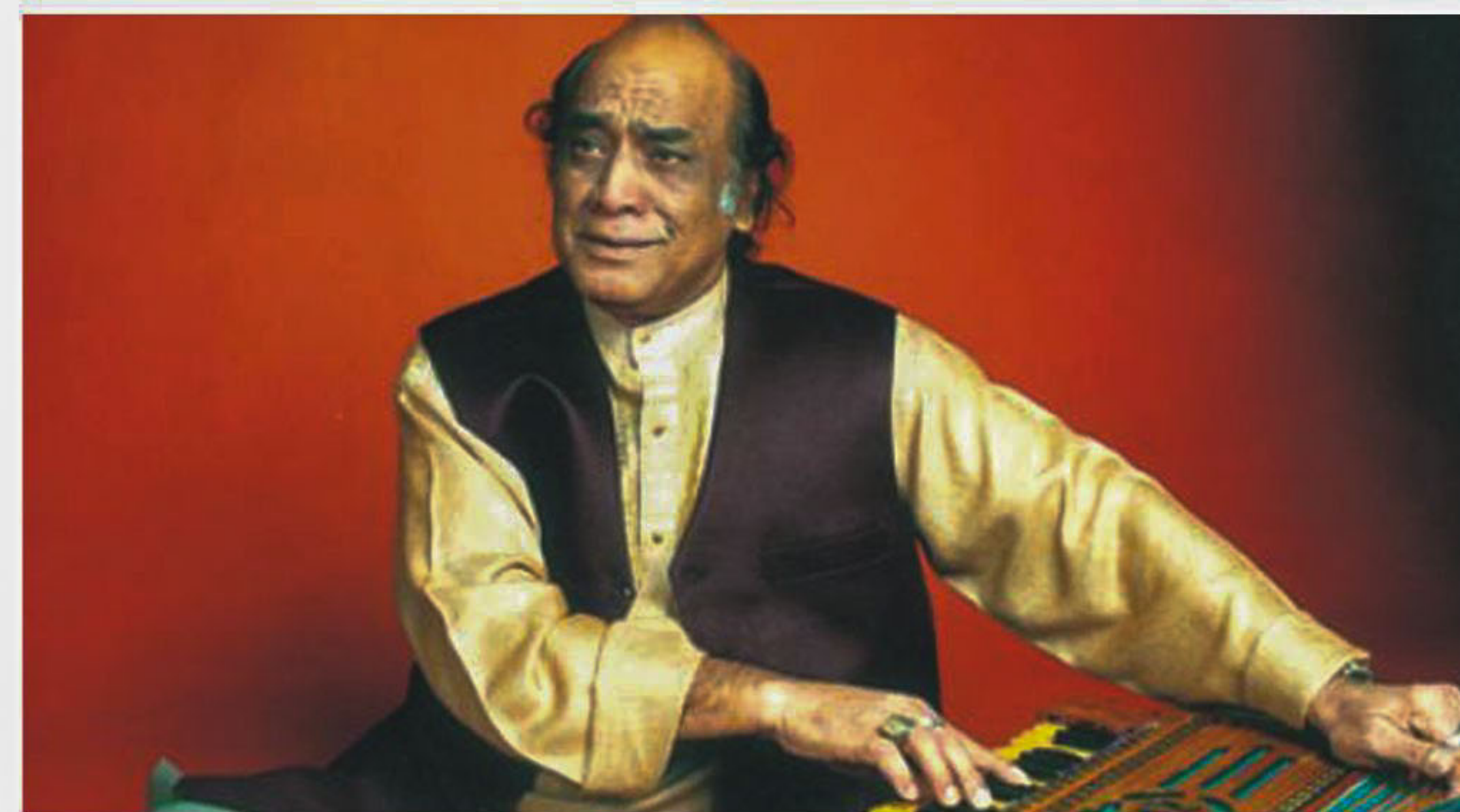
Another show that I vaguely remember is "Ayomoy". Set in a different background, it featured a 'Choto Mirza' (Asaduzzaman Noor, again) and his two wives played by Subarna Mustafa and Sara Zaker. But the drama series Humayun Ahmed really had an impact on me was "Aj Robibar". Shot almost entirely indoors in BTV's shabby studios, it was the TV highlight of my weekend (it would be aired on Fridays). From the simpleton Anis (Zahid Hasan), his constantly awkward encounters with Tili and Kongka (Shila Ahmed and Meher Afroze Shaon), the moody, quirky Aly Zaker, his brother Asaduzzaman Noor right down to their domestic help Moti Bhai (Faruk Ahmed) and Fulli, was entertaining in a way no other TV show was.

There was another of Humayun Ahmed's finest creations that I got to experience later, in my late teens. After I'd read the novel "Bobubhri" and was discussing it with my mother, she said that it used to be a TV serial in the late 80s. After some searching, I got my hands on the seven episodes — downloaded painstakingly off the internet. I thought I wouldn't be as amazed by it as I was of my childhood TV experiences; it proved me wrong to no end. What struck me was that every character seemed not just possible, but probable to exist; the eccentric 'Mama' (portrayed by Aly Zaker) to the shy Emdad Khondokar (Abul Khair) to the widowed father of two Asaduzzaman Noor whose children are more than a handful to Kader the servant (played by Afzal Sharif), all seemed incredibly lifelike. Near the end, the story took a bold turn, speaking about the Liberation War and turning hatred against the collaborators. In a time as politically difficult as that (1988-89), he managed to coin the immortal phrase "Tui Razakar" in it.

There are all types of storytellers in the world; what made Humayun Ahmed special how easily his characters walked into the viewers' lives, how their stories became the viewers' concern. At a time when television entertainment was not as abundant, Humayun Ahmed broke out of the TV screens and touched people's hearts. And that is what will immortalise him to us, his fans.

MEHDI HASSAN

Heavenly gift to listeners



HQ CHOWDHURY

A few decades back, it was in print that Talat Mahmood could not stand Mehdi Hassan's 'talaffuz'. Whether it stemmed out of 'filmi gossip' or fact will remain a mystery as both Talat Mahmood and Mehdi Hassan are now gone for good.

Mehdi Hassan had a flair for poetry and gave soulful renditions of Talat's ghazals at private functions. In fact it was through the vocals of Talat that he realised the goldmine in his voice. Talat's "Ek main hoon ek meri bekasi ki shaam hai" and "Husnawalon ko na dil" had left a permanent impression on him. While singing these two numbers once on stage in Rawalpindi, he held an audience of thousands spellbound and collected a whopping amount in a trice! Later, he became a part-time ghazal singer for Radio Pakistan, Karachi. It was ZA Bokhari and Saifuddin Saif initially and then the poets Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Qazi Shifai, Ahmad Faraz, Himayat Ali Shaif and Muneer Niazi who helped the Rajasthani master the language and its 'talaffuz'.

Mehdi Hassan signalled his forte with C. Faiz's classic composition of "Ilahi aansoo bhari zinadgi" for a film ("Hamen Bhi Jeene Do", 1963). It was not a very popular song for public taste. But a year later, with Faiz Ahmad Faiz's "Gulon mein raang bhary" (later used in the film, "Farangi", 1964) Mehdi Hassan made the first major impact. A string of immortal film ditties soon followed — Hassan Latif Lilaik's "Kaise kaise log" ("Tere Sheher Mein", 1965), Lal Mohammad Iqbal's "Duniya kisi se pyar" ("Jaag Utha Insaan", 1966), Khalil Ahmed's "Aye jaan-e-wafa dil mein teri yaad rahegi" (Tasveer, 1966), M. Ashtar's "Dil-e-weeran hai teri yaad hai" ("Aaina", 1966), A Hameed's "Nawazish karam shukriya" ("Mein Wo Nahin", 1967) to name some. Then Sohail Rana moved his magic wand for "Mujhe tum nazar se" ("Doraha", 1967) and "Ek nay mod pe" ("Ehsan", 1967); and Nisar Bazmi cast his pearls, "Yoon zindagi ki raah me takra gaya koi" ("Aag", 1967) and "Ik sitam aur meri jan" ("Saiqa" 1968).

The 'Mehdi Hassan' we know was born. One may debate that the music directors and the lip-synching by matinee idols, especially Waheed Murad and Mohammad Ali added substantial lustre to his songs. Partly true as by mid-'70s, when these composers became spent forces and the actors got typed, his songs suffered barring some compositions

from Robin Ghosh like "Pyar bhare do sharmili" or "Kabhi sochta hu". But Mehdi Hasan was a thinking singer. Undaunted with the decline of film music, he used his moorings in classical music and experiences with film composers to develop his music that had nothing to do with films. Mind you, it was the days of Farida Khanum and Iqbal Bano too and yet Mehdi Hassan stood out. It is this dimension that separates him from his contemporaries.

His first big one outside the film world was Bahadur Shah Zafar's "Baat karni mujhe mushkil" in 1975, which was his own composition. Ghazal after ghazal followed including Dagh's "Ghazab kiya tere waade pe etbar kiya", Ghalib's "Dile-e-nadaan tujhu huwa kiya hai", Mir's "Patta patta boota boota", Momin's "Woh jo hum me tum me qarar tha", Hafeez Hoshiarpur's "Muhabbat karne waley kum na hongay", Raza Tirmizi's "Bhooli bisri chand umeedin", Hafeez Jullundri's "Hum hi me thi na koi baat", Miratadabadi's "Teri khushi se agar hum me bhi khushi na hui", and then the relatively unknown Saleem Jilani's "Phool hi phool khil uthe mere", Farhat Shahzad's "Khuli jo aankh to who tha", Shai Lakhnavi's "Jo thakey thakey se thay hausle", Mohsin Naqvi's "Jab pukara hai tujhe apni" — you just name it, he was supreme all through to become the 'rehnuma' of a new school of ghazals.

But if listeners think that his art was developed during this period, they are wrong for some of his finest thumris, e.g. "Dukhwa mein kase kahoon mori sajni", "To aaja sajni nadia kinare more gaon" happen to be of the '60s just as his own composed piece, Ahmad Faraz's "Ranjish hi sahi" (later used in a film) or the Bangla piece "Harono diner kotha" (which easily ranks with Tagore's "Purano shei diner kotha" or Hemanta's "Muchhey jawa dinguli" if one is to judge it by the theme of the song). His Punjabi Heer or the Rajasthani Maand that go back to the same time were equally exquisite. Therefore, with the film songs cited above, labelling him as the 'shahenshah-e-ghazal' as most do, would only be unfair to him. He was much above that.

At the peak of his career he was travelling everywhere; loved by all — from the heads of state to those on the streets. Once while singing in the court of Nepal's King Shah Birendra Bir Bikram, he forgot the lines of his song, "Zindagi mein to sabhi pyar kya karke

hain", Shah stood up and sang for the next line for him. He was robbed in the highway but when the robbers learnt his identity they returned him all that they had taken but not before the master hummed them some lines of their favourite numbers. Such was his control on music lovers.

A man of 'tameez' and 'tehzeeb', during his visit to Calcutta, he went straight to ailing Hemanta's house from the airport to the pleasure of the Mukherjee family. The Bengali singer's beauties of the '50s, "Yeh raat yeh chandni", "Jaane woh kaise" haunted him. When he heard Manna Dey's "Madhusala", he was ecstatic and said, "How could a film singer sing such songs!" When his musicians were paid late or underpaid, he would use his purse for their relief.

Mehdi Hassan had the finesse to extract the finest from Urdu's versified poetry and its delicate images. He touched the finer chords of emotion and in so doing gave one pleasure, intellectually or spiritually to add to the totality of pleasure in living. His vocalism was so pure and authentic that to Naushad Ali, he was the greatest expert of ghazal gayaki; to Lata, the Bhagwan's voice and for Noorjahan, a Tansen. This one wonders whether Talat Mahmood at all made a comment about his 'talaffuz' not to forget Talat was a perfect gentleman.

Mehdi Hassan passed away on July 13, 2012. A paralytic stroke that felled him 12 years ago took its toll, bit by bit to make the once "expression master" totally speechless and then motionless. The old order changed, yielding place to new. So, to keep him 'alive', the four walls of his room were decorated with his photographs in the company of Atal Behari Bajpayee, Gulzar, Ghulam Ali and others. What change of fate!

Mehdi Hassan visited Bangladesh several times both before and after the Liberation War. One wonders why the maestro was never exposed to the world of Atul Prasad and Kazi Nazrul Islam. Imagine him singing "Ami bandhinu tomar teerey" or "Aamar koni kuley aaj bhihilo tori". I am sure his rendition would have gone a long way to make these numbers lifetime treasures; for some songs never fade just as some artistes never die. An artist of his calibre would surely have enriched our music. Mehdi Hassan was a heavenly gift to us; his songs will outlive us as long as music remains in air.

The writer is a music connoisseur.

Launching of Media Box: Representing Bangladesh Positively

In conversation with Syed Sajedur Rahman Firoz

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Visual media and publication house Media Box is formally going to be launched soon. Since its inception in 2009, Media Box has been producing documentary films and specialised music videos along with publishing books on illuminated personalities and on historical, cultural and archaeological heritages.

In a recent conversation with The Daily Star, Syed Sajedur Rahman Firoz, the proprietor and CEO of Media Box, talked about his dream, cultural responsibility and commitment to represent Bangladesh positively for the forthcoming generations and abroad. Excerpts:

"The concept and vision of Media Box is primarily to highlight Bangladesh's history, culture, archaeological heritages and lifestyles of its people. We are not producing commercial films. All our documentaries are based on solid research works. Some of our researches took one to two years to complete. We now have our own 'Print Library' on various subjects.

"I have now gone into publishing. The intention is to publish hard-cover pictorial books on each documentary film that Media Box has made and will make. The main reason is that from the findings of our research, it is not possible to include all the findings in the films we make, due to time constraints. So we will now be able to include the findings in the books. We have completed one such book on revolutionary Binod Bihari Chowdhuri, titled 'Agnipurush' ('The Firebrand Rebel'). We have made the book in Bangla and English.

"The launching will include screening of several documentary films — 'Agni Purush — Biplobi Binod Bihari Chowdhury and 'Bhasha Matin' (profile documentaries); 'Agni Juger Dhaka', 'Agni Juger Anushilon Samity', 'Master Da Surjya Sen', 'Prilata Wadeddar', 'Portuguese In Bengal' (historical documentaries); 'Bhasha Matin' (documentary film for children); 'Baul' (heritage documentary); 'Ambitious Stallion' (a satirical film); 'Shat Purusher Dhaka' (a true story of old Dhaka); 'Kansha' (a story on bell metal of Dharam); 'Baliati', 'Muktogachha Rajbari' and 'Hosne Dalan' (on heritage) and 'Paal Para', 'Kheti Khaoa Manush'; 'Adibashi' (lifestyles of the marginalised). Most of our films have English subtitles.

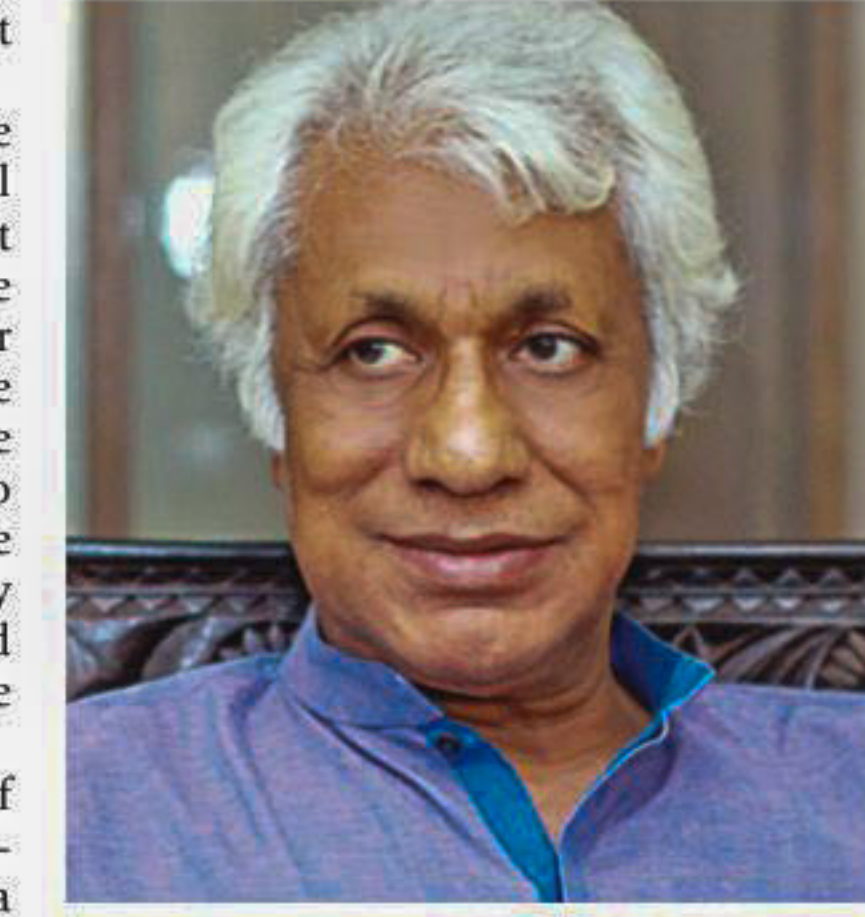
"These films will be like archival project works designed for the younger generations of our country, so that they can properly and concretely know their own heritage, feel pride in Bangladesh's opulence and indomitability and carry forward the legacy. Each one of our work highlights an in-depth insight into the focused subject. We have plans to bring out a regular magazine with contents on art, literature, history, heritage and culture. Books and

"The launching event will be like a mini Documentary Film Festival with 14/15 films. Media Box is hoping to catch the imagination of the audiences of all ages, especially the younger generations with its own brand of dynamic presentation."

films published from the Media Box will cover the bold and the glorious movements and chapter of our history ranging from Chittagong youth revolt to our sublime Liberation War of 1971.

"Besides, I have a great passion to depict the philosophy and lifestyle of Bauls on visuals. That's why I would like to give emphasis on producing and making a documentary film and publish a book on Bauls who truly hold the essence of our folk culture. The great thinker Gokhale once said: "What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow and the rest of the world the day after!" I feel an urge to represent Bangladesh positively through unique works in this regard. I have been conducting a research work on Bauls since 2009, which we are going to transform into visual media. The narration, interpretation and translation are pretty difficult.

"We'll have a launching committee comprising eminent personalities. The launching of Media Box will have unveiling of a book



titled "Agni Purush- Biplobi Binod Bihari Chowdhury" and two music video/DVDs titled "Rana Plaza" and "Barsha". Lyrics, composed and recorded at Media Box's own studio by Tanveer Alam Shajweeb along with the launching of its documentary films. Also, there will be an unveiling of "Media Box Logo with signature tune" on the screen along with a short visual presentation, featuring activities of Media Box. The event will contain performance of ganoasanget, Rabindra Sanget and Nazrul Sanget. We are also thinking of inviting international-famous mime maestro Partha Pratim Majumder from Paris, France to showcase a mime drama based on the conscience of Liberation War at the cultural part.

"The launching event will be like a mini Documentary Film Festival with 14/15 films. Media Box is hoping to catch the imagination of the audiences of all ages, especially the younger generations with its own brand of dynamic presentation."



Atzal Hossain and Bipasha Hayat, two leading lights of the Bangladeshi television scene, will share screen-space together after a decade and a half this Eid. The play, titled "Tobu Nokhroto Jagey", is written by Bipasha herself, and directed by Arif Khan. It will air on ntv during.

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Telefilm Ghunpoka on Maasranga Channel i to commemorate Humayun



A CORRESPONDENT

Telefilm "Ghunpoka" will air on Maasranga television at 11:20 pm on the sixth day of eid. The telefilm revolves around superstar Mou and an ordinary man called Sajal. Sajal, a diehard fan of Mou is obsessed with her and somehow he manages to get a job as Mou's manager. Gradually he comes closer to the superstar and Mou falls for him. One day Mou discovers Sajal's disguise and the plot takes an interesting turn. Written by Zakaria Shoukhin, the telefilm is directed by Sakhawat Manik. Sadia Islam Mou and Sajal are the central characters in the telefilm.

TV WATCH

Channel i to commemorate Humayun

A CORRESPONDENT

Marking the second death anniversary of wordsmith Humayun Ahmed, Channel i will air daylong programmes tomorrow (July 19). "Gaaney Gaaney Shokal", the morning musical show, will have Ahmed's favourite songs, and songs written by him. Gramephone's Trityo Matra, set to air at 1am and repeated at 9:45am, will have Nasiruddin Yousuff and Jayanta Chattopadhyay speaking on various aspects of Ahmed's life and work. The special episode will be hosted by Faridur Reza Sagor. At 10:30am, TV play "Leelaboti", written by Humayun Ahmed will be aired. Directed by Meher Afroze Shawon, the drama casts Jaya Ahsan, Mahfuz Ahmed, Challenger, Dr. Ejaz and Maznun Mizan. Film "Shrabon Megh'er Din" featuring Zahid Hasan, Mahfuz and Shawon will be telecast at 1:05pm, while a special programme titled "Dorja'r Opashe Humayun", directed by Raju Alim, will go on air at 11:30pm.

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