

# Science and Percussions

ANIK A HOSSAIN

Syud Momtaz Ahmed portrays an image of success that every Bangladeshi youth dreams of achieving. At the age of 29, he is a Senior Scientist at 3M, a renowned multinational conglomerate corporation based in St. Paul Minnesota, USA. Like many of us, Momtaz began his academic career right here in Dhaka. He completed his O'Levels at Sunbeams School and A'Levels from MasterMind School.

"My original plan was to study medicine in Bangladesh and maybe leave for a higher degree later," he tells us, "But after my O' Levels, there was a huge push from my parents, to apply for colleges in the United States. I got admitted to a small liberal arts school named Wabash College in Indiana with a full scholarship."

Once he got to college, he focused on majoring in Chemistry and Mathematics. "It was in college that I started doing a lot of research based on molecular modeling and developing nanoparticles for potential medical applications with my college research advisors," he says. "I was quite fascinated with the general concept of scientific research and wanted to pursue it further." In 2006, he had attained a fellowship that enabled him to work for Robert Hamers, a renowned professor in the world of nano, colloid and surface chemistry at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

After an excellent research experience there, he decided to pursue a post graduate degree in Chemistry. "I believe I had a good understanding with Chemistry," he tells us, "Chemistry

gave me that ability to build – build intricate and, in some cases, extremely complicated structures on a molecular level using basic building blocks.”

Momtaz was admitted to the Ph.D. program at Cornell University in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology in 2007. "The next five years of my life were spent conducting cutting edge research in the

functions such as marketing, and sales and also with manufacturing engineers."

When people think about 3M, the first things that come to mind are Post-its or Scotch tape, "Actually 3M is involved in a lot more than that as a tech company, and is considered one of the most innovative companies – it's in your phone, on your car, in your pass-

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fields of materials, organic, organometallic and polymer chemistry," he says.

After defending his thesis in 2012, he joined 3M as a Senior Scientist to develop new technologies and products related to their Safety and Graphics Business. His role is to facilitate the development of new technologies and new products related to the Safety and Graphics business. "It is an exciting role that not only allows me to do research, but also allows me to channel the research to develop business relevant technologies or products," he says. "The role also enables me to interact with customers, different business

ports, and even in dental fillings."

Despite his hectic academic schedule, Momtaz still finds time for his music, "My interest in music was passed on to me by my mother. I started learning tabla when I was 8 years old, and used to accompany her now and then when she sang on TV or the radio," he remembers. When in Bangladesh, he was also a part of bands such as Ajob and Made in Bangladesh, a band formed by his close friends.

"In 2008, I heard about and got a spot in a workshop being hosted by Ustad Zakir Hussain in San Francisco. It was without a doubt, one of the best experiences of my life," he remembers.



PHOTO: COURTESY

"I was rusty, but could appreciate and pick up a lot of the classical kaydas that he taught us," Momtaz continues to hone his skills with the tabla in his spare-time.

Having achieved the success most

people only dream about at such a young age, Momtaz offers advice to our current generation, "Have a doable 'to-do' list," he says, "Be respectful, be a team player, be passionate, and last but not least, work hard and play hard."



# The Melody of Transcendence

**NAZIBA BASHER**

Nourishing her talent from a considerably young age, Sadya Afreen Mallick is a name known well in the field of music, especially Nazrul Sangeet.

"After my initial training under Sudhin Das, I joined Chhayanaaut at the age of nine where I finished the seven-year course on classical music and Nazrul Sangeet and graduated with a gold medal," says Sadya. She was the last person, in the last four decades to have been awarded the medal. She was also director of Sadarang Sangeet Samaraha, one of the country's first dedicated classical music training institutions.

Sadya recorded her first label when she was only 12 years old. She was also awarded the President's Award in the then East Pakistan as a child artiste in 1969. In 1974, she performed in Doordarshan and at a solo concert hosted by the legendary Nazrul Sangeet artist Dipali Nag Chowdhury, in Delhi. Since then, she has had the opportunity to perform alongside some of the most renowned artistes in the sub-continent, such as Feroza Begum, Kamal Das Gupta, Dhirendra Chandra Mitra, Sheikh Lutfur Rahman and more.

After numerous television and live performances, she won the President Abu Sayeed Chowdhury Award for her contributions to music. She was also awarded the Anandadhara Gold medal. In the mid-80's she won the Jay Jay Din viewers' award for Nazrul Sangeet.

Over the years, during her career as a singer, she has had a number of records released both nationally and internationally. She was the second Bangladeshi, after Feroza Begum, to have a record released by HMV India in 1992. This was directed and promoted by Feroza Begum.

After making quite a name in the country, Sadya did not stop there. She toured the world-- the US, Europe, Far East and India, either as part of a troupe or for solo concerts. She accompanied Feroza Begum to 12 states in America, including Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and more. She has also appeared in live talk shows on Voice of America and the BBC to promote Nazrul Sangeet and Bangladesh's culture. Along with Manabendra Mukherjee, Sadya performed for a special documentary on Nazrul Islam produced and aired by Britain's Channel 4 in the UK.

During her music career, Sadya was also dedicated to her education. She completed her Bachelor's and Master's in Sociology from Dhaka University, ranking first in the merit list in MSS.

Besides her performing career, she continues to promote the arts. She is Editor, Arts and Entertainment of The Daily Star. Last year, she represented Bangladesh as special guest at the Bangla Gaaner Utsah, a nine-day bilateral music festival organised by Bengal Foundation and held at the Sangeet Research Academy in Kolkata, where she presented the keynote paper on Nazrul songs.



ELITA KARIM

One look at the book and you might think of it as being a documentation of history; maybe even flip it away for a thriller or romance for a rainy day. But as they say, don't judge a book by its cover. 'Shadhinotar hazaar duaar, nirbhashoner chinthi' is so much more than real life thriller stories and actual romances, fading away in the horizon. A series of letters compiled by author Abdul Momen, the book will soften your heart and help you visualise the actual stories from 1971.

Back in 1971, Abdul Momen lived in London, England. Besides working for the National Westminster Bank, Momen was also an unofficial messenger between family members and friends living in West Pakistan and East Pakistan. "Back then, letters and packages sent from one side of the country to the other would always be censored or made to disappear," remembers Momen. "Instead, many would send me their letters and messages to London and I, in turn, would send them to the respective family members living in parts of the country -- Norshindi, Rajshahi, Noakhali and so on." Momen would disperse all sorts of messages -- starting from the news of death of a loved one to families asking for money to buy groceries.

Abdul Momen was not only a messenger for many; he was also a 'diary' of sorts. "I would also receive letters addressed to me -- asking me how I was doing, thanking me for my contribution and I would also receive pages filled with accounts of a day, a tragedy in the family or yet another Pakistani army attack." One of the letters that Momen highlights comes from a certain Khokon. He speaks of his brother in law, a journalist who would pass messages to the BBC -- how he was picked up by the Pakistani Army in the middle of lunch. "Dulhabhai (brother in law) was not allowed to finish his meal, wash his hands or dress up," writes Khokon. "He was wearing a lungi and a genji. His genji was taken off and used to bind his eyes with. He was taken on a jeep which drove away. We never found him."

'Shadhinotar hajaar duaar, nirbashoner chinthi' will be widely distributed across the country, very soon.



# LETTERS from the PAST

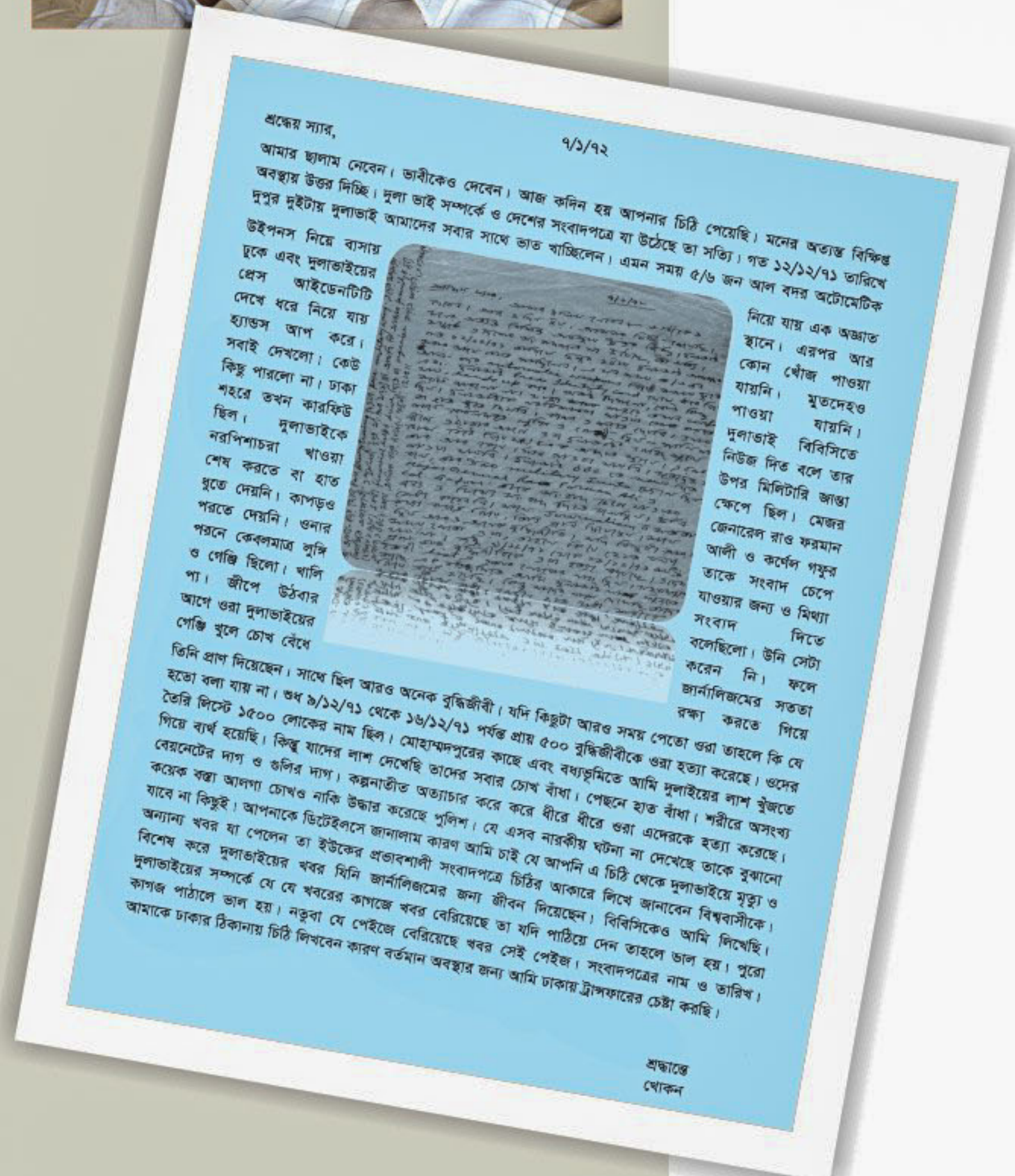


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KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ ABURRO