

I want to die on stage

ALY ZAKER



In terms of acting, creativity, a leading figure in the corporate world and a freedom fighter, Aly Zaker is a hugely successful self-made man. However, as a man, he is more than all these things. He is an outstanding husband, father, boss, actor, and friend in both family and social circles. He recently turned 70, and Star Showbiz is proud to present him on the cover of today's issue. We decided to paint a picture of the man in words. Who better to be a part of this than Syed Shamsul Haque, a friend and a brother to Aly Zaker for the past 40 years! Rafi Hossain sat down with Aly Zaker and was pleasantly surprised when Syed Shamsul Haque came to meet with him, allowing for a much more interesting insight into Aly Zaker's life.

Syed Shamsul Haque and Aly Zaker

Aly Zaker and Syed Shamsul Haque have known each other for the longest of times all through the world of Bangladeshi theater, and deeply so as the duo are heavily involved in the arts. They were a bit disheartened to say that they meet more artistes than relatives; something ordinary people will find hard to believe. They were introduced through 'Dewan Gazir Kissa'; this is the time from when Syed Shamsul Haque started writing 'Nurul diner Shara Jibon'. He wrote this play with a lot of passion and dedication and asked his dear friend Aly Zaker to direct it. Aly Zaker agreed, and while directing he also acted in it, giving rise to certain conflicts. Nevertheless, he managed to balance the two perfectly as he was heavily influenced by plays in Kolkata, where he went to with his mother during his childhood. He noticed that mainstream directors in those plays also acted in the plays.

A Life of Theatre

Before directing theatrical plays on stage, Aly Zaker thoroughly thinks them through, and in the process of doing so, he realizes a unique perspective for the story and visualizes it in a way that no one else might. He brings it to life in his own way. This is something that is quite common in the sub-continent but isn't practiced in the western world. Syed Shamsul Haque said that Aly Zaker's acting is well above his ability as a director, for example, he said that Galileo is a play which he would pay to see every day if Aly Zaker acts in it. It was Aly Zaker's acting that not only brought Nurul Din's character to life, but breathed new life into the character!



On Acting and Writing

Aly Zaker thinks that a good actor is one that thoroughly goes through the script, but portrays the whole play through his/ her lines; an actor who can read between the lines of a script. He said that only a powerful writer can know which word to use where and how for the best effect, and in our country there's just a handful of writers who can understand that. In response, Syed Shamsul Haque looked at Aly Zaker and said, "You do know that I was in another mental state when I wrote this? In order to do something you're good at really well, you need to be in another state of being. I do it in terms of writing, and you do it in terms of acting."

The War of Liberation

In the time of war, Aly Zaker was involved in all movements even though he was working, he and his friends used to gather at Shaheed Minar. On 25th March 1971, all that stopped, they were told by a boy from the canteen if they continued to gather there, they would face problems. When Aly bhai lived in Rajarbagh, he saw they were burning the place down, and killing everyone. Then suddenly, out of the chaos, two people gave him two rifles and asked him to hide them for when they return. When Aly bhai saw all the chaos, he asked himself, "Is Bangla being wiped from the face of the earth? Will we now see Urdu everywhere?" Keeping this in mind, he left his area and ran to safety. The destruction he witnessed, stayed with him, deep inside. All he wanted to do was avenge his country, to turn the tide in her favor. Syed Shamsul Haque said, "When Aly went

into the fight, he did so because his heart told him to, and a heart full of vengeance is the best weapon." In Aly Zaker's words, "The fact that my motherland is free and that I am alive in a free country is the biggest reward of all. There is no bigger reward for someone who has fought for freedom."

For the Love of the Stage

Aly Zaker says he would love to return to stage acting once he becomes physically fit. Rafi Hossain asked Syed Shamsul Haque if he wishes to write something in which Aly Zaker can act in, to which, he smiled and said, "I have already started, but I am no longer the man who can write a full play in two hours, I will need quite some time to finish." To him, television and film cannot be compared to the stage. "The feelings you get from seeing an actor on stage are miles apart from the feelings you get from watching television or films, there is electricity between the performers and the audience" he says. Aly Zaker agrees saying that there is nothing like the feeling of electricity in the air while watching a play unfold on stage. "I want to die on stage," he exclaims! When discussing the future, the duo looked at each other, smiled and said 'we will once again be reborn!' Star Showbiz is enthralled by the thought of a future play written by Syed Shamsul Haque starring Aly Zaker and we are certain we aren't the only ones.

Catch the uncut and unabridged version of Showbiz's Cover Interview and more on Radio Shadhin 92.4 FM Every Saturday, 11 PM onwards.

Interviewed by Rafi Hossain & Narrated by Waleed K. Rajamiya



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