



AFZAL HOSSAIN EXPRESSIONS UNBOUND

YOU'RE A MAN OF DIVERSE TALENTS! DO YOU FAVOUR ANY SPECIFIC INTEREST OVER OTHERS?

AFZAL: I equally love all the different things I'm involved with. That's the reason I've managed to remain attached to these diverse fields thus far. I am glad that I am able to allocate time to all of them, and I consider myself lucky for being able to concentrate on these different areas. I never say that I'm good at or bad at these things, but whichever of these I'm doing, I enjoy thoroughly. So to answer your question, I don't identify myself as being particularly biased towards any of these fields. I don't write because I aspire to become an established author or poet; I do so for the purpose of self-expression and self-satisfaction. The same goes for all my other fields of work. But I have always had some strong basics that I have tried to establish through my work, and I do have strong commitment toward my work.

WHAT CAUSED YOU TO SHIFT FROM ONE MEDIUM TO ANOTHER? DO YOU EVER FEEL THAT YOU WOULD BE BETTER OFF IF YOU PRIORITIZED

ACTING OR DIRECTING OVER EVERYTHING ELSE?

AFZAL: I wasn't able to give time to the theatre, but it was possible for me to give more time to television. However, somewhere along the line I lost my enthusiasm for staying involved in television because I believed I had already got as much as I could from my work on television. I felt there was nothing more for me to gain by remaining attached to it, at least not in Bangladesh, especially when the filter became so extensively relaxed and the work of good directors started getting lost in a sea of mediocre materials. I shifted to cinemas, even though moving from theatre and TV to cinemas was perceived negatively by many. But there too I failed to find a good fit with my thought process, so I left that line as well. It is quite a difficult feat to completely retract oneself from acting because it is a passion; but due to these realities I was able to do so. I consider myself fortunate from this perspective since I had a few other areas of interest that kept me occupied.

WHAT QUALITIES OR CIRCUMSTANCES DREW YOU AND MONA TOGETHER?

AFZAL: We were not very close initially but we did know each other for quite some time. I felt that she always liked me for the person I am, not just because I was an actor. As an actor, I didn't feel my position was very prestigious to the common eye back in the day, so there was always this tension about how well her family would accept my proposal. But my advantage was that my mother-in-law liked my personality, saw me as a good person and was very fond of me, even before the marriage. That increased my courage to ask for Mona's hand in marriage.

MONA: I always found Afzal to be very honest and transparent as a person. He always expressed his true thoughts and I appreciated his respect towards our relationship.

DO YOU TWO WORK TOGETHER

PROFESSIONALLY? DO YOU CRITIQUE ONE ANOTHER?

AFZAL: People who know Mona always say that they don't find anything to criticize about her work. Considering my own work, since I've already said that they don't

Afzal Hossain has been one of the most well-known faces in Bangladesh for decades. He is a prominent actor, director, writer, painter, poet and creative artist of Bangladesh. He was born in Parulia, Satkhira, on 30 July, 1954. He started his journey through theatre and joined BTV afterwards on his way to becoming a celebrity and television personality. He is also known for his work in advertising. This week, we present Afzal Hossain and his beautiful wife Tazin Halim Mona on the Star Showbiz cover.

necessarily turn out equally good; Mona and I often engage in logical constructive criticism over them. I obviously try to justify my work, but through a healthy amount of criticism and justification we eventually arrive at a mutual decision over what is best and right. Mona is the first reviewer of everything I produce. After finishing a piece of writing I always read it to her and her reaction gives me a preliminary idea of how good or bad the material is.

DO YOU HAVE ANY INTEREST IN POLITICS?

AFZAL: I would be extremely unfit for politics. A necessary trait for politics, I believe, is for one to think one thing but say another. As Mona has noted, I am a very transparent person, hence my anger, irritation, elation etc can be clearly read from what I say and do. But you need to be more tactful and composed to partake in politics. As for wanting to be something different, I can say that I am quite happy with whatever I have – my family, my work and my friends. What I'm not at all happy about is the current situation of our country and the unnecessary complications of our society. I become unhappy about things I believe should have happened but did not, or things that are happening which should never have been allowed to happen. We tend to think too much about which to say and what to keep silent about, and in not expressing ourselves clearly and openly we only accelerate the growing gaps between us. For these reasons there are questions piling up every day with no satisfactory answers.

MONA: Afzal tends to see things as either black or white so when he comes across something negative it has a huge effect on him. He understands the presence of good and bad in everything, but the thing which worries him most is that people in our society do not speak out clearly about anything.

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF THAT WE DON'T KNOW.

AFZAL: Like Mona said earlier, with me what you see is what you get. I am quite frank and straightforward; I don't have a hypocritical personality where I mask my dislike for certain people just to get along or further my own interest. I admit that this feat is quite difficult to pull off in today's world where you often need to do things you don't like in order to get along, but I again consider myself lucky to have got by just the way I am.

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*Interviewed by Rafi Hossain
and Narrated by Ahmed Adib*

