



Farewell to Charms

CHINTITO

Chintito began as a column "Pinch of Salt" in The Daily Star's broadsheet on 30 May 1995 when respected elder brother Madan Sahu was looking after a weekly post-editorial page. The column was shifted to the Star Weekend Magazine since the latter's inception. I continued to write without having to meet the magazine editor, as I was submitting my column as before.

A few weeks into the changeover, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam dropped a sinker, that I should submit my writing to the magazine editor. Seeing me a little puzzled (read disturbed), Mr Anam quickly added that 'she' was not going to correct my pieces, but she needed to know what was going to be printed in the magazine. Baaaps, I thought.

I was disarmed when I met her, a charming lady and a great personality, and have been under her spell ever since. She always had words of encouragement and defended the works of her entourage. She has been a caring soul for all who have embraced the weekend magazine that under her tutelage became The Star.

I have been blessed to have been able to carry a column for 20 years. I remain grateful to both Mahfuz Anam, who now believes I should come out of my Chintito shell, and Aasha. It has not been always easy to come out with a piece every week, nor did I always feel up to it. But, she always had the pep talk ready-coated with superlatives that made me get up and start tapping the keyboard. This column would not have lasted this far without her. She has been the steadfast shadow of Chintito.

In her preface to the book, "Chintito - a 'stir' is born, published by The Daily Star 2006 (and available at the Daily Star Bhawan), Ms. Amin wrote: "For one thing, he (Chintito)

It was (almost) twenty years ago today
That I for the first time heard her say
Words that kept my writing in style
Words that were guaranteed to raise a smile
So may I introduce to you
My editor who has remained veiled for all these years
The Star magazine's pillar of strength

We're the writers, photographers, cartoonists and contributors
She sheltered us under her wing
There are also the freelancers, composers and advertisers
And because of her we could all sit back and sing
The Star will be lonely, The Star will be lonely
Yet this day was destined to be
It's wonderful to have such a boss
Compassionate even when she is cross
She is such a great manager
We'd like to keep her with us forever
But forever is so temporary

I have on and off thought of putting down my pen
But lost each time to her logic, focus and acumen
That she is now moving on to sing another song
Painful for us even if we could sing along
So let me introduce to you
The one and only Aasha Mehreen Amin
And her soon-to-be Lonely Hearts Club Star Band

(Adapted from "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" of The Beatles, 1 June 1967)



Artwork by Zebun Nahar Nayeem.

is as mischievous as Puck in Midsummer Night's Dream. While not dropping love potions on unsuspecting youth, he does drop missiles of sarcasm encased in globules of wit, in almost every sentence he writes. He is definitely a provocateur, coming up with the most farfetched, bizarre themes and applying them to cold reality with finesse and precision. Like the disgruntled monologue of a tiger... Now who would have thought of something like that - except Chintito.

"'Brutal candour wrapped in satire' is probably the best way to describe Chintito's style. The man seldom minces words.

"The most intriguing part (in Chintito's writing) is that that there is definite message in every one of his writings... His emotions reflect those of the ordinary citizen - helpless and at the mercy of selfish administration and an apathetic, brutish society. But he also represents the lighter side of the human psyche - the one that is tickled by dry humour...

"Chintito is ageless. He hardly sleeps (How can he when he is Chintito?) and is hyperactive as a two-year-old on a steady supply of Mars bars."



Kazi Rakib, *Untitled 2*, acrylic on paper, 2013.

Even a dead man would write after that.

However, make no mistake, I have been aptly reprimanded by her for my slips here and there, and there have been a few over the years.

This is how she broke the news to me 10 February over an email headed 'Goodbye to the Star', a few minutes after she had spoken with me on a business matter: "I wanted to let you know earlier but just couldn't find the right words somehow. It is with a mixed feeling that I must inform you that I will be leaving the Star magazine to join the Editorial Section from March 1, 2015. Professionally it is considered a promotion though

personally it comes with a certain amount of heartache for obvious reasons."

I was at a loss for words but managed to write by return immediately, "Never thought about it, but nothing is ever permanent, and you were bound to leave someday, although I bear the sudden news with a twitch in my heart. Star will never be the same for me."

Congratulations Aasha! No one deserves it more than you. ■