

HUMOROUSLY YOURS

Naveed Mahbub Uses Humour as Social Critique

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"There is no such thing as victimless comedy. We are always a victim of situation and that is when you are able to deliver the message very effectively through humor" explains comedian Naveed Mahbub. Although comedy is often misunderstood as facetious, there can often be a strong underlying message. Comedy, like other forms of art, is a cathartic experience. Honest humor has the surprising quality to unite people. Through laughter we release of tension and feel connected to others. A sense of humor can go a long way. Astute observation and insight turns humour to social critique.

Naveed Mahbub's new book *Humorously Yours*, a compilation of writings from his column of the same name, posits humour as an instrument of social commentary. Now more than ever, as

nationwide political tug-of-war ensues, we are left to sit and observe. It is through the observations of collective hurdles that Naveed's talent shines. This thoughtfully portable book, chock full of amusing anecdotes and witty observations of a Bangladeshi comedian, is perfect for lifting the spirits while stuck in Dhaka's traffic. The book published by Daily Star

Books delves into a range of issues, some more significant than others, within the overarching theme of being Bangladeshi. The book, which the author describes as his journal, contains 37 entries from 2013 through 2014.

Through unapologetic and honest storytelling the author shares his experiences and observations. "I hate sitting in the car during a traffic jam. It's a big blow to my ego to see pedestrians go faster than myself"-

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such reflections which are disconcerting, simultaneously makes us laugh at the ludicrous ironies we face every day. The author expresses his concern as a father when his young daughter picks up profanities from watching the live Parliamentary sessions. Such lively anecdotes are plentiful and with reason. Much of this book is good practice in laughing at social failures and, in turn, ourselves. By drawing parallels, which at times seem outdated, other times are spot on- "Election 2014 is the twin of the movie Battle-ship- a big budget flop, with the only difference that the election at least gave us a few laughs, an honest attempt to left the spirits of a depressed nation". It is true, we are a depressed nation. When we laugh at our country's failures we are inevitably laughing at ourselves. The true power of comedy is deeply felt when we realize that at the end we are laughing at our own hypocrisy and ignorance. The narrative often shifts from 'I' to 'We' effortlessly by moving to the collective experience. From the personal stories to general social commentaries, the book's salient quality lies in being humorous without being malicious. Tragic events and serious national

predicaments are put forth without watering them down for the sake of comedy. When reflecting on the violent border killings, Naveed takes a jab at BSF by asking what they really stand for- 'Border Shooting Forces' or 'Bangladeshi? Shoot First'. From blatant accusations to subtle insinuations, the word play is varied and above all- courageous. On the topic of migrant workers, the author's dissatisfaction is evident- "Oh well, we continue to kiss those taking dollars out of the country and diss those bringing the dollar in without fail and with consistency amidst the political unrest". Controversial subject matter such as our love-hate relationship with India, the plight of Sundarban's ecosystem and the ironies of Digital Bangladesh, is discussed through the perspective of the common man. Although there are confrontations of the gritty reality, the book does not have a defeatist outlook.

In the end, Naveed Mahbub combines comedy with critique in a way which is truthful but not offensive. *Humorously Yours* succeeds in being entertaining and contemplative through the witty narrative of a comedian.