

A LONG LOST FACE.. SAKINA SARWAR

LIFE'S LYRICS



NASHID KAMAL

I worked hard to obtain her phone number. I was adamant. I tried all possible contacts and then finally dropped her a line through a post card as I had her address. It reached her the very next day and I got connected. Thank God her address was the same; I had not seen her in the last twenty years. My daughters quipped "Mummy has a loving Auntie wherever she goes", I heard them giggling. But truly, she has been very close to me, as I was to her and many of others such as Shimul Yousuf, Nima Rahman, Abida Sultana, Fahmida Hafiz, Riazuddin Badshah, Mrs Badrunnessa Abdullah, Kajal Ibrahim, Sabina Yasmin, Ferdausi Rahman, Asma Abbasi, Runa Laila, Faridur Reza Sagar and many others.

I remembered Sakina Sarwar (Akhter) from her maiden days; beautiful, simple, soft spoken yet firm and artistic, dedicated, straight forward, hardworking, and a no nonsense person. Sakina or Shathi Auntie was working for BTV from the earliest days.

She was single, which was quite unusual for a 26-27 year old during the 60s. She went to Islamabad for her training and then left for UK for her training with the BBC. From when I remember, she was the local guardian (at TV office) for my sister Naeela and me. She would personally pick us from our Purana Paltan home and we loved her as dearly as our aunt Ferdausi. She would softly speak to my Amma, "Bhabi, you don't have to worry, I will reach them on time". She would take us to DIT TV station and be the producer of our children's program.

During the 1971 liberation war, we moved and lived with our grandparents (maternal) in Segun Bagicha. She could not find us during the nine months of the war. On the 17th of December 1971, the morning started with Shathi auntie's voice in our Segun Bagicha hideout. She came to fetch me and Naeela to sing for the children's programme. We sang freshly com-

posed victory day songs, written and tuned on the spot by maestro Abdul Latif. The songs were like 'Hot Cross Buns!' hot, fresh, steaming, crispy and new to the ears! I watched how Shathi auntie spoke to everyone with a very endearing tone.

I had very close interactions with her and I was very happy to be reunited. I rushed to Gloucester, not too far away from London.

My heart was beating, as I looked out of the window and wondered how Sakina Sarwar had managed to leave her high profile life on BTV behind her and start anew there. Shathi Auntie was waiting at the train station. People came up and spoke to

her. Some were her students, some worked with her in her school, and some were examiners with her for the Cambridge exams (In Bangla).

Shathi Auntie seemed like a celebrity here. "Not me, my son is actually" (both were present). I relaxed and listened to her

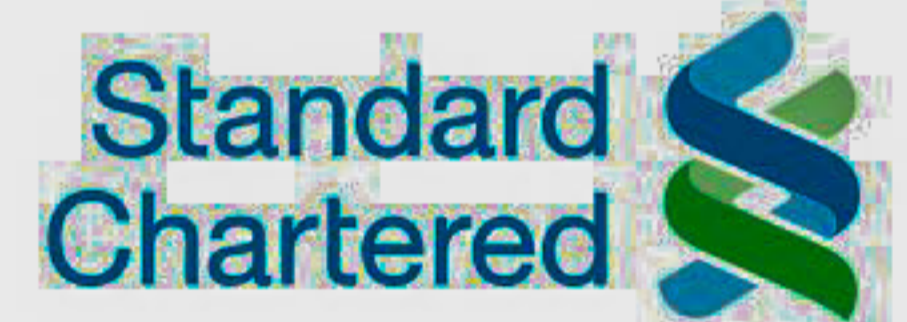
story about the last thirty years. I could write a book. When she came to UK, (apart from being the senior most producer at BTV) she already had a Masters in Botany as well as BEd. She joined a school. She taught Maths and Bangla. She marked scripts for Cambridge O and A level, she did community work, did interpretation and now after retirement she has started her own weekend Bangla school in her neighbourhood.

First, I was sad that she left BTV and went to UK. Now though, I am glad. So many contributions to the Bangladeshi community there! All the ladies/gents who are taking Bangla courses at her school (especially men/women from Sylhet) and securing A's in O and A Levels. She had turned the entire community into her ward; she made a new Bangladesh in Gloucester!

The writer is an ACADEMIC, NAZRUL EXPONENT AND WRITER.



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