

ASADUZZAMAN NOOR TURNS 70

Theatre's favourite heartthrob

ATAUR RAHMAN

ASADUZZAMAN Noor, a star in the world of art, culture and especially theatre, will complete 70 years of his multidimensional life on October 31 this year. In the modern world, 70 years is regarded as 'young old age', 75 years as 'middle old age' and beyond 80 years, yes, it is regarded old-old age, so in that sense, he is still young. Noor is a household name in Bangladesh, known for his unique acting quality with distinctive diction which can legitimately claim a unique place in our world of theatre. He is an attractive elocutionist of both prose and poetry which includes oration as well as recitation of poems. His rendition of the prologue of Syed Shamsul Haq's great play *Nurul Diner Shara Jibon* was a treat to the audience and still remains an attractive performance to the people of any assemblage when he recites the preface of the said play as our Honourable Minister for Cultural Affairs.

people of the country; otherwise one gets to know about their sufferings only in abstract. Moreover, by being in politics one can motivate a pro-people government to help people through financial aid, which is allowed by the government to spend for a constituency of a particular district.

With this objective in mind, Noor joined Awami League, which led our



Asaduzzaman Noor

PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

War of Liberation under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation.

Asaduzzaman Noor was a member of the Chhatra Union, as I was, during our student days. Chhatra Union was a Left leaning party that used to believe in socialism. Well, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also propagated socialism as one of the

main ideologies of the newly born Bangladesh in 1971. Noor and I have known each other for almost fifty years. Noor is five years younger than me, and is a good friend and a brother. We both worked together for thirty years in the field of theatre. I always found in him an extremely compassionate friend. He emerged as a powerful stage actor in 1976 when he acted in playwright Syed Ahmed's *Mile Post*, portraying the role of a circus clown, which was directed by me. He excelled in that role with his slim figure and agile movements. Syed Shamsul Haq, our great litterateur who left us for good a few days ago, highly appreciated his acting. And the rest is history.

Noor emerged as a great stage actor which enriched a good number of stage productions of Nagorik Natya Samparadaya directed by eminent thespian Aly Zaker along with yours truly. His portrayal of different pivotal characters on stage of Nagorik Natya Samparadaya's different productions such as *Sot Manusher Khoje*, *Shahjahan*, *Kopeniker Captain*, *Nurul Diner Shahrajibon*, *Godor Protikhaya*, *Kobor Diye Dau*, *Muktodhara*, *Mukhosh*, *Thatta Tamasha* and several other plays will always be remembered fondly by the theatre audience of the country as well as outside the country.

Asaduzzaman Noor also excelled as a television actor. His superb portrayal as the protagonist in Humayan Ahmed's TV serials *Kothau Keu Nei*, *Ayomoy* and *Bohubrihi*, among others, will never



On the set of *Kothau Keu Nei* as the famous 'Baker Bhai'.

SOURCE: STAR

be forgotten by the TV audience of the country as well as Bangali audience all over the world. In one word, Noor reached Himalayan heights both on stage as well as television. His Bangla adaptation of German playwright Bertolt Brecht's *Mr. Puntilla and his man Matti* as *Dewan Gazir Kissa* - which Noor also directed - was a commendable work to be remembered by the theatre audience for all times to come. As a

recitation artist of poems written by different Bangali poets, Asaduzzaman Noor stands apart and it is always a treat to hear him recite poems in front of the audience and also amongst friends in a homely ambience.

Noor, now a politician and minister of the country, has remained a simple and unpretentious dear friend just as always. He, along with his wife, a medical practitioner, have

dedicated themselves to the service of the people of his constituency and home district, Nilphamari. Noor was always an activist against autocratic misrule, fundamentalism and all kinds of terrorism in the country. One cannot help but feel immensely proud of Asaduzzaman Noor, an amiable, compassionate and extremely gifted human being.

The author is an actor, director, writer and recipient of the Ekushey Padak.

SARAH ANJUM BARI

A girl with dark skin, unruly hair or a plump figure gets called out - to her face or behind her back - for not being beautiful. Her classmates bully her; the boys cast her off as unworthy of appreciation. Scrutinised for being too shy, too friendly, too sporty, too brainy, she grows up studying hard; because a girl should be a good student. She has to be thinner, shorter and fairer than the men, but smart enough to catch a good fish from the sea, and hold its attention.

We know this girl. We've all been this girl.

A recent conversation between women of various fields arranged by Dove and *The Daily Star* showed a video with young girls screaming out their ages in joy. "I am 51" and "I am 8!" they voiced confidently. As it continued to portray women of different ages, it was clear that the older the women, i.e. in their twenties, thirties and forties, the more hesitant they were about revealing their age. It shed light on the unrealistic images of perfection that women struggle to achieve. Social media and the silver screen glorify the looks of young models and celebrities, and older women stop being celebrated after a certain age. When some of them do attract appreciation, it's usually under the guise of - "How does she look so beautiful at her age?" Overlooking the virtues of intelligence, resourcefulness, passion, optimism, or kindness, we equate beauty with youth.

As with all things, the cycle starts at home and in classrooms. Sharing

work stories from running beauty salon Labelle at *The Daily Star* discussion, Sadia Moyeen mentioned a customer complaining about her daughter's dark complexion and her need to be "made pretty". Appalled, Sadia asked both mother and daughter to stop entertaining such demeaning ideas. It reminded me of my friend who was called a "fat

respect when their own parents and teachers subject them to insult? How are they supposed to learn to fight the world when their basic foundations give them no strength?

Dr. Chowdhury Tasnim Hasin, a renowned nutritionist, talked about the oncoming wedding season in Bangladesh and the onslaught of clients it brings for her. Young brides

their husbands' love, especially after pregnancy. "The stress level over these things in urban societies is beyond imagination," revealed Dr. Tasnim to our dismay.

Somewhere between the fight to becoming beautiful young girls and mature women, women's freedom is further tested by other impediments embedded in our culture. "Meje boro

to international statistics posted on the website Girlsnotbrides. While the Tk.1,000 fine for child marriage crimes do little to prevent the actual practices, easily available fake birth certificates and lowering of the legal age from 18 to 16 have dealt blows to the initiatives taken to tackle these issues by the government, UNICEF, Save the Children foundation and other organisations. Girls in rural areas and urban slums face the worst of it, where daughters' marriages serve as political or economic settlements - the younger the girl, the higher the demand, the lower the rates of dowry. Forced to drop out of school and work, these young brides face fatal illnesses including STDs resulting from early pregnancy and childbirth.

The issues are more subtle in urban societies but toxic nonetheless. We are brought up in safe and nurturing environments, made to believe that we have the privilege to educate and strengthen ourselves as we please. Once we start approaching our twenties (if we're lucky to make it that far), it's time for education and career aspirations to take a backseat as we suddenly find ourselves in the wedding market, which operates on a set of complicated dynamics. We must be educated and intelligent enough to qualify for interested men and their families. We must delay our plans for that additional postgraduate degree or job opportunity so as not to scare off men by being "overqualified". Either that, or run the risk of settling for older men after we've reached our goals. Having spent years believing in the strength of our progressive environments, these sudden mixed signals aren't as extreme as forced or illegal marriages,

but are hurtful and deplorable all the same.

It is true that things are improving. Bangladesh has the third highest figure of women lawmakers across SAARC countries, according to a report published in *The Daily Star*. More recent updates have reported Bangladesh's lead in gender equity in South Asia, standing 72nd amongst 144 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2016. There are many more women working at organisations across the country, and more girls in schools than boys (though many drop out because they are married off at a very early age). Further proof lies in the laws being drafted and advocated, and the countless families across the country which support and celebrate their daughters' dreams, including my own.

What's important is to keep the conversation alive. Why must we be thinner, shorter, less successful and somehow smaller than our male counterparts? Why must our achievements wait until we've secured qualified husbands, out of fear that the men won't wait for us? Why must we stress over staying thin as opposed to healthy, looking young instead of aging gracefully? Why do we have to be white-skinned at all? It's important to keep raising the questions, and help answer them too.

The operative word is "we". We as a society - as families, friends and institutions - must bring about the changes necessary; and as women we must keep reminding ourselves and others that we determine how old or young we are for our own dreams.

The writer is a student of English and Economics at North South University.

Who determines our age?



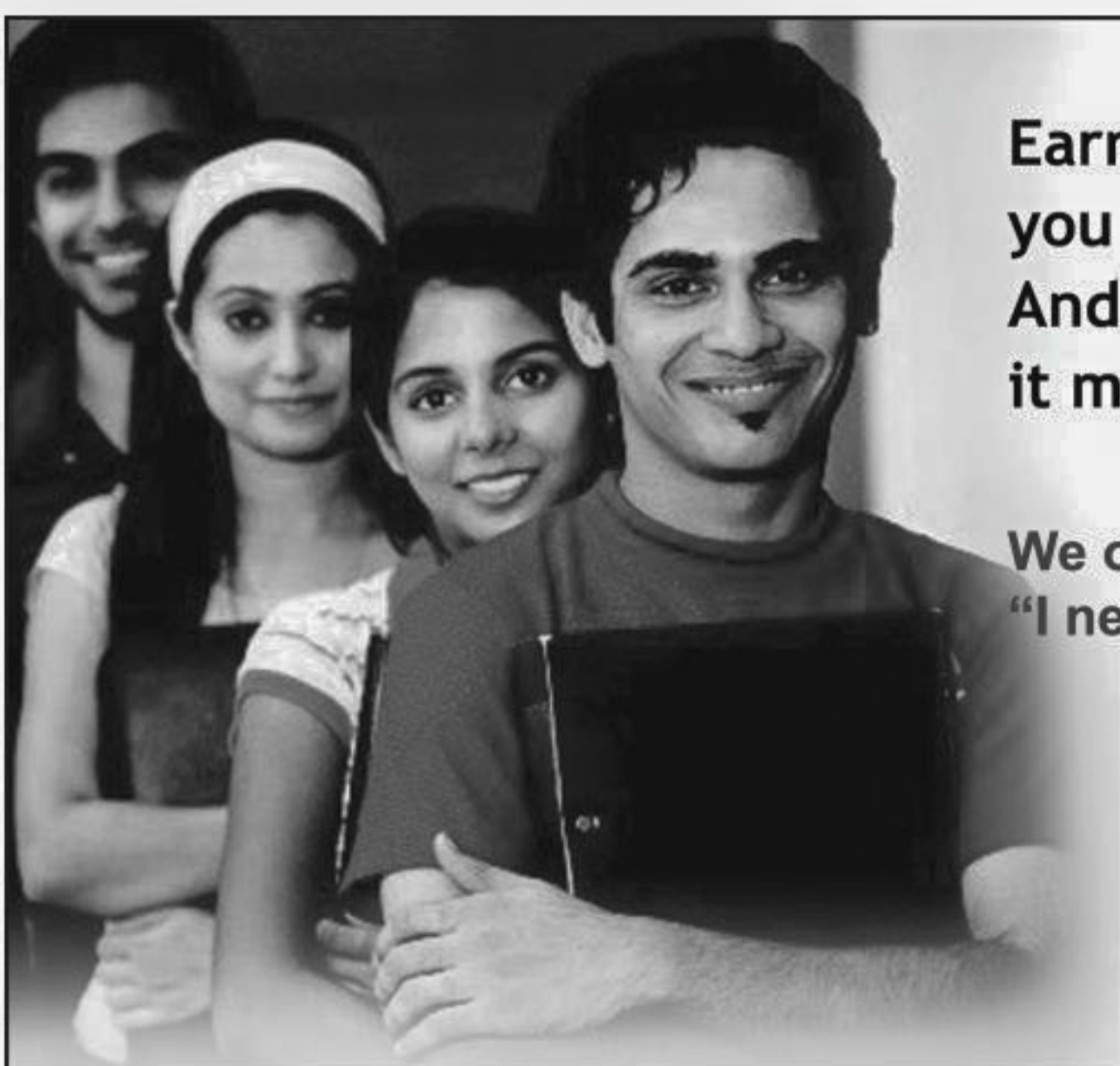
SOURCE: PINTEREST

elephant" by a teacher in school because her uniform belt kept sliding down to her midriff due to her shape. It horrifies us to hear of such incidents, and yet they're prevalent across most societies. With all our talk about women empowerment, how are young girls supposed to form any sense of self-

approach her in a frenzy to quickly become skinny by their wedding day; some are brought by their parents and fiancés, who after a few consultations ask that the bride lose a few more pounds by the time the date rolls around. Other married women visit her the year round, worried about staying slim to retain

hoye giyeche, ekhon biye dite hobe," summed up Sara Zaker at the discussion, addressing the stunted development of girls caused by this race to get married as soon as they reach a certain age.

Eighteen percent of girls under 15 and 52 percent of girls under 18 are married off in Bangladesh, according



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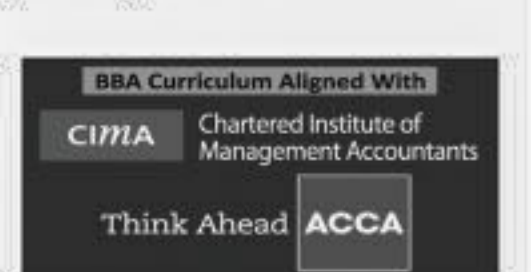
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ADMISSION TEST

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LAST DATE FOR ONLINE APPLICATIONS

Friday, 4 November 2016 till 10:00 am

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Sunday, 15 January 2017