

THE CITY GROWS ON ME!

**A LIFE
LESS
ORDINARY!**

ALY ZAKER

Dhaka slowly grew on me and I started exploring all around it. Its lanes and by lanes were simply fascinating. All those old houses lining on either side of the lanes attracted me most. Each of these houses seemed to have a story of its own. I always loved to imagine. And I kept on imagining stories that befit these grand houses. It all started with my own locality Ganderia. And then, as started adding years to my age, I sauntered across the areas like Wari, Armanitola, Tantibazar, Narinda, Badamtoli, Banglabazar etc. Gradually I went beyond the confines of the old town and ventured out to areas like Ramna, Palashi, Azimpur etc. Ramna, with its evergreen vegetation fascinated me. This part of Dhaka, I was later told, was designed by an erstwhile curator of London's Q-Garden. Some of this area still holds on to that character.

The areas in the older part of Dhaka used to be called 'Mahalla' by the locals. Each Mahalla had a Sardar controlling it. There was a time when these Sardars were very powerful. Qader Sardar, the owner of Lion Cinema of old Dhaka, comes to

mind as being a patriarch. Gradually, the bureaucracy introduced by the British must have tarnished their muscle. All things told my love for the villages east of Ganderia seemed ever so strong. Almost every evening I went there to be in the company of the rural atmosphere.

Baba occasionally took us out for ice-creams at a restaurant called Britannia in what is known as the Gulistan area now. Or was it the cinema hall that was called Britannia and there was an ice-cream shop there I do not clearly remember. There were very few varieties of ice-creams there. But our taste hadn't become so discerning yet to have longed for assortments. I always preferred vanilla and was pleased to have that when offered. Maa was a very good cook. And to the best of my knowledge, it was not like "the food that I 'thought' my mother used to cook" syndrome. She was genuinely a culinary



expert. So, at home we grew up having delightful food specially on week ends. My father was very English in his disposition and habits. we had to learn how to put a poached egg on toast with fork and knife and eat it without the egg yoke seeping on to the plate. This, I later thought, was ridiculous. But then, for Baba, it was like old habits die hard. One other thing that he held very close to his heart was his village of Ratanpur in Brahmanbaria that he had to leave very early in his life first for the sake of his studies and later to pursue his career. We went to Ratanpur at least once every year. They used to be grand going home. We used to

look forward to these visits. We usually took the river route from Sadarghat to Ramkrishnapur in Comilla and then by country boat through rivulets and canals to our village. We invariably took to the so-called upper cabin of the motor launch

late at night and went to sleep and used to be awakened by the sound of waves breaking down on the hull of the launch mixed with the hum of motors. We reached Ramkrishnapur by about noon. Chicken curry and and rice cooked in inimitable village cuisine awaited us in the country boat. This simple meal seemed just extraordinary. The scenery as we paddled across toward our village was pristine. I have started going back to my village since 1997 again and try to be there once in every two months. I love these trips enormously. That said, the journey remains painful. True we are able to drive down to the village but the road condition through the villages remains abysmal. A seventy plus kilometre drive takes more than four hours. And every time I go I promise to myself, 'not in another year again!' But then a couple of weeks pass by and I feel like making the trip desperately.

The author is an actor, director & writer

These are excerpts from Aly Zaker's upcoming biography, exclusively for the readers of Star Showbiz.

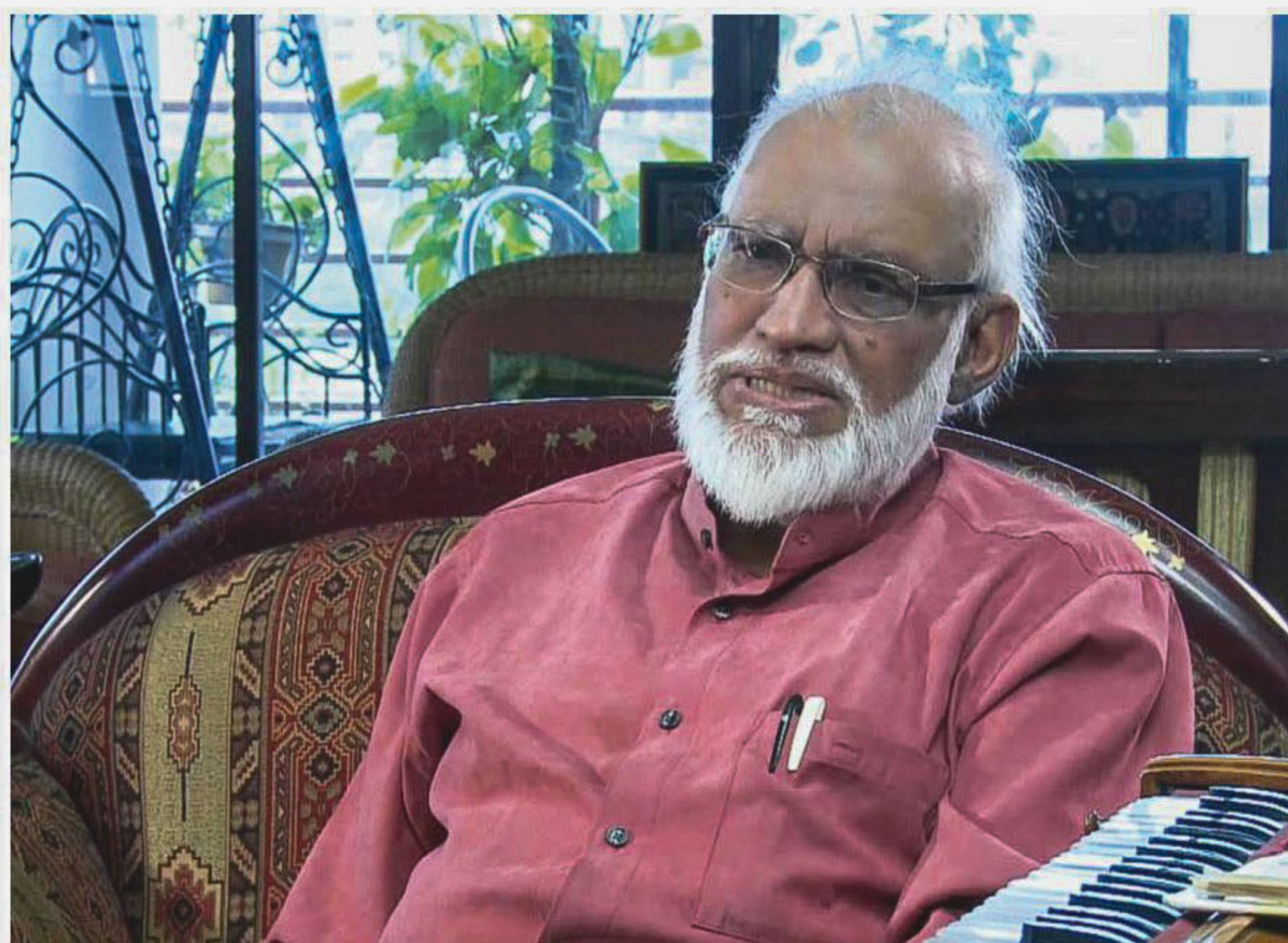
CELEBRATING THE BIRTHDAY OF A CELEBRITY

NASHID KAMAL

Last week we celebrated the birthday of Mustafa Zaman Abbasi. Through an interesting design of God, it happened to be the birthday of his grandson too-Alvi Mustafa Kaiser. The two Mustafa's cut a birthday cake and another significant Mustafa ie Sujit Mustafa, entertained us with his melodious songs, full of passion and ripeness of delivery. It was indeed a hattrick!

Mustafa Zaman Abbasi is the youngest son of legendary singer Abbasuddin Ahmed. He was originally christened 'Mustafa Zaman ' in the family tradition. He went to erstwhile West Pakistan and recorded some songs which were going to be in his first album. He wondered if people would recognize him as Abbasuddin's son and thus added the surname 'Abbasi' to his name. At the brink of turning octogenarian, there remains no doubt that he is the son of Abbasuddin Ahmed. His entire life and works speak so. He is currently a Senior Research Scholar at the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) where he has pioneered a centre titled Kazi Nazrul Islam and Abbasuddin research and study centre the first of its kind ever in any university of Bangladesh. Thanks to the trustee board of IUB, specially Mr. Towhid Samad for encouraging such a unique center. Other music departments in Bangladesh teach biographies of Miah Tansen, Munshi Raisuddin, Ustad Amir Khan, not Abbasuddin Ahmed. Abbasi teaches a course on the life and works of Abbasuddin Ahmed, he holds exhibitions of photos highlighting the salient points

of Abbasuddin-Nazrul duo and has made these pictures immortal through his book titled 'Nazrul Abbasuddin smritimoy album'. His most recent book from the centre is 'Abbasuddin Ahmed, manush o shilpi', and before that 'Kazi Nazrul Islam, man and poet' and even earlier a novel on Nazrul Islam's life titled 'Puribo



ekaki' from Onnoproakash publications. The list continues with his own biography, travels, providing leadership to Rotary Club, translations of poems by Rumi, original poems with wife Asma Abbasi, novella in Bangla, two volumes of

books on bhawayya and related personalities along with lyrics and staff notations. I do not know where to start and where to end regarding his achievements. A few years' back he wrote in the Daily Star that his father had dreamt of exact career goals for his three children. Mustafa Kamal (the eldest) was to be a lawyer, Mustafa

Zaman, a writer and of course Ferdausi Rahman a musician.

His initial years of life was dedicated to music, specially folk music. He sang, he taught, he researched and presented shows on BTV 'Bhora nodir bake ' or

'Amar thikana'. He gave breaks to new artists who are household names today, his TV show brought out the best of folk music in East Bengal and if archived properly, will be the greatest collection of audio visual folk music as well as information on the lyricists and tuners which he has provided meticulously. He was awarded the Ekushey Padak by the government, an additional recognition would be to archive his works in some form, (utube or website), making it available for the rest of the world.

Having said so, I once again turn to his writing. Amongst all works of Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, my favourite is his biography of Hazrul Muhammad (RA), from Ononnya Prokashona 'Mohammader Nam'. Being a student of Islamic History, it is not coincidental that he has researched and written on the Prophet, but that is only one dimension of the book, because Abbasi added the Islamic ghazals written by Nazrul and he added life to the book by placing them as excerpts in appropriate places. His thoughts travelled with him and those thoughts are a part of the book. The combination of Mustafa's actual life, Islamic history, travels in Saudi Arabia, command of Bangla and his knowledge of Nazrul's Islamic songs as well as his ability to translate the Quran have all found fruition in this volume. To celebrate his life is a rare honour, and matching this celebrity is indeed another task.

The author is an Academic, Nazrul exponent and translator



**LIFE'S
LYRICS**