

HUMAYUN AZAD

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SKETCH: YAFIZ SIDDIQUI

Abu Kaiser, one of his fellow students in the department of Bangla, Dhaka University, remembers Azad as the student who used to don "a Bonde Ali Miah-like hair-do" and "whose reticence belied his intelligence and his goonpona (creativity)". And he went on to add that Azad used to befriend only the meritorious students of his class and had little time to waste in idle chit chat.

We were politically active and were attached to different student organisations. However, Azad stayed away from the hubbub of real polity," wrote Kaiser in a recently published article. But Azad first became famous for a political poem he wrote during his student life. "Blood Bank" was the poem that made a

ripple in the campus. It even went beyond that when people started to consider it a testimony to the political climate of the '60s, which was severely subjugated to the military rule. The poem was published in Kolkata in the weekly "Desh" and the "Amrito".



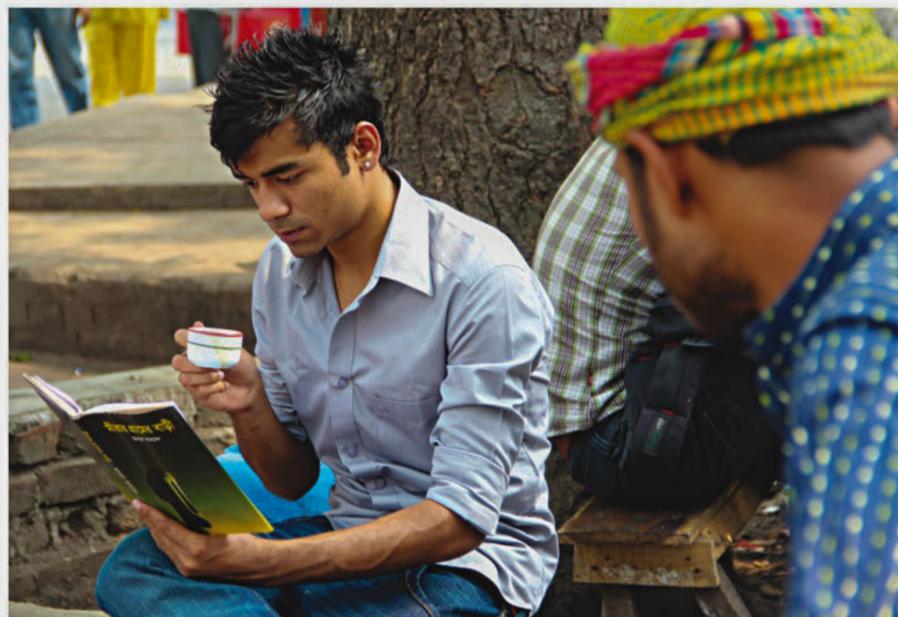
Mashukul Haq, editor of the Observer Magazine and a classmate of Azad remembers him as a brilliant student "who came from a science background and switched to Bangla and turned out to be the best in his class." "He was also impulsive in nature, and it was evident at an early stage that he was destined to become a rebellious voice," he adds. Haq considers him a voice against those who use religion as a political tool.

The excerpt is taken from Humayun Azad: A Truncated Life written by Mustafa Zaman and Ahmede Hussain published on Star Weekend Magazine on September 1, 2004.

MEETING A BLUFF-MASTER

Last week we were coming back from our office's annual picnic festival. We were exhausted and took a break at Noor Jahan Hotel in Comilla near Dhaka-Chittagong highway road. While we are drinking coffee, we found a well-dressed, decent looking person sitting next to our table eating very fast. "Where is he going this time of day, all suited and booted?" we said to each other seeing his rush. Meanwhile, the waiter came a few times asking if he needed anything. The man quickly finished his meal, went to the washroom while the waiter waited for him with bill and tissue paper. Guess what happened next? The man never came back! He just fled the restaurant without paying the bill. The waiter got worried at one point and went to the washroom to check. But he was not there. It's a big restaurant and it's difficult to keep track of who is leaving and who is entering. We were very disappointed witnessing such deceit. The waiter was fined for not being cautious enough. When we saw the man initially, we never thought he was able to do such a thing. Never judge a book by its cover- that's what I told to myself!

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I have always been an avid reader. When smart phones started taking over our lives, I became very agitated finding people around me looking at their phone screens all the time. Many of my friends, who previously used to read a lot, stopped reading. So I thought of starting a book club where we can gather and discuss books. I thought of starting it in my neighbourhood and invited book lovers through a facebook post. It's been three months and we have six members in this reading circle. The number of members that we have might not sound very

impressive but we are a group of lifelong readers who take great pleasure in discovering that next great author and share what we read the week before by gathering once every week. Every week when we get together we are bursting with great stories to tell. This little community not only helped us working on our reading skills and passion for books, it also helped us forming a good relationship with our neighbours.

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OUR LITTLE BOOK COMMUNITY

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO