



I cannot deny that I was brought up in an extremely supportive family. My father passed away when I was four, but from what I had heard he was an extremely liberal man with 'Sufi' influence. My mother, I cannot be grateful enough to her. She was amazingly far-sighted, and to her education was the first priority. She insisted that her three daughters should complete their Masters from Dhaka University, and did not put the same emphasis on my brothers. She wanted us to succeed and prosper in life. I am extremely grateful that we could fulfill her dreams. My mother only studied till Class 8, but she grew up in Assam in an extremely rich cultural environment. She knew how to make her children reach their potential. She enrolled me in "Kochi Kachar Mela" when I was little, where I met so many legendary figures that many would think that it's surreal. There, I got in contact with the poet Jashimuddin, Begum Nurjahan, Sajjanul Abedin sir, Kamrul Hasan sir, Sufia Khala and countless other legends. My husband Nasir Uddin Yousuf Bachchu was and has always been supportive. I am grateful to have him by my side.

*There is a decrease in the number audiences in our theatre today, which sometimes is very disap-*



*pointing for us. How do you feel about it?*

I feel the same. In the past people used to fight to get tickets to watch a play, whereas now, we seldom have audiences outside weekends. It is tragic,

really. We have become robotic. It is true that we have bigger problems to worry about; our existence itself is at stake.

*I was coming to that; our country has been in turmoil for quite some*

*time. What do you think us, as cultural activists, can do to help?*

You have to remember that before 1971, we, the artists were preparing for what was to come. We were united and strong, and would do anything to save our culture and heritage from the onslaught. We succeeded because we were united. We stood by each other unconditionally. I have seen people giving their lives for their country. We orchestrated our protests not only through force, but art. My question is: Are we that united now? We have become self-obsessed. We had a successful stint but then became too shortsighted. We need to unite against what is to come; and believe me, very trying times are ahead. In my opinion, we can only achieve true freedom through unity.

*I believe 60 is a new beginning in life. At this point how do you see yourself in the future?*

Where else but in the theatre? Where can I go? It has become an addiction to me and I couldn't leave it even if I wanted to. Theatre is where my heart is! And of course, I want to sing more for myself.

.....  
Interviewed by Tropa Majumdar