



A LIFE
LESS
ORDINARY!

Life Beyond Dhaka!

ALY ZAKER

I had decided that I would not burden my readers by going in detail with my boring and mundane journey through life. So readers; you will find me jumping from on episode of life to the other that I consider may be of interest to you. That said, I have to fall back on some details from time to time to vindicate my position. My B.A. honours examination included eight papers of Sociology; my primary subject; and two papers each of my subsidiary subjects English Literature and Political Science. I had to sit through all these in one go as I had not cleared my subsidiary subjects earlier. For this I needed a special permission from the Controller of Examination of the Dhaka University. To the best of my knowledge, until then; no one was allowed this privilege. One had to clear at least one of the subsidiary subjects before appearing in the honours examination. In this the provost of Iqbal Hall; with which I was attached; played a magnanimous role. This was Professor Matin Chowdhury, the famous physicist of the sub-continent. He summoned me to his office and asked what had happened. And on being told about my distress of losing my mother and sister immediately before my subsidiary examinations stood by me and got me the permission to sit for all the examinations in one go from the Vice Chancellor.

The B.A. examinations over, I thought I had enough of studies and avoided admission in the M.A. class. That said, I was still not in a settled frame of mind. Bhaiya did understand me better than all else and presented me with a ticket to Karachi, then the largest city of Pakistan.

One autumn night at ten, I left Dhaka on a Boeing 707 PIA flight to Karachi. In the flight, after putting my hand bag in the overhead luggage carrier, I tried to make myself comfortable in my seat and looked around. I was baffled by the smartly attired PIA Air hostesses.

They were smart and well groomed and at my age of 21, they seemed more beautiful than any other woman that I had seen before. On reaching Karachi, I spent a few days with two of my distant relatives. One was a cousin of my mother Mr. Abdul Alim who belonged to the glitterati, of Karachi, the other was an uncle that really, had no relationship. He was my maternal uncle's friend. And was like an uncle. His name was Captain Nasir Haider. Captain Haider was an ace flier of PIA. After staying with both these families for some time I decided to move on.

I found an accommodation in a mess comprising two rooms and seven people. So I became the eighth occupant of the mess and the fourth occupant in a room that was one short. The food in the mess was modest. And the bed was distressfully uncomfortable. But I did not complain. That I was far away from a home devoid of the love of my parents and a loving Didi was an adequate compensation to suffer the not so comfortable a living. It took quite some time for Karachi to sink in.

Once I somewhat settled down, I started to get around. Karachi then was growing. I was in need of a job for, my share of our family's income from house rent was a meagre 200 rupees. Though paucity of fund was always an issue it did not deter me from having my share of fun by getting around to places of interest. I got connected to a few young Bengalis and local guys who were well placed, owned cars and were also fun lovers. They were not given to intellectual reservations. But that was not an issue for me. I was looking for fun and they were also fun lovers.

We used to go for long drives to beach resorts like Hawks Bay or Sands Pit on weekends. We even drove quite a distance to various lakes in Hyderabad for picnics, fishing or bird hunting with shotguns. Some of my newly acquired friends had good looking girlfriends who, even in a conservative Pakistani society, did not hesitate to come with us, even on night outs. That was fun. When alone I went to places like the Hill Park and the Clifton Beach. Kulfis in Sadar Street was a treat that I indulged in. How can I forget Bandu Khan's Boti kebabs which were out of the world!

My entertainment opportunities were limited to the collective and quasi-democratic endeavours. I say this because, in my experience, it was un-democratic as far as the less and not-so-high and mighty were not decision makers. Decisions were made by the rich, high and mighty and all else were asked to follow. This created a kind of a dissension amongst us weaklings. So, the weaker members collectively took a decision. In this, my cohort was my Pathan friend from Peshawar who played a very active role. This was my very good friend Gouhar Ahmed Khan from Landikotal. The victim was Arshad Manzur from Lahore. He was always loathsome about all nationalities but Punjabis. So, that night we picked up Arshad Manzur in Gouhar's rundown Fiat 600, a tiny contraption that the young people liked those days. In fact, my first car, bought on borrowed money from my company, was also a Fiat 600. Anyway, that fateful evening of December, when the night was sufficiently cold, we went to Manzur's house and told him that we were going for a picnic to Sands Pit and that there were to be girls who would be around. Manzur's eyes lit up and he quickly got into Gouhar's car. The rest is history. We were carrying some bottles of beer with us.

Manzur polished off a bottle within fifteen minutes and was half way through the second when we reached Sands Pit, Arshad Manzur was adequately drunk. We made him comfortable in the veranda of a bungalow the rooms of which were occupied by visitors and locked from inside, and left for the city. We were worried as to would Arshad react the next day and were happy to find that he had become very quite and orderly.

This episode can not conclude my experience of Karachi. So I will revisit the city in my next episode again.

The author is an actor, director and writer



LIFE'S
LYRICS

NASHID KAMAL

Shabana; a name that is etched in golden ink in the hearts of the Bangladeshis. She was a very successful actor and has acted as the leading heroine in almost three hundred Bangladeshi films. In the film 'Dossurani' she first appeared with hero Alamgir, she had already starred in many other movies, but this was their first appearance together. Later they appeared in 130 movies altogether out of the 299 movies in which Shabana had acted in total.

Recently, actor Alamgir and his world famous wife Runa Laila hosted a very peaceful dinner at their home titled 'Dream' and enabled me to live and experience some hours of the same. Actress Shabana and her husband film maker Mr. Wasim Sadik were visiting from USA where they are currently based. Their daughters live and work there. One of her daughters is studying in Harvard University, working for a PhD in English literature. The other daughter is married and settled there and their son lives with them. Shabana wore attire akin to abaya and made jokes of her life as an actress, when several women-in waiting brought her saris, blouses, matching accessorize and shoes and how she misses them in USA. In such a situation, says she, her abaya and head gear is the best escape, she laughed, she does not have to bother about her dress.

My imagination took me back to the early sixties when I was a little girl and lived in Purana Paltan, Dhaka along with my famous aunt Ferdausi Rahman. That is when I had first seen Shabana as the heroine of an Urdu film titled 'Chokori'. Those were busy days for the musical



genius Ferdausi Rahman, I remember the West Pakistani young man Nazir Baig frequenting our house, learning songs from Uncle Mustafa Zaman Abbasi and aunt Ferdausi and wanting to be a singer. When I was studying in my room upstairs, I could hear him imitate my Chacha "nodir kul nai..." Then came the news that Producer Ehtesham had chosen him (Nazir Baig) to star opposite his niece Shabana and he was to be named Nadeem for his films. My aunt was singing the famous songs 'kaha to tum kodhundhrahe hey yehbahareyehsama'. Nadeem was singing the male version of the same song as well as duets with my aunt. I went to the first opening debut of the film and remember the long hair of Shabana, following her like a trail, the sandy beaches where she ran and where the song was picturized.

I mentioned this to her, she laughed. She, meaning Afroza Sultana Ratna is related to Ehtesham who had taken her in a film as a child. Later, when she was in gradenine, she was asked to act in Chokori and she knew no Urdu. Her tutor came every morning and she rolled into laughter, 'Ghur ghur ke phir keya dekhte ho?' She had to learn. So many times she told her father she could neither learn Urdu nor take part in this film. However, she did and the film was made.

She had also acted opposite Rajesh Khanna in a Hindi film titled 'Shatru' and a total of 299 films earning her the national awards ten times. Her acting span covers over thirty years 1962 to 1998.

Shabana alias Ratna is very sweet, affectionate humble and down to earth. She loves her home making role in USA, her children, her siblings all live there. She misses Bangladesh and comes to Dhaka every year. She will be receiving the lifetime achievement this year from the Prime Minister herself on 11 July 2017. We, Bangladeshis, miss you Shabana.

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