



SORRY, A GENTLE SOUL

We lost Sorry last Saturday.

My workplace, Asiatic Centre, is constructed on a five *katha* land in Banani. The parking lot is a shelter for homeless dogs.

I was never a pet lover, but I have become one. I have to admit that it has been made possible by the orientation and training from my son Iresh and later from my daughter Sriya.

It was 2005. At that time, we were persuading Iresh to return home from USA. One of his conditions was that he would only return if we allowed him to bring Fire with him. Iresh was younger then and Fire was a baby. By the way, Fire was Iresh's pet dog, a character in her own right. When Iresh was saying goodbye to his friends at the JFK airport, we were speaking to him on the phone. I was crying. Crying for Iresh who was leaving the land of many opportunities. Iresh said, "Ma there is no use crying. Fire is on the luggage belt and she is saying goodbye to the US, which means I too am happily saying goodbye."

Fire had puppies when she was very young. She could not handle the trauma of pregnancy and the responsibility of little wriggly babies. Even animals have physical and mental trauma when they have childhood pregnancies. So, as the story goes, Fire fled from her "responsibilities" and was roaming around in a building under construction in Philadelphia from where she was rescued. That is how Fire came into our lives, and led the way for the homeless dogs who would eventually find homes in our own home and in the shelter of Asiatic's parking lot.

Another interesting story about Fire I cannot resist narrating is when she took to the highway. Before returning to Bangladesh, my son took a road trip in the US. Fire was his company for the thousand miles he covered on his trip. With the windows rolled down, Fire would stick her head out, her ears flying back in the wind of the speeding car. One day, for some reason, the car had to stop on the highway and Fire got a chance to step out of the car. She was on the dream road, which she had fondly watched for hours and hours of the drive.

Suddenly, she decided to run on the highway, and my son started running after her. The faster he ran so did Fire. This was getting dangerous. "Come back Fire. Come

back! Fire! Fire, stop!" The drivers of the speeding cars on a highway would have no way to step on the brake if Fire went under their wheels. This would mean a series of disastrous accidents for many speeding cars. So Iresh decided to lie flat on the side of the highway. This set off an alarm in Fire. All this while, the entire chase was a game for her: she would keep looking back from time to time to see how fast Iresh would run after her. When she saw my son lying flat on the ground she walked back,



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knowing that the game was over, concerned about the well-being of her friend, "father", and companion. And that's when Iresh found the opportune moment to catch Fire and take her back to the safety of the car. By the way, for all those who may be wondering, Fire was a Pit Bull, and none of the ferocious characteristics this breed of dog has a rep of having.

To keep Fire company, first Ganga and later Sorry were adopted. Sorry was a baby. His paws were so big that he would plod like an elephant. I first named him

Oirabot (*shuddho* Bangla for elephant.) Like many German Shepherds, he had weak back legs. But he grew big soon enough.

I cannot recall who named him Sorry. It was not fair on him—he appeared to be saying sorry for his existence. He was such a gentle soul. He would greet us as we stepped out of our cars or came in through the gate of Asiatic. He would gently brush his body against ours, searching for the hand that would kindly pet his back or head. That was his way of showing love.

I remember Maher, a young chap who used to work at Radio Shadhin and was particularly fond of Sorry. So Sorry made many rounds on the Shadhin floor. He was a big dog, but he would often attempt to hide behind Iresh. His sloppy yet adorable attempts at hiding were futile since either his tail or his head would invariably stick out from behind. He was, as they say, like an ostrich sticking its head in the ground thinking no one can see it if it cannot see anyone. Sorry too felt safe thinking that nobody would see him and disturb his alone time with his favourite person in the world if he could hide himself well enough.

Yesterday, Sorry suddenly passed away. In the morning, I heard Joynal, the caretaker of all our four-legged loved ones, had taken him to the vet. I thought it must be one of his usual skin irritations. Or maybe I had that uncomfortable feeling, and maybe that is why I avoided calling Joynal back.

When I went to say my last goodbye to Sorry, I saw him lying on the parking space with the *ghungur* (dancing bells) around his neck like a necklace. Joynal used to do little creative things to make them look better. The entire place had the familiar smell of Dettol. Sorry was given a good bath and Joynal was in charge.

I again felt sorry for Sorry. Why did we name him so? As I write this article, all my colleagues pour in their condolences for Sorry. They all agree he was a gentle soul.

All we did was give him a shelter. But what Sorry probably valued most was the love he got from so many in the Asiatic family and from Joynal, his caretaker. Goodbye Sorry—our gentle giant. Your adoring eyes and sloppy steps and loving welcomes with a gentle push and a brush of your head will be truly missed. The shelter house at Asiatic still houses five dogs.

Sara Zaker is theatre activist, media personality and Group Managing Director, Asiatic 360.

ENTERTAINMENT



PHOTO: COURTESY

RECOGNISING THE VOICES VOICE ACTING AS AN ART

NAZIBA BASHER

Even though the first voice-over was given in the 1900s, it took a while for it to be recognised as a skill. As communications developed, voice acting became more common in radio and cartoons. But even today, especially in Bangladesh's context, the actors behind these voices are rarely known by the public. While voice acting has grown into a large industry and voice artistes are in demand, it still remains "behind-the-scenes."

Among television and theatre activists, it is a well-known fact that at least 70 percent of one's acting capabilities depends on how one uses one's voice. The ability to use the bass of one's voice is something that actors of both media get special training for - how to use it in particular instances, the intensity of the bass, how to get rid of it when the moment calls, so on and so forth. Although you use your voice in voice acting, it's much more than just talking. It is delivering the dialogues with the same mood and emotion that is being displayed on the screen in front of you.

"Voice acting is always challenging. One of the first reasons, I believe, is because sight has a stronger impact than sound. When there is visual aide to any sound, it is easier for the audience to perceive. So when you are voice acting, relying solely on your sound, it gets challenging for the actor to dominate the power of visuals," says Shahadat Hossain, actor and Dubbing Director of upcoming TV channel Duronto Television.

The main part of voice-over work is to read your

script in a style that is suited to the type of work you have been commissioned for. The art is to make it sound like the words flow naturally, fit with the character (e.g. animation character) or context (e.g. documentary), and does not sound like you are reading the words from a piece of paper in front of you. It is almost like acting without the physicality or appearance.

In many cases, the actors and voice actors of a particular character are two different people, depending on the voice quality and use of bass. Whether dubbing an international show, an advertisement, or a film, sometimes dubbing your own voice can be a gargantuan task, whereas playing the voice for someone other than yourself can be even more unnerving.

"It gets even more challenging when one has to give the voice of another actor. The voice actor then has to get into the mind of the actor, think the same thoughts when delivering the dialogues. Sometimes, it's up to the voice actor to rectify the actors' mistakes as well. And then, of course, there is international content where one might have to dub content of different languages in Bangla. From lip-syncing to expressions, to making sure the true meaning of every dialogue remains, everything has to be considered," says Shahadat.

The art of a professional is that they can not only adapt, provide the voice that fits, but also require little preparation or direction. So whilst having a good voice is important, it is being able to adapt it to fit the client that matters. To do that you need to learn the essential skills that are required of a voice-over actor so that you can compete for and get work.

It is very easy to misconstrue the skills required for voice acting—just having a good voice does not really

do the trick. When creating characters, or voicing characters, it is very important for you to get entirely into it. The physical aspects of your character are just as important as the voice. When one plays an 8 year old trying to pick up an axe, the person will have a different input of energy, which will affect the sound of the voice accordingly. And thus, the actor will imitate picking up axe while creating the voice so that the impact sounds original.

"Unless you're a mime or playing a character that does not speak or have dialogues, one's voice is possibly the most important tool in any kind of performance. Especially, in the radio, where you cannot act with the help of your facial expressions, you have to know how to use your voice well enough to help the listeners visualise. It is, through our voices, our job to put soul into the playwright's words," says renowned actor, Suborna Mustafa, who has done many a radio drama throughout her acting career.

Veteran actors like Raisul Islam Asad, Suborna Mustafa and many more, have been lauded time and again for their excellent manipulation of transitions, lifts and lows during performances to paint their characters on television. After a generation of actors and performers like them, the current situation is bleak—we now see the voice given little importance in front of the camera, or even beyond. There is no recognition, acknowledgement or award given to those giving their voice to bring a character to life.

"Voice acting used to be given a lot of importance before, when we would pay a lot of attention to the pitch and bass of our voices. But in recent times, it is hardly recognised separately from acting. Even with the sprouting of FM radio stations, people don't really work on their speech, accents, dialects, voice or any of that anymore, like we once used to. Maybe the radio stations themselves can take initiatives to give more importance to the use of one's voice and bring back the glory of proper voice acting," says Suborna.

With the kind of effort, dedication and practice that one has to put in behind voicing a character, it is undoubted that these artistes need more recognition. With deserved credit and appreciation, maybe we too will one day find and cherish our own like Mel Blanc—'man with the 1000 voices'. ■

ABOUT TOWN

WORKSHOP ON STRESS MANAGEMENT
Organiser: Searchlite Management & Leadership Consulting
August 5, 9 am -5 pm, Searchlite Management & Leadership Consulting, Nikunja -02, Khilkhet

MEDIART FIESTA '17
LIFE IS BETTER WITH ART IN IT
BATTLE OF ART FREE REGISTRATION
LAST SUBMISSION: 11th Aug 2017
CREATE YOUR IMAGINATION

Organiser: ULAB MEDIA CLUB
August 4-10, 1-4 pm, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi

BIOSCOPE '17
FILM FESTIVAL, EDITING AND STAND UP COMEDY
Organiser: MIST Drama and Film Society
August 5, 8 am - 9 pm, MIST campus, Mirpur Cantonment