



A LIFE LESS ORDINARY!
BY ALY ZAKER

Towards a new destination!

The train started rolling at around nine in the morning. We were initially busy with making ourselves comfortable. But when things seemed under control and the train started to gain on speed, we could take time to look around. To our delight we found a fantastic landscape through which the train was steaming ahead. The railway track was laid in layers surrounding the green hills, each track going over the other. The scenic beauty with green vegetation along the route and the hillocks all around were mind boggling. We wondered how uphill a task it must have been for those who built this track over this difficult terrain over a hundred years ago. We went through a number of tunnels on the way. Some of them were nearly four-minute long. The beauty of this route was so enchanting that we thought of revisiting it someday if we could survive the impending war of our independence. By the time it was past mid-day we were famished. There was no food available on the train. When the train stopped at the small stations dotting the hills we bought wild bananas and buns to satiate our hunger. It was not until another eighteen hours that we reached Lumding, the first station for a change over to the next train that would take us on a broad-gauge track to near the Farakkah barrage. We had a vegetarian lunch to our heart's content in the forenoon that day. We had not bothered to buy tickets during the first phase of our journey from Dharmanagar to Lumding as in the process of finding a place in that train and our dishevelled physical condition made us forget about the travel formalities. At Lumding, however, we thought it would be in order if we enquired whether tickets were needed for our onward journey. This was really an academic exercise because we could not have afforded to buy tickets in any case. The idea was to appeal for exoneration if we were asked to buy the tickets. When the Station Master heard that we had come from Bangladesh we were told that people from 'Joy Bangla' did not need tickets. During our sojourn in India we were always treated with this kind of honour wherever we went.

It was about four in the afternoon that we rolled in to Kolkata, then known as Calcutta. As was my earlier experience while entering this great city by train, the signs of impending presence of urbanity were evident. The experience was one of delight when I came on holidays to Calcutta before but this time on it was different. We were approaching the unknown. It was like an abysmal void that was about to oopervade us. All the stations close to Sealdah were full to the brim with refugees from Bangladesh. And what scared me most is that we were going to join this crowd of indigent. It was then that I tasted the feeling of depression, may be, for the first time in my life. When I visited this city earlier I had a home back there in Dhaka. And after each visit I could look forward to going back home. But this this time I did not know if I would ever have a home to go back to. Sitting in the horse-drawn phaeton, looking around for excitement I was inundated by further depression. The only alternative to this feeling was to go and add a meaning to life by being actively associated with the war, however meagre the effort at that point in time was. At One O' Four Park street, my Grandfather's house, we were welcomed by our cousins who still lived in Calcutta, both my Grand Parents being long gone. The house was there. The tall rain trees dotting the avenue were as before. The paan shop of Rashid 'round the corner was still as inviting for a chilled bottle of an orange drink. Kali Da's shop at the Congress Exhibition Road was as inviting as before. Joy Bangla had become the most sacred greeting all around. Except that all colours from such worldly pledges had evaporated for me. I had nearly lost all meanings of life.

By then the first Government of an independent Bangladesh was sworn in at Mujibnagar. Various Ministries in exile had started operating in full swing. Recruitment of Mukti Bahini officers by batches had started. I was getting prepared to join in. It was a Sunday morning. I was walking aimlessly on the sidewalks of Syed Amir Ali Avenue when Alamgir Kabir, the famous Bangladeshi journalist called me from behind. He invited me for a cup of tea at the roadside stall and asked me what I was doing. On being told about my predicament, he told me that there was a greater war to be fought on an independent Radio because the world did not know what was happening in Bangladesh nor were the people confined within Bangladesh have any idea that we had waged an organised war against the occupation army of Pakistan. So I landed up in Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. And the rest is history.



LIFE'S LYRICS
NASHID KAMAL

Mayurakshi

When my grandfather Abbasuddin Ahmed passed away in December 1959, my father had just returned from UK after joining the Lincoln's Inn, he had no income. He told me, he borrowed Rs 400 from his friend S. M. Pervez (movie producer) and later, to pay back his loan, wrote the dialogues for some of his movies. My father said, the movies were designed in such a manner that every seven to ten minutes there would be a song, or song and dance (together). The audience, otherwise, would be bored, if five minutes interlude could be afforded, even better!

In January 2018 I watched a movie in Kolkata titled *Mayurakshi* (directed by Atanu Ghosh). There was no song, no dance, no heroine with scanty clothes or figure on display, no love scenes, all of this was missing, yet I watched spellbound. Actor Prosenjit Chatterjee was there, he was overshadowed by the acting of octogenarian Soumitra Chatterjee as the father and the protagonist in this movie, where there was no love scene, but lots of love. It was an example of brilliance per se,

The lonely father's role was played with such ease by Soumitra, it seemed he was in his own habitat, speaking to his son. I had once had the opportunity to listen to his recitation live in London (2003) where he recited Tagore and Jeebonanondo Das by heart. It was a magical moment and I was amazed at his memory, the recitation was of course unparalleled and his rendition of *Shesher Kobita*, or *Banalata Sen* are still ringing in my ears. I took the opportunity to go to the stage and introduce myself with my grandfather's name; he respected that and remembered meeting my Uncle Abbasi, what a legend Soumitra!

I was reminded of my late father Former CJ Mustafa Kamal who shared watching the Apu trilogy with me, he remembered the reaction as Soumtiro slaps the messenger boy who brings news of his son's death, Abba praised that acting. In fact, through the entire movie, I was reminded of him. Abba had retired from his various important positions and my mother had passed away in 2009. He lived



if S.M. Pervez was alive he would certainly have to shift from his 7-10 minute interlude for dialogues, because dialogues here were the most important communication tools.

I will not go into the story for I suggest my readers to view this movie, instead I embark upon my own reactions to the movie. Indian poet, lyricist Gulzar had once said when asked, "What is loneliness?" He said, "It is your twin brother." Begum Akhter, the famous ghazal exponent had once told his disciple Rita Ganguli, "Loneliness is inevitable, the earlier you accept it in life, the better." In his compilation of letters *Chinno Potro*, poet laureate Rabindranath Tagore writes to his niece, "What I can write to you, I cannot to any other, even to my readers I have to tone down my expressions and make them intelligible." Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam in his letters to his friend Dr. Qazi Motaher Hossain repeatedly mentioned his loneliness and wished his friend were of the opposite sex, in which case, he would offer him his love. But Fakir Lalon Shah has already warned us, "*Mon, shohoje ki shoi hoba?*" (This means: It is not easy to be one's mate).

until 2015 and I was privileged to be his closest confidante. I witnessed *Mayurakshi* in the next six years of my father's life. His feeling of loneliness, of seeing the society go in different directions, of not being useful, powerful took various manifestations. Often he would just start talking when I am about to leave, and I would miss my friends' get-togethers just to listen to him, knowing that I was his sole escape. Often, when I visited him, he would not talk at all, listlessly watch TV. As the hair greys his friends left this world, his health was fragile and junior lawyers, judges all knew about his not so generous remarks. To put it mildly, he would be able to tick off any junior CJ or Judge, Barrister if the need be. He was a guardian of this country, but as it happened in *Mayurakshi*, you are gradually left to yourself and the attendants. One of the regular attendants was me, I wonder whether those times spent chatting with my Dad, made me richer or do I still have to compete with the neo rich and their SUV's?

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