

FARUK AHMED

STORIES FROM MY PAST

Faruk Ahmed is a renowned face on TV and a long time member of Dhaka Theater. In this interview, he remembers Humayun Ahmed, and talks about the early days of his career.

MY THEATRICAL MOULDING

Way back in 1980, I had enrolled in Jahangirnagar University. The JAKSU election was going on then, where I had the opportunity to meet Humayun Faridi. Later he organized a theatrical workshop, in which I enthusiastically participated. I used to live in Mir Mosharraf Hall of JU, and took part in the theatre competitions there. I performed in inter-university theatrical events as well. While still in university, I directed my first play, named *Bornojor*. Gradually, a theatre group which JU could call its own evolved. I was one of its co-founders.

JOURNEY WITH DHAKA THEATRE

I joined Dhaka Theatre in 1983. Here, along with Humayun Faridi, I was fortunate enough to work with Afzal Hossain, Suborna Mustafa, Shimul Yousuf, Assad, Ahmed Rubel, Litu Anam and many others. This experience was a professional eye-opener for years to come. The environment in Dhaka Theatre group was so sober and staid that we would rehearse a play even for up to a year before staging it. Dhaka Theatre inculcated dedication, discipline and the sense of integrity within me. It is during these years that I was acquainted with Gram Theatre. My co-artists and I used to traipse all over rural Bangladesh and perform. This attached me with the grass root level of Bangladesh. I worked for almost 25 years in Dhaka Theatre. My best performances were in Kirtonkhola, Prachyo, Keramot Mongol, Chokro and Joiboti Konyar Mon. My journey with Dhaka Theatre is unforgettable.

THE JIGSAW PUZZLE

I did my Masters from Jahangirnagar University. Then I worked in BRAC, various NGOs and private companies. However, I did not continue with these jobs for long, and instead managed to get a chance in television-drama. My first breakthrough was my character Roshiklal from Baro Rokomer Manush by Imdadul Haq Milon. Roshiklal was a fully negative character in the play. This character had thrust me into the limelight. I portrayed some other negative characters after that, like in the play Taarkata, which was appraised by the audience. Then I came in touch with Humayun Ahmed and acted in his television drama Achin Brikkho. Around this time, Humayun Ahmed started a series of plays called Tara Tinjon, featuring three main characters. Swadhin Khosru, Dr Ejajul Islam and I portrayed these three characters in the series. People admired our chemistry so much that it remains unbeatable till date. Humayun Ahmed brought the best performance out of us, which is unmatched throughout our acting careers.

DIRECTORIAL DEBUT

I always had a propensity for writing. I used to write plays since the beginning of my university days. Kal Saper Dongshon,



Uccho Bongsho Patro Chai, Digbaji, Dui basinda, Panipora are some of my noteworthy works. Audiences and even many art and culture critics warmly welcomed me as a director and playwright. Humayun Ahmed had a long-lasting effect on my thoughts and works. There was this serial that I made, with a friend as a producer *Megheder Shongshar*. That would be the first serial that I directed, but I have not been able to sell it yet. Now

I am directing two more serials; *Bodragi Bodrul* and *Hau Mau Khau*.

THE TRAGEDY BEHIND COMEDY

The comedy genre in our country is extremely neglected. We have an innate tendency of disdaining comedians. I do not identify myself as a comedy actor; I am just an actor. I just follow the script given to me. Making people laugh is not my primary duty. I have portrayed both serious and playful characters.

Understanding the tactics of playing a comic role while not exaggerating the character, is of central importance. Think about Charlie Chaplin, undoubtedly one of the greatest stars of all times. Even he was a comic character. I have personally felt that portraying a comic character is much more difficult and challenging than playing a customary character. Art is not all about conveying peoples' gross emotions. Sometimes even a comic character can turn out to be the most tragic one.

LIFE IN BIOSCOPE

I got plenty of offers of working in cinema in the 80s. Our cinema industry was going through a bad spell back then. My family had strict objection against me acting in movies. I myself was not interested either. Later on, I performed in Shyamol Chhaya, Taarkata, Ekattorer Jishu, Ghetu Putro Komola and some more movies. Recently, I have worked in Tauquir Ahmed's *Fagun Hawa*. This movie has a wonderful script, comprehensive story, and the plot of the cinema is based on the Language Movement of 1952.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAL

My inspiration was Humayun Faridi. Afterwards, Nasir Uddin Yousuf Bacchu and Selim Al Deen encouraged my thirst for acting. As an actor I do not idolize anyone. I prefer asserting individuality in my performance. Shimul Yousuf, during my Dhaka Theatre days, and Humayun Ahmed, till his last days, had an inevitable impact on me.

REMEMBERING HUMAYUN AHMED

I am blessed to have found Humayun Ahmed in my corner for years. He was simultaneously a brilliant playwright and a director. He often used to mention that an actor is supposed to perform, not amuse his audience. Working with Humayun Ahmed was a lifetime experience. We used to shoot in Nuhash Polli with mirthful laughter. I miss our days of having Iftar together. Humayun Ahmed was a versatile film-maker. His films made people laugh, and he was the one who made a parrot say "Tui Rajakar". Very few playwrights in our industry can produce as brilliant scripts as he did.

WALKING BAREFOOT ON GRASS

We should not forget our roots. Sometimes I have an obtruse feeling that we lack love for our country and its people. We are turning selfish. This continuous transition is devouring our human values. Love for one's country should be overpowering. This should hold the greatest value. If we start accepting our responsibilities, and be a little more sympathetic towards the people around us, the world would be a much better place to live in. As an artist, I follow my heart and endeavor to contribute to the evolvement of art, drama and cinema.

By Sharbani Datta